JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2, 2022

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

ISSUE INTRODUCTIONS

Rosalind Latiner Raby	1	JCIHE: Vol. 14 Issue 2, 2022 Introduction
Allan E. Goodman Mirka Martel	6	The Future of International Educational Exchange is Bright

EMPIRICALARTICLES

Kenneth Han Chen	11	Cyber Divided: How Taiwanese International Students Make Identity Boundaries within Social Network Sites
Jasarat Valehov Bernhard Streitwieser	26	The "Entrepreneurial University": A Catalyst for the Redevelopment of the Azerbaijani Higher Education System
Hayfa Jafar Emma Sabzalieva	47	Faculty Experiences of Higher Education Internationalization in Post-conflict Iraq and Tajikistan
Wolayat Tabasum Niroo Mitchell R. Williams	66	*"Native Speakers Do Not Understand Me"*: A Phenomenological Study of Student Experiences from Developing Asian Countries at an American University
Feifei Wang Yi Wang	85	International Student Mobility and Internationalization of Higher Education in Hungary and China: A Comparative Analysis

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Helen Collins David Callaghan	96	What a Difference a Zoom Makes: Intercultural Interactions Between Host and International Students
Wei Liu, , David Sulz Gavin Palmer	112	The Smell, the Emotion, and the Lebowski Shock: What Virtual Education Abroad Cannot Do?
Courtney Queen, Sarah Schiffecker Valerie Osland Paton	126	Critical Pedagogy for Health Professions and International Learning Experiences
Shaoan Zhang, Chengcheng Lib Daniel L. Ungera	138	International Doctoral Students' Sense of Belonging, Mental Toughness, and Psychological Well-Being
Monika Z. Moore	152	Neo-colonialism in Distance Learning in Barbados and Canada
BOOK REVIEW Sneha Bhasin	166	Downing, K., Loock, P.J., & Gravett, S. The Impact of Higher Education Ranking Systems on Universities. London: Routledge, 2021

JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2, 2022

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

Philosophy for JCIHE

This is the official journal of the Comparative and International Education Society's (CIES) Higher Education Special Interest Group (HESIG), which was created in 2008. HESIG serves as a networking hub for promoting scholarship opportunities, critical dialogue, and linking professionals and academics to the international aspects of higher education. Accordingly, HESIG will serve as a professional forum supporting development, analysis, and dissemination of theory-, policy-, and practice-related issues that influence higher education.

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1) EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

Authors are encouraged to contextualize their argument, when possible, by citing from existing debates and discussions previously published in JCIHE and by sharing how the results of your manuscript contribute to previous published articles on related issues. These links build a sense of continuity and foster scholarly dialogue within the journal.

Empirical Articles: empirical research should demonstrate high rigor and quality. Original research collects and analyzes data in systematic ways to present important new research that adds to and advances the debates within the field of comparative and international higher education. Articles clearly and substantively contribute to current thought by expanding, correcting, broadening, posing questions in theoretical or methodological in focus. Review/Essays are 3,500 to 4,500 words excluding references and tables.

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a new light, or strengthening current conceptual and/or methodological discussions in the field of comparative and international higher education. We especially welcome new topics and issues that have been under-emphasized in the field. Empirical Articles are 5,500 - 7,500 words excluding references and tables.

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NOTE: Submissions must include a Letter of Support from the student's Supervisor/chair indicating their approval for the publication.

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ISSN 2151-0393 (Print)

ISSN 2151-0407 (Online)

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Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
Volume 13, No. 5 (2021)

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https://www.ojed.org/index.php/jcihe/about/editorialTeam

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OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp.1-5
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.4901|https://ojed.org/jcihe

JCIHE: Vol 14(2) 2022

Introduction

Rosalind Latiner Raby

California State University, Northridge

Editor-In-Chief

Dear Readers -

I am pleased to share Volume 14, Issue 2, 2022 of the *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education* (JCIHE). In this current issue JCIHE is honored to publish articles of higher education on the following countries: Azerbaijan, Barbados, Canada, China, Hungary, Iraq, Tajikistan, Taiwan, United Kingdom, and United States.

JCIHE publishes new and emerging topics in comparative and international higher educational whose themes represent scholarship from authors from around the world. Two broad themes are represented in the articles in the 14(2) Issue: Student Learning Strategies and Institutional Context. For this issue, the Editorial Board invited two high-profile internationalists: Allan Goodman, of the Institute of International Education and Mirka Martel of the Institute of International Education to write a reflective essay about the effects of COVID-19, on student mobility. They focus on changes between the different waves of COVID-19 and projections for the future. We conclude this issue with a Book Review by Sneha Bhasin.

Student Learning Strategies

Student learning strategies are explored in six articles. Kenneth Han Chen explores how international students in Taiwan engage in online activities and use those experiences to develop a sense of community and identity. Courtney Queen, Sarah Schiffecker, and Valerie Osland Paton explore how experiential and community-based learning, enhance the development of a critical pedagogy for international, community-based health education learning experiences. Shaoan Zhang, Chengcheng Li, and Daniel L. Ungera explore the sense of belonging of international doctoral students who study in the United States and how that impacts their academic goals and relationship with their mentors and their peers. Helen Collins and David Callaghan examine the impact of Virtual Classrooms (VCs) on intercultural relationships between domestic and international students, and shows that VCs offers a platform for increased interaction than face-to-face classrooms. Wei Liu, David Sulz and Gavin Palmer compare the learning experiences of in-person vs. virtual abroad and find that despite the many advantages, virtual online programing is qualitatively inferior to physical in-person programing and is not a solution to the long-standing equity issue with international education. Wolayat Tabasum Niroo and Mitchell R. Williams examine how students from developing Asian countries, where English is the second language,

are marginalized when attending English dominate HEIs. Although these students feel othered and disappointed, they nonetheless use the writing centers to help them succeed.

