

IARC President's Report

October 2020



by **John Mason, President International Approval and Registration Centre (IARC)**, Board Member Australian Garden Council, Principal ACS Distance Education, Publisher and Author.

Industry Update

The past year has been the most volatile that I have seen since I first worked in the education industry in 1974. Further, it is particularly difficult to review the 2019/20 year because our industry was following one path until Covid-19 emerged, then another, different, path since. The path forward beyond the Covid-19 pandemic is even more unpredictable, not just for the education industry, but for every facet of our future.

A New Normal

It is obvious to us all that on-campus education has been disrupted in most countries, and in doing so has provided an impetus for growth in online education. Talk about “getting back to normal” is commonplace, but the reality is there are many new factors at play, driving the future of education.

When we emerge from the disruption of Covid-19 nationally and globally, and the subsequent economic devastation becomes apparent, the education industry landscape will be different in many ways, including:

- Attitudes will be different. People are likely to be more sensitive to risk, and more people may be further focused on their short-term future than their long-term future.
- Economic dynamics will have changed. Governments will have massive debt; more individuals will have less surplus income. Budget priorities will no doubt change.
- Established education institutions will be weakened. We are already seeing reductions in university and vocational college funding.
- Educators who are experienced and skilled to deliver classroom-based education are already in over supply, while educators skilled to deliver online are increasingly in under supply.
- Some industries (e.g. tourism, aviation) have been weakened so much that even the removal of a Covid-19 threat would not be enough to allow that industry to return to normal any time soon. Many of the skilled human resources from damaged industries are moving to other industries, and are likely to be averse to returning to the industry they once worked in.

No one doubts the importance of education in rebuilding severely damaged industries. Rebuilding may require retraining massive numbers of new people for those industries. This could offer opportunities to the education industry; but funding increased training needs requires either governments or private individuals to source additional funds. Difficult when it is probable people have less funds than ever before.

The education industry was changing faster than ever before the pandemic. Covid-19 has amplified and probably changed the direction of industry change. We are facing increased volatility until we get past this

pandemic. All this change has brought opportunities though as well, if you focus on and apply good change management skills. I encourage all IARC members to take time to research and understand the concept of change management if you have not done so before.

Opportunity For IARC

I lean toward the theory those individuals and institutions that will be most successful over the coming years and decades, will be those that adapt and change appropriately and rapidly. Mainstream established institutions including many universities, government colleges and support agencies, such as education agents and accreditation or recognition authorities, may find it harder to change fast - the result is a major decline of such institutions.

People will continue to choose education based on the same broad criteria they have always used – quality of service, benefits from the experience and price. With less money available, price may be a bigger factor for some, but only if service and benefits are not compromised. With a more challenging job and trading market, the benefits of education may become of greater concern. Services offered may be looked at more closely when media exposes increasing problems with universities and old, mainstream educators.

What people learn, how they learn, plus where, when and why they learn has become increasingly different, and that trend will continue.

Our Current Status

Over the 2019-20 period, IARC membership has remained more positive than many other industry bodies. I have become aware of membership numbers dropping, and revenue decreasing very significantly in many other industry bodies. Our total number of members has not changed since this time last year – we have remained completely stable with 72 members as of October 2020.

Over the past year, the IARC office has continued operating on minimal human and financial resources. We are recovering financially by operating stricter budgets, and by continuing our hold on larger projects such as website development and professional development awards for courses for the time being.

We have also placed the UK entity into a state of dormancy for the 2020-2021 year. The dormant status of the UK company may possibly remain until we see demand increase there or throughout Europe. That decision was made when reviewing costs and budgets at the beginning of 2020. The Regional Committee in the UK continues to have presence there. We thank them for their ongoing enthusiasm and for actively representing the Organisation when and where possible.

Jade has been effective in dealing with increasing enquiries from both prospective students and institutions, however she has taken a period of maternity leave throughout 2020 and has covered only the absolute essential business for the Organisation during that time.

All website development work has remained on hold, due to financial constraints. Minor edits and updates continue to take place as normal.

Enquiries from students and prospective students:

We have seen an increase in enquiries from former students at schools offering TESOL and TEFL courses. The TESOL and TEFL industry has seen specific changes in legislation (what is understood is that changes are in relation to working visa requirements) throughout parts of Asia. Graduates now require further substantial formal recognition of their awards than previously. We have received countless enquiries to 'legalise certificates' – something which sits well outside of our objectives and is usually the responsibility of government agencies in the country in which the qualification is issued. Also, legalisation of qualifications normally relates to higher education e.g. undergraduate level courses, not vocational education, so it is assumed affected graduates are not likely to be successful in securing what is required.

From institutions:

During the latter part of 2019 we saw minimal enquiries regarding membership, albeit slightly up on the plunge of 2018. During the first 6 months of 2020 we saw very little activity at all – practically no enquiries for membership. However, since June, enquiries and have increased yet again, averaging 1 per week.

Summary of Membership

We have a total of 72 members – this includes all categories of membership. Full fee-paying members, honorary members and subsidiary memberships. This remains unchanged on the total membership recorded in October 2019.

- There are two prospective member applications being worked on at present.
- We have approved **four new members**.
- We **lost four members** (reasons: management changes at the schools, new management not renewing – none have made contact after repeated attempts to connect).
- We **rejected zero** applications.
- We terminated the **zero** memberships.
- We wrote off a total of \$330 from debtors.
- There are **17** members (plus 2 subsidiaries) who are currently considered non-financial with invoices unpaid for the 2020-2021 year totalling \$5860.
- There is **one** member considered non-financial with annual fees unpaid for the 2019-2020 year.

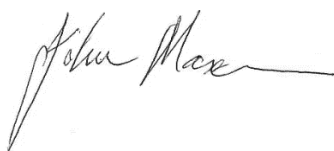
We strive for rewarding relationships with members, new and old. As enquiries regarding membership rise once more, we are now making a specific dedicated effort to follow-up with each enquirer directly and seek feedback or explanation why membership applications do not come to fruition, where appropriate.

Important Request to All Members

We ask that you ensure you are using the most up-to-date logo and branding relating to IARC membership. It is some time since we rebranded (Jan 2018) and we still find members using out of date information, terminology and logos after repeated requests. Please contact us if you need written content or access again to the logos. We will happily assist you in this. admin@iarcedu.com

In closing, we look forward to progressing solidly as the new normal emerges. I would like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to the Organisation and encourage you to consider change management as a key focus within your own schools. Your suggestions, feedback and input into our work is always welcome.

With warmest wishes,



Mr John Mason



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