



Comparison of offshore and onshore students' perceptions of university learning environments and quality of educational experiences:

Implications for teaching and learning

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Objective

- To present the preliminary findings about the relationship between offshore and onshore students' perceptions of learning environments and the quality of educational experiences



Key question

- What are the contextual factors (individual, university-level and classroom-level) that influence offshore and onshore students' **educational experiences?**



The Research Context

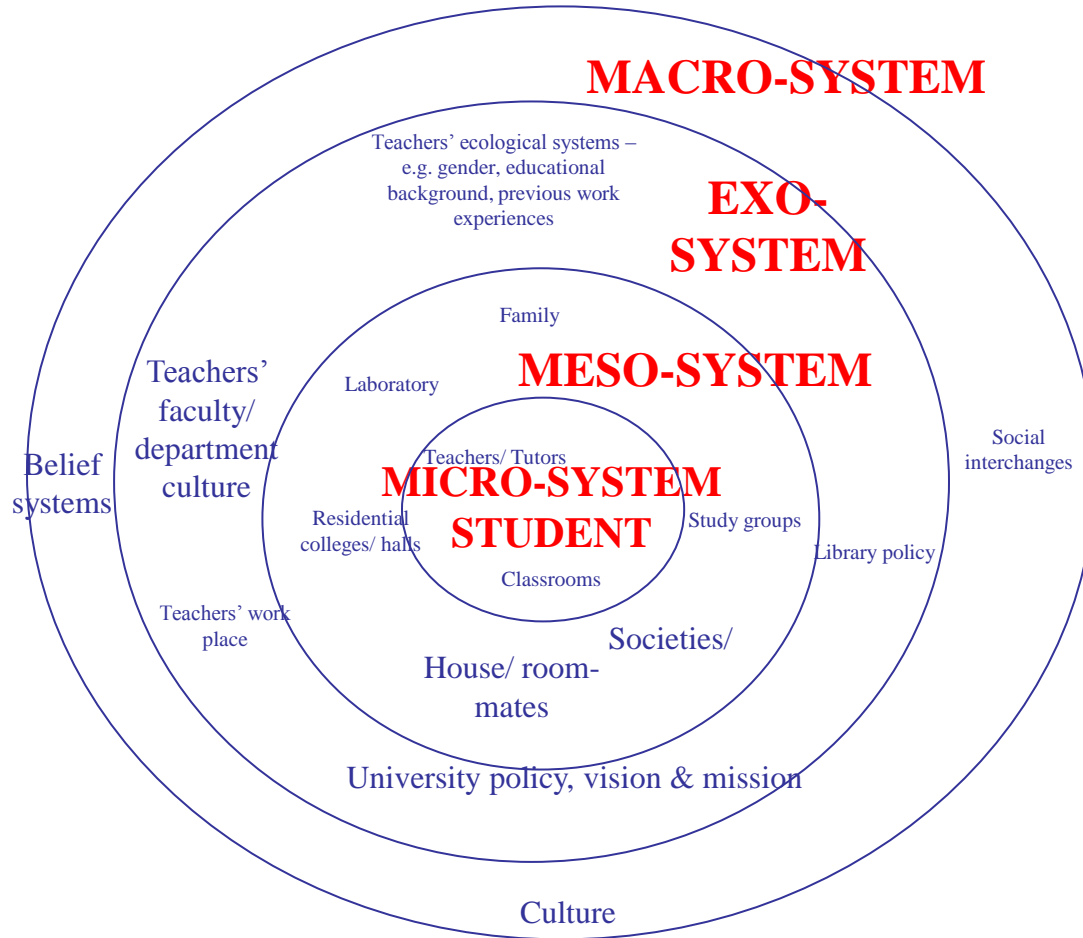
- University of Southern Queensland (USQ), Australia
- Providers of on-campus and distance education programs in Australia and globally
- 75% students study via distance or online



The Framework for Analysis

- Based on Kek & Huijser's (in press) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's 'whole ecology' and its impact on Student Learning and Outcomes in HE
- Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Human Development (1979) and Bronfenbrenner & Ceci's Bio-ecological Model (1994) conceptualisation of 'whole ecology'
- Explores the extent to which the macro (distal) & micro (proximal) systems interact to impact outcomes