Institutional Context

Institutional changes are explored in four articles. Jasarat Valehov and Bernhard Streitwieser explore how the entrepreneurial university concept will increase alternative revenue for HEIs in Azerbaijan and in so doing will build a stronger, rejuvenated, and ultimately more autonomous identity for those universities. Monika Z. Moore compares the development of higher education systems and distance learning in Barbados and Canada, highlighting the dynamics between the colonized and their former colonizers and how distance learning can add an amorphous, non-local dynamic to a country or region's attempt to define itself and its goals for local development and well-being. Feifei Wang and Yi Wang compare Hungarian and Chinese promotion of internationalization of higher education and how institutions are prioritizing raising international student mobility as a way to enhance countries' competitiveness at the global level. Hayfa Jafar and Emma Sabzalieva compare how faculty in Iraq and Tajikistan reconnect with the international academic community and in so doing import prestige and bridge the gap created by conflict. Institutional internationalization processes then positively exist within national political and economic factors that constrain how these processes develop.

Articles

The Following Articles are included in this Issue:

Allan Goodman, *Institute of International Education, US* & **Mirka Martel**, *Institute of International Education, U.S.* The Future of International Exchange is Bright.

The Editorial Board of JCIHE specially invited Goodman and Martel to write an editorial essay on the future of international education. The focus of their essay is that internationalization, in all its forms, will continue and thrive in the future. This editorial essay outlines the importance and need for internationalization on U.S. higher education campuses throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic with critical considerations regarding the future of international educational exchange

Kenneth Han Chen, *National Taiwan University, Taiwan.* Cyber Divided: How Taiwanese International Students Make Identity Boundaries within Social Network Sites

This article examines an online forum for prospective Taiwanese international students, STUDYABROAD. By engaging in these online activities, international students develop a sense of community and identity. The article shows how social networking sites reinforce group boundaries relating to different class traits and individual characteristics. International students find support and reassurance by socializing with netizen members and learning essential knowledge and information, but they also learn to distinguish different personalities and associate with them based on how they are perceived.

Jasarat Valehov, *Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Azerbaijan* & **Bernhard Streitweiser**, *George Washington University, USA.* Entrepreneurial University: A Catalyst for the Redevelopment of the Azerbaijani Higher Education System

This article examines new challenges that Azerbaijani universities face as part of the Azerbaijani higher education transformation in the post-Soviet period. Azerbaijan's transition to a knowledge economy requires a substantive transformation of the country's higher education system. As such, these institutions must develop the entrepreneurial university model that has been embraced as an effective response to the challenges of our time by some U.S. universities. The entrepreneurial university concept will increase alternative revenue for an institution and will build a stronger, rejuvenated, and ultimately more autonomous identity.

Hayfa Jafar, *American University of Iraq – Sulaimani* and **Emma Sabzalieva** *York University:*

Faculty Experiences of Higher Education Internationalization in Post-conflict Iraq and Tajikistan

This article compares how academics in Iraq and Tajikistan recover from the impact of conflict and international isolation and what spaces they create for higher education to internationalize by opening up and (re)connecting with the international academic community. Findings show commonality in how faculty bridge the gap created by conflict, reconnect with the world, import prestige, and integrate into the international academic community. Finally, respondents viewed internationalization processes positively even while recognizing that national political and economic factors are constraining how these processes develop.

Wolayat Tabasum Niroo, *Old Dominion University* and **Mitchell R. Williams**, *Old Dominion University:* "Native Speakers Do Not Understand Me": A Phenomenological Study of Student Experiences from Developing Asian Countries at an American University

This article explores the experiences of international students from developing Asian countries where English is their second language and how that language is then marginalized in American Universities due to language barriers. In developing Asian countries, such as South Asia, the English language belongs to families of the Middle and Upper classes and those who speak English gain admission to HEIs that use English. However, when those students begin their instruction in English-speaking HEIs in America, they feel othered and disappointed. Nonetheless, with use of limited resources some student use writing centers to help them succeed.

Feifei Wang, *Institute of Health Promotion and Sport Sciences, Faculty of Education and Psychology, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary* and **Yi Wang** *Intensive Care Unit, Peking University First Hospital, Beijing, China* International Student Mobility and Internationalization of Higher Education in Hungary and China: A Comparative Analysis

This article compares Hungarian and Chinese promotion of internationalization of higher education. Both Hungarian and Chinese governments are prioritizing raising international student mobility to enhance their countries' competitiveness at the global level. This article compares determinants of higher education internationalization between the two countries, particularly focusing on the context of international student mobility.

Helen Collins *Liverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University, UK* and **David Callaghan** *TEL Unit, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK:* What a Difference a Zoom Makes: Intercultural Interactions Between Host and International Students

This article examines the social interactions among international and host students during the pandemic when institutions transitioned from face-to-face to online learning using zoom. Findings show a marked increase in interaction among students online and examined what differences exist for online learning that enhanced intercultural experiences.

Wei Liu, *University of Alberta, Alberta, Canada,* **David Sulz** *University of Alberta, Alberta, Canada* and **Gavin Palmer** *University of Alberta, Alberta, Canada:* The Smell, the Emotion, and the Lebowski Shock: What Virtual Education Abroad Cannot Do?

