

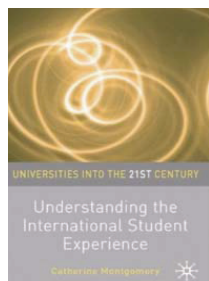


Professional Book Reviews

Understanding the International Student Experience.

Catherine Montgomery (2010). Palgrave Macmillan, February 2010, £22.99. 5 (UK), \$27.05 (US), 224 pages ISBN: 978-1-4039-8619-1

Reviewed by *Krishna Bista, Arkansas State University*



Catherine Montgomery has depicted a clear picture of how international students encounter both social and cultural, academic differences and learn positively as a result of cross-cultural experiences while studying as abroad sojourns in her book, *Understanding the International*

Student Experience. She has established a strong relationship with foreign students who pursue higher education overseas with home cultures, languages, and learning backgrounds.

Montgomery has examined social factors and learning environments of international students because she believes "learning takes place in contexts beyond the classroom and beyond university walls" (p. xiii). Through the lenses of constructivist approach, she conceives that international students establish an authentic meaning of their learning from their own perspectives as being embedded in social and cultural contexts. She addresses the dichotomy of the culture of internationalization in higher education as "East" versus "West" and cultural perspectives of students, faculty and international student advisors as "insiders" and "outsiders".

With a supportive campus network or community of international students, Montgomery firmly believes that students and educators of overseas students can develop meaningful cross-cultural experiences. She dissects existing stereotypes, assumptions and bias of foreign students and their cultures from an

outsider perspective. Lack of cross-cultural experience, according to Montgomery, is the main barrier for educators, teachers and staff for not understanding foreign students and their needs and issues.

Montgomery is an outsider who has offered authentic and realistic research portrayals of foreign students carried at a university in the United Kingdom. This is due to fact that most of the existing literature and research on foreign students are carried by insiders, international scholars. Through several in-depth field observations and interviews collected during six month, she concludes that foreign students are matured, motivated and prepared to study and value the experience of earning degrees overseas. Her study challenges conventional thinking about foreign students as they are slow learners with poor English, limited class-participation skills and inability to think critically.

She acknowledges the values of the educational backgrounds and cultural identities that international students bring to the United Kingdom and demonstrates how eager they are to layer new learning experiences and new identities on top of home cultures. As a result of her research, Montgomery explores the cross-cultural experience which prepares foreign students and their educators to live and work productively anywhere in the world.

Montgomery's book can educate scholars and staff of international students about the real experiences of overseas students. In her qualitative research, she included seven students from China, India, Nepal, Indonesia, Italy and the Netherlands. Montgomery is unflinching of her assessment of foreign students' experiences with rich and recent reviews of existing literature. She has added a postscript for "a broader and more critical awareness and understanding of the social context of the travelling student" (p. 144).

Her book prepares teachers, students and support staff in the Office of Internal Programs to understand several unresolved issues of international students, including language proficiencies, mediocre finances, sub-standard housing, loneliness and racism in the institutions of higher education.

This book satisfies an academic audience of international education, and encourages both insiders and outsiders to share their perspectives and critical frameworks of policymakers, practitioners and educators who directly and indirectly work with international students in the world.

About the Reviewer:

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Intercultural Sensitivity in Foreign Student Advising: A Quantitative Analysis of Ethnocentrism within the Profession in the Post 9/11 Era.

Jeff Davis (2011). VDM Verlag Dr. Mülle pp., 84, \$76.35. ISBN-10: 3639320972

Reviewed by

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Jef Davis' book *Intercultural Sensitivity in Foreign Student Advising* could be helpful to international student advisors and other

professionals in two ways. First, it may help advisors understand the issues and concerns of international students who bring their diverse social and cultural backgrounds to American institutions of higher education. After the 9/11 attack in 2001, it was assumed that foreign students perceived social and cultural bias because of their nationality, religion, gender, or language. Following the 9/11 attacks, American colleges and universities did seem to experience significant changes in monitoring and regulating international student visas and the student exchange visitor information system (SEVIS).

The role of foreign student advisor is significant to address the needs and concerns of international students, especially immigration rules and visa information. In his book, Davis discusses the value of intercultural sensitivity among advisors to "increase self-

awareness, awareness of one's own culture and world-view, awareness of one's own biases and prejudices, interests in other cultures and different worldviews, fascination with new people, situations and events" (p. 42). International students experience adjustment problems and culture shock in their new location. Davis describes a plethora of research that focuses on why advisors of international students need to understand the unique needs of students in American institutions of higher education (Chapters 1 and 2).

Advisors of international students can also use this book to better understand the challenges and demands of the profession from the perspective of field research. Davis explores the dynamic roles of academic advisors who must deal with students and update their reports of these students to stakeholder government agencies. In one example, Davis described a study of 300 advisors who worked directly with international students across the United States and investigated the intercultural sensitivity of these advisors (Chapters 4 and 5). His findings not only brought attention to the latest updates on the professional network of foreign student advisors (NAFSA) but they also illustrated how the roles of advisors were shifting in the context of post 9/11. Davis found that intercultural sensitivity, also known as intercultural competence, was highly related to the political orientation of advisors, their length of time spent as an advisor, academic study in the field of intercultural relations, and levels of education. He also found that the majority of foreign student advisors operated from an ethnocentric worldview.

It would have been a valuable contribution to the field if the author had included detailed demographics of international students who adopted the roles of advisors. Furthermore, addressing challenges in the field, and comments and feedback from advisors would have been useful instead of merely presenting information as a technical report that emanated from a survey study conducted at Boston College in 2009. However, the book does shed lights on the intercultural sensitivity of foreign student advisors which has never been previously studied empirically. This book is helpful reading for international education professionals, teachers, policy makers, and researchers.

About the Reviewers:

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