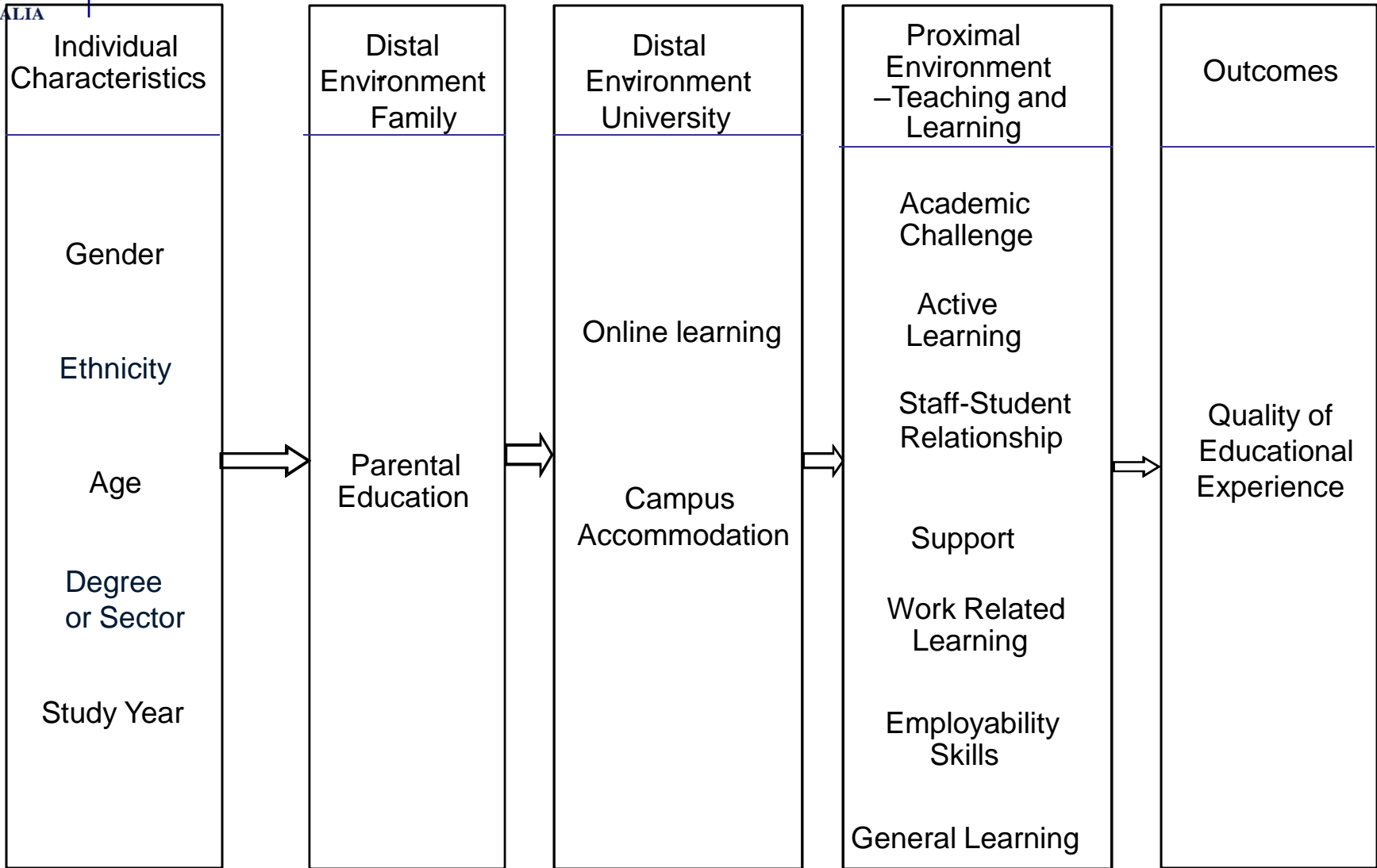
Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Environment Applied to Student Learning and Outcomes in Higher Education



Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development (1979) & Bronfenbrenner & Ceci Bio-ecological Model (1994)