This article examines the institutional shift to virtual programs as a result of COVID-19 in terms of addressing how virtual education abroad promotes equity issues in the internationalization of higher education. Despite the many advantages of virtual online programing, such as low cost, flexibility, and accessibility, it is still qualitatively inferior to physical in-person programing and thus is not a solution to the long-standing equity issue with international education. Though teleconferencing technology can be fruitfully used in intercultural learning as a new addition to existing tools, it cannot replace physical programs, nor can it fully address the equity issue.

Courtney Queen *Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, USA*, **Sarah Schiffecker** *Texas Tech University, USA*, **Valerie Osland Paton** *Texas Tech University, USA:* Critical Pedagogy for Health Professions and International Learning Experiences

This article examines health sciences education in the international, community-based context. The focus is on how experiential and community-based learning, common in the fields of Health Sciences, are appropriate methods to support the development of a critical pedagogy for international, community-based health education learning experiences. Recommendations are given for educators to provide practice-based education that focuses on improved outcomes of experiential learning so that learners do not just recreate their own lived experiences of order, structure, and power, instead to use a critical pedagogical approach which allows learners to examine their own social conditioning and biases so that they are empowered to engage, work and live across cultures.

Shaoan Zhang *University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA,* **Chengcheng Li**, *The Open University of China, China &* **Daniel L. Ungera** *University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA:* International Doctoral Students' Sense of Belonging, Mental Toughness, and Psychological Well-Being.

This article describes international doctoral students who studied in the United States and their experiences and examines the relationships between their academic goals and psychological well-being and their sense of belonging and mental toughness. Findings imply their sense of belonging impacted academic goals or psychological well-being through communication and relationship with their mentors and support from their peers. Mental toughness impacted academic goals or psychological well-being via cognition, behavior, and affection.

Monika Z. Moore *University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada:* Neo-colonialism in Distance Learning in Barbados and Canada

This article examines the development of higher education systems and distance learning in Barbados and Canada, highlighting the imprint of colonialism, and exploring the way in which both countries interact with the Commonwealth of Learning. In using an analysis of neocolonial processes focus, examines the colonized and their former colonizers, and organizations like the CoL who house both. This study also shows ways that Barbados and Canada are embracing distance learning, and how distance learning by its very nature can add an amorphous, non-local dynamic to a country or region's attempt to define itself and its goals for local development and well-being.

BOOK REVIEW

Sneha Bhasin, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, India* presents a book report on: Downing, K., Loock, P.J., & Gravett, S. The Impact of Higher Education Ranking Systems on Universities. London: Routledge, 2021.

JCIHE Support

I want to thank several individuals who were instrumental in the publication of this issue. First, I want to thank the JCIHE Associate Editor, Hayes Tang for his support, insight, and creativity. Second, I want to thank the co-chairs of the CIES HE-SIG, Pilar Mendoza and Anatoly Oleksiyenko, for their guidance and leadership to the journal. Third, the timely publication of the issue is dependent on the expert management of the journal by the JCIHE Managing Editor, Prashanti Chennamsetti and by the JCIHE Production Co-Editors, Yovana S. Veerasamy (lead editor), Jacob Kelley (supporting editor), Hannah (Minghui) Hou, Marissa Lally, and Emily Marchese. It is their dedication that helps keep the standards and integrity for the journal.

Dr. Pilar Mendoza is the Chair of the CIES Higher Education SIG. She moves off the rotation in June 2022 and as such, she moves off the rotation for her leadership role in JCIHE. During her tenure on the journal board, she has helped to raise the standard, visibility, and profile of the journal. I want to personally thank her for her time and dedication and look forward to working with her again when she and Santiago Castiello co-edit the JCIHE Summer 2023 Special Issue, *The Road Towards UNESCO's Sustainable Goals Amidst the Pandemic of COVID -19 in Latin America and the Caribbean Higher Education.*

JCIHE is an open access, independent, double-blinded peer-reviewed international journal publishing original contributions to the field of comparative and international higher education. The JCIHE is the official journal of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Higher Education Special Interest Group (HESIG). The mission of the journal is to serve as a place to share new thinking on analysis, theory, policy, and practice, and to encourage reflective and critical thinking on issues that influence comparative and international higher education. JCIHE showcases new and diverse international research that uses rigorous methodology that focuses on theory, policy, practice, critical analysis, and development analysis of issues tha influence higher education. JCIHE has as its core principles: a) comparative research; b) engagement with theory; and c) diverse voices in terms of authorship.

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May 2022

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OJED
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Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp 6-10
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.4036| https://ojed.org/jcihe

The Future of International Educational Exchange is Bright

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ABSTRACT

The future of international education and academic student and scholar exchange is bright. Though the term "virtual" transformed from an adverb to a noun since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago, our belief is that international educational exchange in all its forms will continue. This essay outlines the importance and need for internationalization on U.S. higher education campuses throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, learnings from the last two years from U.S. higher education institutions, and critical considerations regarding the future of international educational exchange.

Keywords: international student mobility, COVID-19 pandemic, internationalization, U.S. higher education institutions

Received 12/1/21; revised 1/15/21; accepted 2/1/21

INTRODUCTION

The future of international education and academic exchange is bright. This is not because the world turned out to be flat or that globalization was a good tide that lifted all ships. Instead, there is something in the human spirit from the earliest days of Plato's Academy that appears to prefer the exchange of ideas and a location outside of one's home to spur academic thinking and collaboration. And even though the term 'virtual' transformed from an adverb to a noun since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago, international educational exchange in all its forms will continue and thrive.

The subset of students who planned for an international exchange experience in the last two years have not abandoned their plans or dreams, and their ranks are only growing. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, internationally mobile students numbered over six million according to the OECD, with a year-on-year growth rate of six percent. And while some have indicated that it may take years for global educational mobility to recover, our conclusion is more optimistic for two reasons.