Framework used in comparing USQ offshore and onshore learning contexts





Research Design

- Questionnaires to offshore and onshore students in 2008
- Administered AUSSE Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
 - Explores extent of students' involvement with educational activities and the conditions found in the learning environment
 - Eg. Questions – “During the current academic year, how much/often have you done....or how much has your course emphasised ...to what extent has your experience contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development ...”
 - Developed and managed by Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) & based on USA's National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
 - Psychometrically validated, robust sampling strategy



Sample

- **Total** – 1,314 students
 - **Onshore**
 - 930 (USQ Toowoomba)
 - **Offshore**
 - 384 (USQ Partner Institutions in China & Malaysia)

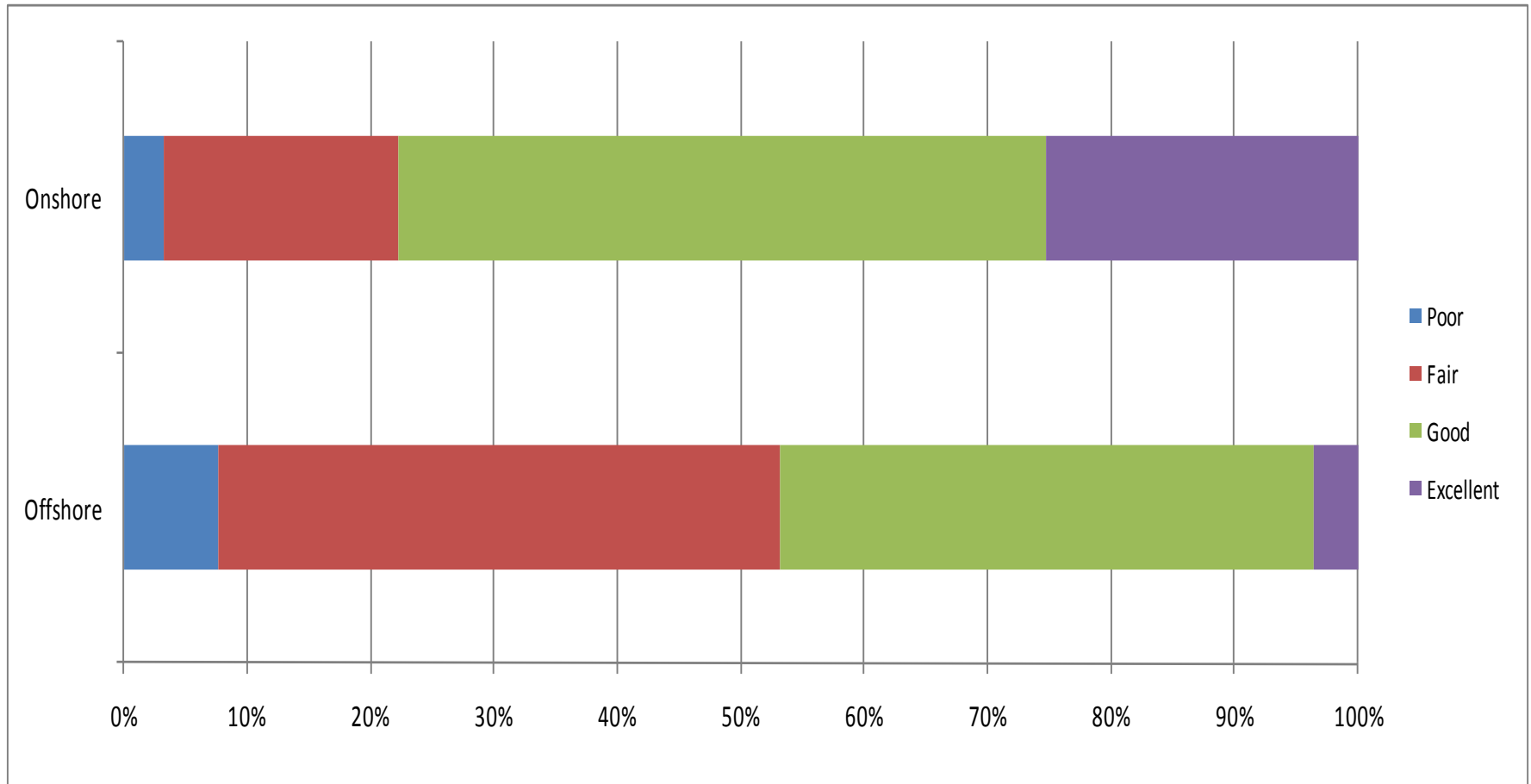


Analysis

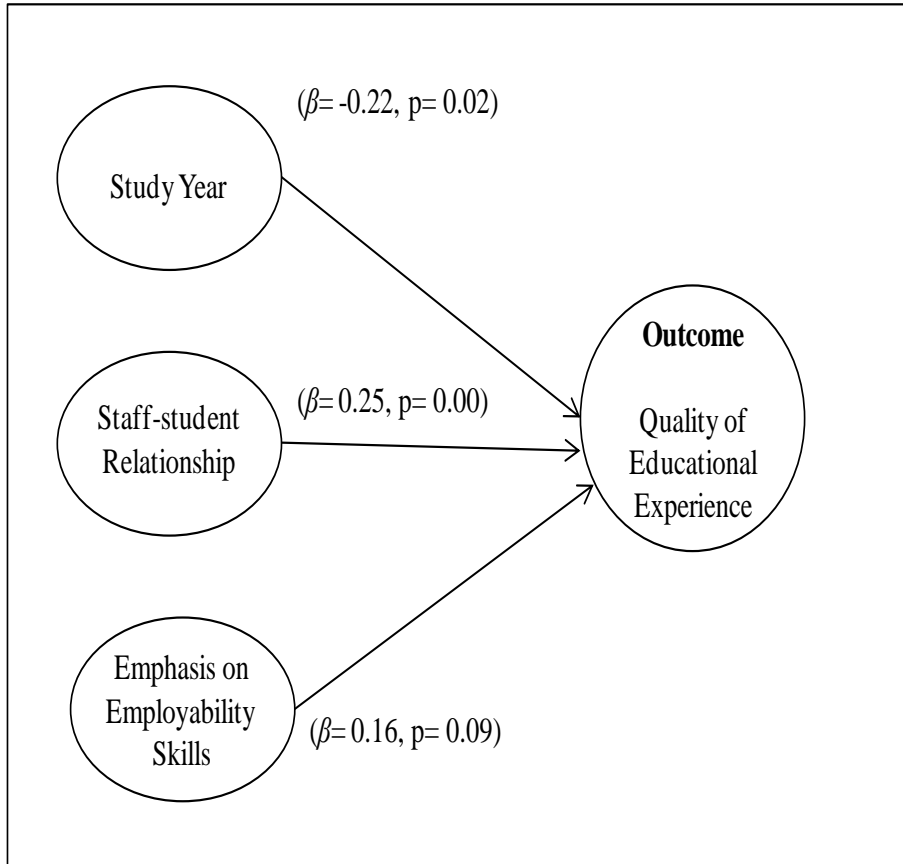
- Used hierarchical regression analyses
- With following sequence for entering the blocks of factors in the framework:
 1. Personal characteristics: Gender, Ethnicity (ESL or not), Age, Degree (UG or PG) for offshore model or Sector (International or Domestic) for onshore model, Study Level (first year or final year)
 2. Family environment: Parents' highest educational level
 3. University environment: Proportion of online learning, Accommodation on Campus
 4. Learning and teaching environment: Academic Challenge, Active learning, Staff-Student Relationship, Support, Work Related Learning, Employability Skills, and General Learning
 5. Outcomes: Students' satisfaction with Quality of Education