The first is that throughout the pandemic, even in-person international education exchange never actually stopped. The *Open Doors 2021 Report on International Educational Exchange* indicated that the total number of international students at U.S. higher education institutions decreased by 15 percent in 2020/21. At the same time, the report noted that over 145,000 new international students had begun their studies at U.S. colleges and universities. This was in addition to the over 760,000 international students already in the United States at the start of COVID-19. Despite travel restrictions, quarantine requirements, and going virtual, students continued to pursue study at U.S. colleges and universities in large numbers.

Second, some positive trends are already apparent. The *Fall 2021 International Student Enrollment Snapshot* indicates a rebound of international student numbers in 2021/22, increasing 4 percent overall and a significant 68 percent for new international students. Perhaps even more uplifting was that 65 percent of these international students were located on campuses in the United States. There is a strong indication from prospective students that they intend to pursue academic opportunities overseas in future years. Recent reports indicate that students from large sending countries, including China, India, and others, intend to study abroad.

Support for Inbound and Outbound Mobility at U.S. Institutions Continues

In the United States, higher education institutions are prepared. Throughout the pandemic, colleges and universities took multiple steps to reach out to international students continuing their studies regardless of location and to prospective applicants and new students to assure them that their interest was welcome and would be accommodated. Institutions offered continued support to international students on their health and well-being and provided virtual and in-person study support. Most institutions offered COVID-19 vaccines to all international students on campus in fall 2021.

Support for U.S. study abroad has not waned either. According to *Open Doors* 2021, study abroad offices across the United States launched a massive emergency effort in spring 2020 to return over 55,000 American students home early from their study abroad experience amid the COVID-19 outbreak. In the aftermath, programs in global online learning, virtual internships abroad, and other opportunities for global and local experiences highlight the ways institutions pivoted and adapted when in-person study was not possible. Looking ahead, forecasts indicate that American students have their passports ready, and their intention is to travel abroad. In the latest IIE COVID-19 Snapshot Survey, over half of the institutions (54%) plan to have in-person study abroad programs in spring 2022.

Coming out of this global pandemic, it is important to prepare for future ones. The COVID-19 pandemic is the 12th such event in IIE's history. IIE was founded in 1919, amid the Spanish Influenza and at a time when the then-Commissioner of Immigration of the United States needed a way to admit the growing numbers of international students who U.S. colleges and universities wanted to have pursue their degree here but at a time when a non-immigrant visa did not exist. The solution involved turning to IIE to register the incoming students and scholars,

conduct an annual census, and then inform the Commissioner when the course or degree program had ended. This was the origin of what today is known as the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. We know from our records that exchanges continued during each pandemic, and once the pandemic was brought under control, student flows continued and increased.

Lessons Learned from the Last Two Years

There are some features to this pandemic that make it unique from our perspective and are changing how we practice international education. Interestingly, most were already in process or being explored before COVID-19 struck. Others have provided an opportunity for higher education institutions to reconsider how they do their work, provide support to their students, and run their programs. First, the truly global nature of this pandemic and the fact that it occurred in the middle of the spring 2020 term required all institutions to become more expert at arranging for evacuations for students who could not travel home. Finding ways to house, feed, and employ many who suddenly had few ways and even fewer resources to cope with a summer where internships, housing, and the expected return to their home countries all disappeared.

Many institutions noted that they were not prepared for this emergency response, and shared takeaways around emergency and risk management protocols, guidelines on staff mental health, and institutional support to students in the U.S. and abroad during an emergency. We need to thoroughly review the emergency support provided to the one million international students we normally host when pandemic-type events break out. How institutions of higher education and the countries in which they are located respond to the needs of international students and the plans they have in place in the future should become an element of how universities are ranked. Such protocols will ensure that institutions across the U.S. and worldwide will be prepared for when, not if, the next emergency arises.

The way we deliver education has evolved as well. Historically, when a pandemic struck a country or region, schooling simply ceased to avoid further in-person contact. But schools have figured out how they could and should continue to function, albeit in limited ways. More recently, U.S. institutions had already been exploring how an international component could be infused more broadly into U.S.-based curricula, how students who could not travel could nevertheless get a global perspective, and how we could all practice internationalization at home by engaging with the multicultural communities adjacent and nearby to our campuses. This was further catapulted by the growth of virtual exchange programs and global online learning experiences.

In the last two years, ‘global’ actually became ‘local’ for everyone. In response, institutions created options for international and U.S. students to participate in global virtual experiences, whether through online learning, internships, or virtual exchange, so that location was not the prerequisite for global interaction. There are lessons we need to learn about how hybrid courses and semesters impacted students and faculty, as most institutions noted that offering virtual programming provided options for their students and allowed them to continue their studies from abroad or in their homes or apartments. Many institutions noted that while the virtual format was not a substitute for in-person programs, it was possible to deliver high-quality education and services.

Another takeaway is the need to address a pandemic's effect on students, faculty, and staff's mental health. We need to know a lot more about how students navigated the pandemic and the advice they would give to future students — international and domestic — on how to be prepared. Institutions noted that they planned to take forward many of the protocols they had set up around mental health advising for their students and staff. Frequent check-ins on health and well-being, often virtual, proved critical during the pandemic, and these practices should continue well beyond this year. The resiliency of faculty and staff who went through the pandemic, typically discussed in association with other words such as 'patience,' 'grace,' and 'adaptability,' also point to the need to look inward and support those on the frontline in international education.

Finally, it will be important to examine the institutional effects that the pandemic had on institutions and their administration. From staff furloughs and layoffs to programs being canceled and defunded, the effects of the pandemic on U.S. higher education and the international education field in some institutions were dramatic. Yet even here, there is an opportunity to learn. Offices had to take a hard look at their offerings and their methods of operation. This led to abandoning outdated practices and making important decisions about which programs and services to cut. The necessity and reality of the COVID-19 pandemic forced some institutions to adopt a more streamlined approach.

Where We Stand and the Way Forward

What will international educational exchange look like moving forward? For three-quarters of the twentieth century and all of the present one so far, more young persons between the ages of 18–24 sought access to higher education faster than their home countries could supply it. They had relatively few places where they could go. Today, international students have more destinations and choices than at any time in history. There is already an unprecedented global trend toward seeking international students as part of national education economic growth strategies, and foreign policy. And of the 100 top-ranked world universities, nearly two-thirds are no longer based in the United States; a decade ago, only 47 of the top 100 were non-U.S. institutions. As state-sponsored investments in universities in nearly all regions enable more to attain rankings, will growing numbers of students prefer to stay in their region instead of switching continents? Or will the opportunity of traveling abroad where the chances of getting vaccinated could be higher, or where research may lead to rapid development of vaccines for the next pandemic, now become a part of an international student's calculus in considering where to go?

For much of the past 100 years, promoting international education and exchange has not been easy, and efforts to impart a global perspective and international frame of mind across higher education here and elsewhere have not always been seen as a priority. COVID-19 may not have changed those realities for professionals in our field. But as the world we share recovers from this pandemic, more higher education institutions than ever before will be engaged in making 'international' a central element of what it means to be educated.

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Empirical Article

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Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp.11-25
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3191 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Cyber Divided: How Taiwanese International Students Make Identity Boundaries within Social Network Sites

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ABSTRACT

Cyberspace has become a fixture of contemporary higher education institutions. When facing challenges seeking admission to a foreign university, international students often resort to online resources for guidance. By engaging in these online activities, international students develop a sense of community and identity. Despite recent advancement, existing studies on digital space and international students often fail to address the contentious nature of the community-forming process. Using digital ethnography and interviews, I studied an online forum for Taiwanese international students, STUDYABROAD, to delineate how social networking sites (SNSs) help reinforce group boundaries relating to different class traits and individual characteristics. International students find support and reassurance by socializing with netizen members and learning essential knowledge and information, but they also learn to distinguish different personalities and associate with them based on how they are perceived. By describing how Taiwanese students interpret online forums and develop norms around those communities, this study contributes to a growing strand of research into socialization of the international online community.

Keywords: boundary-making, identity, international students, social media; Social Network Sites (SNSs)

Received November 8, 2020; revised February 6, 2021; accepted June 19, 2021 8/16/21

INTRODUCTION

Over recent decades, scholars of international education have expressed increasing interest in the study of international students and the physical and virtual infrastructure supporting their mobility (Ngai, 2019; Wee, 2019). Previous studies have tended to link the migration of students to the reproduction of class in their home countries (Knight, 2004; Xiang & Shen, 2009).

For many students the pursuit of higher education abroad has been a channel for upward mobility, a path for expanding career options and a means of acquiring social capital and preferential culture in the labor market (Ball et al., 1995; Waters & Leung, 2013; Xiang & Shen, 2009). New institutional arrangements and collaborations across national borders have contributed significantly to this global migration of students; examples of these new modalities include long-distance online learning, overseas branch campuses, and outbound-study programs (Hudzik, 2015; Madge et al., 2015). While past studies focused on school-level factors leading to international student mobility, few studies have extensively explored how the digitization of social lives has transformed the global college admission environment for international students.

Online communities have long served as a hub of information and resources in society, while simultaneously providing their members with essential affiliations (Golder & Macy, 2014). Their relevance has only increased in the interval, and they have become a perennial fixture of contemporary higher education institutions (Watkins, 2011). International students often turn to online sources for help when dealing with the challenges of applying to a foreign university. In the past few decades, online forums have become a significant source of information for international students seeking to study abroad (Madge et al., 2015; Ngai, 2019). Today, internet-mediated information exchange and interactive communities have become a central part of international students' university admissions and decision-making processes.

Since youth participation in online forums is both understandable and expected, researchers tend to ignore how such participation contributes to norm-building behaviors among international students (Ngai, 2019). Online community members are usually strangers, but while users in the community do not know each other, participants in online forums can generate meaningful solidarity—such as the international student peer networks discussed at length in this paper. These qualities enable online communities of international students to play a unique function as a public space for altruistic and reciprocal exchange, even when there is no apparent revenue attached to participation in the social network (Mundy & Murphy, 2001; Zhang et al., 2007). In other words, to understand the full context of global education, we need to consider how the internet serves as a transnational space which connects students' domestic and foreign lives.

By conducting in-depth ethnographic interviews with different online community members surrounding admission and study-abroad, I uncover how Taiwanese students construct their identities as students, having been socialized to incorporate the digital communities' moral frameworks. I found that individual students, participating in and analyzing the online forums, proceed to draw distinctions between various identity models. The evidence presented in this paper indicates that narratives in these forums regarding student identity and the group have a broader contextual meaning: specifically, students construct their status as international students based on assigned values relating to individuality and personal characteristics. As such, this research takes a step toward understanding how students construct identities and how students react to the blurring line between commercial and reciprocal exchange in online spaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

International Student Online Participation

Existing literature on digital activity has taken two theoretical approaches to capture the motives and patterns of international students' participation in those online spaces (Collins, 2014; Matzat, 2009; Xiang & Shen, 2009). One group of scholars justifies the popularity of online spaces with an "opportunity approach." These studies highlight how cyberspace has become a "space of opportunities" for international students to gain information and resources from various global education affiliations (Madge et al., 2015; Xiang & Shen, 2009). These researchers believe that most international students lack cultural capital and social networks before studying abroad (Chung et al., 2018). In general, these studies celebrate the openness of online chatrooms, online bulletin board services, and SNSs that has broadened the range and scope of educational access and experience for international students. For international students, digital and virtual participation has become a vital life skill that shapes how they live and how they make decisions before moving abroad (Madge et al., 2009, 2015).