AUSSE Overall Satisfaction: Quality of Educational Experience



Predictors of Quality of Education – Offshore Students

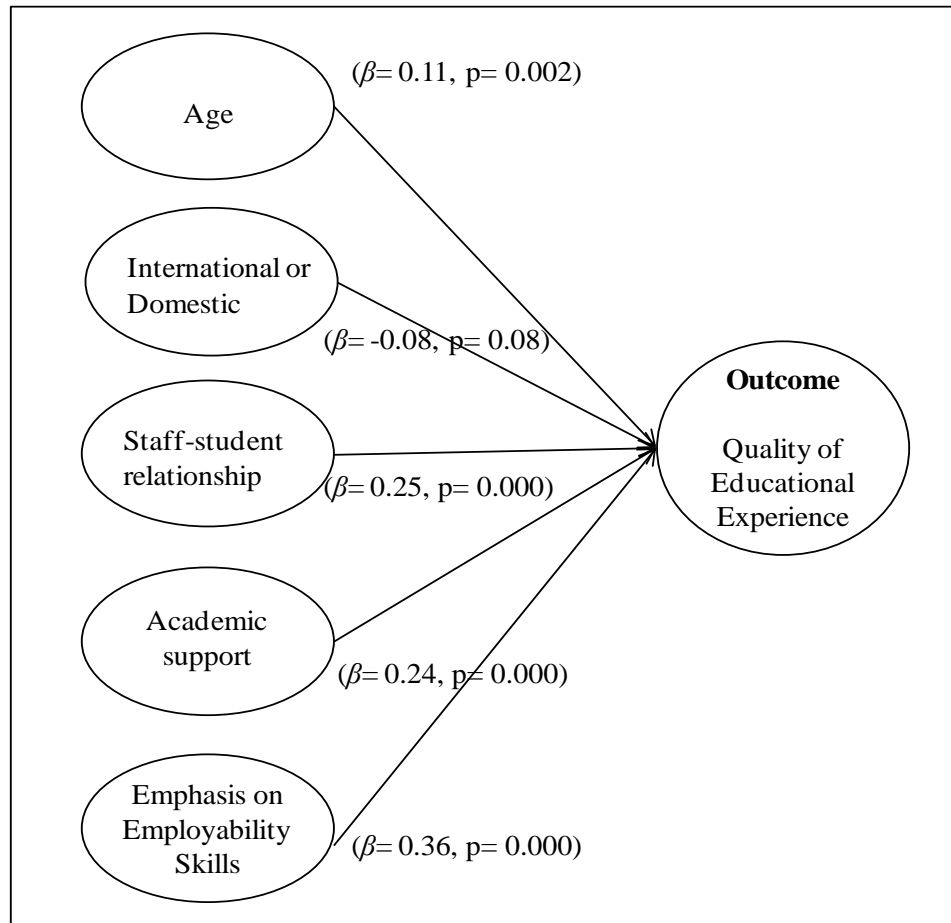


Final R = 0.47, effect size= 0.28 (medium), p=0.000

Offshore students who are highly satisfied with their educational experiences are:

- **First year students** compared to final year students
- Those in learning environments that had placed great emphasis on **staff and student relationships**
- Those in learning environments that had placed great emphasis on teaching **employability skills**

Predictors of Quality of Education – Onshore Students



Final R = 0.70, effect size= 0.96 (large), p=0.000

Onshore students who are highly satisfied with their educational experiences are:

- Older in age
- Domestic students
- Those in learning environments that had placed great emphasis on **staff and student relationships**
- Those in learning environments with encouraging **academic support**
- Those taught in learning environments that placed great emphasis on teaching **employability skills**



Preliminary Conclusions

- There are similarities in the offshore and onshore learning environments that affect students' educational experiences
- Main similarities are found in the learning and teaching environments that emphasised: 1) staff & student relationships; and 2) teaching employability skills
- Learning and teaching environments (contexts) predict student satisfaction with their education experience.
- There were individual differences (age, student status, study level) in predicting student satisfaction with their education experience but micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-factors are all influential, indicating the importance of addressing students' learning journeys as integrated 'educational ecologies'.



Implications for Teaching...

- It is important to ‘get the context right’ to facilitate students’ learning journeys by crafting ‘educational ecologies’
- Use of AUSSE can serve as a quality enhancement tool to assess the performance of a university’s off-shore partners in relation to the university’s expectation of its providers (partner management agreement)



References

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Ceci, S. J. (1994). Nature-nurture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bio-ecological model. *Psychological Review*, *101*, 568-586.

Kek, M. Y. C. A., & Huijser, H. (in press). Exploring the combined relationships of student and teacher factors on learning approaches and self-directed learning readiness at a Malaysian university. *Studies in Higher Education*, *36*(2).