Prospective international students also look to forums to gather information absent from their immediate personal network (Bilecen & Faist, 2015; Ngai, 2019). For example, applicants who attended less academically rigorous schools may lack the social network which encourages peers to take the transnational education journey. Furthermore, young applicants living outside metropolitan areas may find it challenging to locate appropriate resources, information, and professional support regarding studying abroad. Internet communities tend to fill such vacancies. Additionally, students seek online forums to access international education resources and information that similarly are missing from their personal networks (Ngai, 2019).

Another group of researchers explains the importance of online spaces by imputing a “broker role approach.” These studies define the brokerage role as a function that mediates between different parties, juggles the disparate activities and norms of organizations and individuals, and communicates various forms of knowledge and interests (Bilecen & Faist, 2015; Feng & Horta, 2021; Stovel & Shaw, 2012). Netizens and veteran participants in those online communities play the role of mentors, teaching prospective students how to develop individualized strategies, make practical choices, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their admission documents. These help-seeking behaviors make study-abroad discussion forums serve a function as expertise finders or expertise-location engines, which help locate those with the required competence to answer a question or solve a problem (Ngai, 2019).

Boundary-Making and Legitimacy of Online Communities

By participating in an online community, international students develop a shared sense of collective and individual identity. These qualities enable online communities to maintain a public space for altruistic and reciprocal exchange, even when there are no quantifiable positive outcomes for participants. For prospective international students, this shared sense of identity and community centers on different personal aspects, including social status, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, desire for information and experience, and mutual recognition (Cheng et al., 2014; Madge et al., 2009; Wee, 2019; Zhang et al., 2007). Simultaneously, for foreign students from more marginalized positions, cyberspace may also serve as a field of social resistance to the hegemonic power of Western nations' institutional and ideological influence (Chung et al., 2018; Ngai, 2019).

Despite the merit of these previous studies, prior scholars have often failed to address the contentious nature of the community-forming process—how and when these different international student identities and groups confront each other. While most researchers agree that cyberspace is essential for identity-formation and knowledge requests, this understanding tends to be limited to seeing online spaces as a neutral platform. However, newer research posits that online forums of international students in Taiwan constitute a dynamic social field where students encounter and debate their different identities (Tran, 2016; Tse & Waters, 2013). In addition to utilizing these sites as resources and affiliations, a student could also develop specific virtual conduct and set social boundaries against adversaries.

Boundary-making is a critical practice in online community participation. In a normative face-to-face encounter, physical presence is usually enough assurance that a member is committed to participating in the interaction. Physical interaction, therefore, rests on the premises of pre-existing power dynamics and social status hierarchy, which follows a clear institutional or regulatory structure. However, online groups only partially follow these norms and rules. In online-mediated interactions, individuals can redefine their sense of identity and regain the sense of control which they have lost in everyday life (Cheng et al., 2014). For international students, redefining their position and expertise in online space helps them regain a sense of control in the uncertainty of the international application process (Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016; Rui & Wang, 2015).

Prior studies of international student mobility have begun to direct attention to the cultural and social trends of "virtual cosmopolitanism" within academia (Kim, 2009, p. 200). The generation of tech-savvy, native netizen students has grown accustomed to sharing and exchanging information, goods, works, and ideas online (Kim, 2010; Wee, 2019). Middle- and working-class children have grown to depend on the internet and social networks to communicate time-sensitive information about fluctuating job markets, diverse educational opportunities and pedagogies, and culturally-specific standards and norms (Madge et al., 2009). Through participating in one or more social networking sites, international students interact in online communities populated by like-minded peers and expert-like individuals.

Despite the new generation's familiarity with online community, students' online SNSs are unique in not being unified groups with coherent motives and the capacity for participation (Ngai, 2019). For example, open-access forums mean extensive opportunities for students to seek and interact with for-pay experts, such as admission consultants, editors, and "contract-cheating" providers (Lines, 2016). In stark contrast to the reciprocal help students receive on the SNSs, commercially-oriented actors charge a fee or commission for their assistance. While paid experts could likely be an invaluable source of knowledge, these commercial practices pose potential threats to the online community's goals for deliberative norms, as well as students' legitimate claims as independent, self-justified elites (Chen & Berman, 2022; Lines, 2016). With these considerations, it is unsurprising that many SNSs reject and disembark the market exchange and view the entrance of commercial actors as an unacceptable invasion.

International students are not alone in treating commercial actors as detrimental and dangerous to the integrity of their shared online community. While the practice of engaging with third-party actors in learning or doing specific tasks might not be characterized as inherently immoral, the consequence of the action is often associated with the demolition of altruistic behaviors. The market exchange thus "pollutes" the integrity and originality of the academic

sphere. Previous studies applying this framework also discuss an alternate "moral legitimacy" promulgated by market actors that challenges how non-market actors construct, redefine, and stabilize boundaries along the "ethics" associated with varying economic activities.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

In this paper, I describe how interactions within online SNSs tend to facilitate identity boundaries and class discourses, specifically with discourse about individual merits. Mainly, I argue that students learned both how to mobilize transnationally and the "social distinction" about how one can become a transnational elite. The social distinction was a process that Bourdieu believes would significantly impact one's subjective and objective class privilege (Bourdieu, 1984; Tran, 2016). In this study, this distinction is applied to how international students develop particular expressions of taste and emotion, generate ways of acquiring knowledge, and learn patterns of consumption, any of which may potentially change their position and status in a given social environment (Bourdieu, 1984). Whereas contemporary research on the internet and international students tends to treat their class position as static, Bourdieu's theory helps focus the investigation on participation and the reproduction process behind creating boundaries between different identities (Deer, 2003).

This paper contributes to the existing literature on international student's online participation by exploring how Taiwanese students employ different justifications for discussing behavioral conduct relating to individual merits. Students make "social distinctions" between other cultural traits, motives, and tastes relating to economic and non-economic actors and practices in interactions and dialogue on online sharing sites. These distinctions exemplified the group's shared identity and the underlying individualism and merit-based logic behind distinguishing the true elite (Chen & Berman 2022). Taken together, this paper helps investigate the complexity of commercialization and the transforming nature of netizen culture in the international student identity-making process.

RESEARCH METHOD

The primary observation site for this research was a popular online-sharing forum and community used by Taiwanese international students and migrants: STUDYABROAD. I collected conversations and discussion threads on the forum and conducted interviews with actors who used the forum. STUDYABROAD uses a Bulletin Board System (BBS) and is one of the thousands of forum sections under its parent site PTT, a non-profit social networking site in Taiwan. The forum uses a discussion-thread structure, where users post a topic or question. Then other users participate in the discussion by posting their responses in the original post or starting another line of debate. A group of international student alumni founded STUDYABROAD in 2005 and, as of May 16th, 2021, it contains over 6,815 threads with over 14,000 entries and comments about student migration issues. Today, STUDYABROAD is one of the main sites where prospective Taiwanese international students consult before their migration and admission process.

To obtain a deeper understanding of how students experience, perceive, and navigate communication on the site, I used an ethnographic approach to collect "thick descriptions" of participant experience on STUDYABROAD (Beneito-Montagut, 2011; Garcia et al., 2009). Following the conventional ethnographic approach, I began informal observation on the forum to

obtain an insider look at the site without disturbing the community interaction. However, most veteran users of the forum acknowledged the "researcher-lurker" identity of my account. More systematic ethnographic work began in the summer of 2015 when I started to study the online-offline social life of Taiwanese international students. This study collects all online participant data for analysis regarding the dynamics and narratives around boundary-making in the online forum. Participating, communicating, and reciprocal exchange of information about studying abroad continued even when I was not studying the area, mirroring how a conventional offline ethnographer lives a dual life of both local and distance observer (Hallett & Barber, 2014).

STUDYABROAD predates any commercial social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) or social networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter), which makes it the most complete and representative online platform for Taiwanese international students and applicants to consult, exchange information and opinion, and interact with professional admission aids. To fully understand how members perceived the community and drew boundaries with each other, I supplemented observational data with 43 face-to-face interviews with participants on the forum. In the interviews, I asked the users to share with me their thoughts and experience on STUDYABROAD. I established a broad framework regarding different norms and dynamic identity types on the sites from these interviews. Following these conversations, I compared my transcripts with ethnographic notes. I later analyzed the corresponding codes and performed the analysis through the aid of MaxQDA, a computational qualitative software. Altogether, the multi-level fieldwork approach provided a holistic view of how individuals perceive and functionally connect to the online-sharing community.

FINDINGS

Seeking Reassurances

STUDYABROAD, as a community, values students who control their own fate and manage to acquire different resources while applying to schools abroad. Student participants praised individuals who shared information about their application process bluntly and honestly. At the same time, community members are active in teaching applicants how to acquire information selectively. Independence and self-learning are considered core characteristics for participating in the forum and appropriate socialization for becoming an international student.

In STUDYABROAD, solidarity is shown by expressing one's willingness to offer collaborations with old and new community members. One's commitment to engage with new applicants on the forum was perceived as a sign of loyalty to the community as a whole, as seen when members use words such as "supported" and "reinforced" to describe how forum members' experience sharing can make other students' journeys possible. One such example is a discussion thread posted in July 2015 titled: "Pay it Forward, Helping SOP, CV and Recommendation Letter," by alumni member H:

> I helped so many people here [PTT] and want to pay it forward to other people. If someone is applying for 2016, they should already be starting the process of preparing their documents. I can help with Business School, and M.S. MBA is not my expertise, but I can try my best if you need me to. Please send an I.M. [internal message]. Free of charge. Please help three more Taiwanese in the future if you did receive my help, (Post 20150706).

Therefore, this member attributed the reason for collaboration with the new applicants not to a desire for the individual success but their commitment to providing for the success of the whole Taiwanese international student community. Such sentiment can also be found in an interview with one of the alumni forum members, an assistant professor at a public university in Taiwan. He described his willingness to offer help in the forum as a "responsibility to the community", stating:

> I have been participating on this site for over a decade. Applying to a foreign school is hard work, emotionally and academically. You come to realize that you are not competing with your peers (Taiwanese) but helping each other out to overcome difficulties. It would help if you found someone you trust. I think sharing encourages us to talk about our experiences and problems without engaging in personal feelings. At least to me, this openness was essential during that time, knowing that I could turn to the community when I needed them, (Interview 20180908).

STUDYABROAD, an online community of international students, thus occupies a pivotal role in serving Taiwanese international students who face a significant milestone of success facing the uncertainty of admission. For new applicants and new members of the STUDYABROAD, these enthusiastic and motivated community veterans are essential information and experience resources. More importantly, the forum gives students the support, reassurance, and social networking opportunity that they may not get otherwise. For instance, a new applicant described how STUDYABROAD offered reassurances to her by supervising the process. Some students interviewed also mentioned that working with members of the forum reassured them because having an "expert" managing their application reduced their anxiety about making mistakes and ruining their future:

> When I was still thinking about studying abroad, and I was always looking for advice from people. My classmates and teachers suggested that I go to STUDYABROAD because there are many people's experiences and ideas, and I wanted to see what real study abroad is like. I did not know these people, but the information and experiences they shared gave me a better sense of who I am and what I want. It is good to have someone on top of everything helping you through the process, (Interview20170415).

The sense of reassurance was only one examples of the "organic" support students can get from seeking support from STUDYABROAD members. As Brooks and Waters (2011) described, the mobility of international students was also a "move for educational purposes and, in doing so, creates new networks and circuits of identity."(Brooks & Waters, 2011) While the consideration of the online international student community in terms of academic development has been a traditional focus, growing research has indicated that non-academic reasons such as migration, enhancement of personal network, and social transformation have become essential factors shaping international student mobility (Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016; Tran, 2016). The fact that STUDYABROAD became so integral to student mobility highlighted the long-suspected role of global education mobility in pursuing forms of capital conversion and expansion of their cultural repertoire.

Consistent with previous research, Taiwanese students and netizens I interviewed also identified several reasons to seek help from STUDYABROAD (Matzat, 2009; Ngai, 2019). In addition to the feeling of emotional connectedness to other members, students expressed a wide variety of rationales for using a site like STUDYABROAD. Information has played a central role in deciding to consult the online community in transnational admission processes. In STUDYABROAD, as with global education admission more generally, information sharing is linked to the opportunity for access. Those who provide information about studying abroad act as a

trustworthy "intermediary" because they can influence people's perceptions about studying abroad and offer or eliminate some of the available options:

> By the time I [was] applying, I did not think I relied much on my professors and friends. Even though some of them have certainly used it before, they either do not know my field or their experience was a long time ago. I might just look [online] by myself"(Interview20160402).

When preparing to study abroad, a student can hypothetically turn to anyone for help for information- schoolteachers, parents, relatives, and peers. However, when those individuals fail to deliver timely and helpful advice, online websites and communities like STUDYABROAD become critical.

Delegitimization of alternative sources

However, STUDYABROAD is, by no means, a homogenous group. Within the rapidly expanding online network, internal cleavage between student migrants is readily apparent; divisions often occur along lines of generation, political orientation, and, most frequently, qualifications. Those who seek commercial help and admission assistance in the online community, for example, are often discredited. According to their value system, such boundaries distinguish the "true" international student community group from the others. The veteran STUDYABROAD members, for example, distinguished the more legitimate altruistic sharing, separating it from the information-sharing practices of commercial agents:

> Commercial agents can do just as much as any of us. The only difference is that they have some "experience." By experience, I mean they could make an educated guess of where you might fit better. If you work hard enough, you could post a thread here, and the netizen will give all kinds of opinions. Altogether, we know more than your agent, (Post 20080706).

For community members, the practice of selling communication and services for a fee violates what they consider a crucial part of the online forum's standards. Moreover, the discussion foregrounds a belief that using commercial agents is deviant from the ideal practice of "becoming" international students. The forum's conventions often immediately label these individuals as lazy, and considers them to be lacking the ability to craft their own individualized pathways:

> PPT [STUDYABROAD] usually discourages people from using commercial agents. They say if you want to be an international student, you should not do it. [K: Why do you think so?] I think they have a point. Many say if you cannot manage the process yourself, you are not independent enough to go abroad. In my view, using commercial agents to help with preparing their documents is just how lazy and rich people buy their way into studying abroad, not earning their way, (Interview 20160402).

This quote from a Taiwanese graduate student studying in the U.S. indicates the internal conflicts between free sharing of information and the concept of commercial agents in cyberspace. Although both "sources of information" provide the necessity, only the forum is considered legitimate. Essentially, the association with third-party, commercial actors disqualifies individuals from being part of the community. Many of the interviewees later revealed that they worked with agents but felt too ashamed to share such experiences. One of these, a former STEM Ph.D. student, shared their thoughts concerning this aspect of the forum:

> They also said that if you cannot manage the process yourself, you are not independent enough to go abroad. In my view, this is only partly true. I would point out this: although some students are fortunate enough to have the resources available, some others require agents' help. Not all students

> using commercial agents are lazy rich people buying their way into studying abroad, (Post 20150514).

In turn, a cyber community such as STUDYABROAD facilities a collective understanding of international students that favors "earned privilege" instead of "inherited privilege" as they seek their way to gain access to study abroad.

Identifying a similar pattern, Shamus Khan (2010) discusses elite boarding school children having to defend their legitimate privileges through a show of hard work, concerted effort and, most importantly, independent creation (S. Khan & Jerolmack, 2013; S. R. Khan, 2012). If they hire someone to supply these activities, their cultivated privilege was permanently tainted, and they could no longer claim elite status since their effort would now be considered artificial. In a close examination, students in the online communities draw a distinction between those who "can" and those who "cannot." According to this logic, those who find help through commercial providers are an invasion of the free-sharing culture of the community while those who seek help from the forum deserve praise. In this context, discussion about agents carries a stigma because, once students employ third-party aid, they lose their claim to be elite. In such cases, the students' online community orchestrates its own social and moral punishment for students associated with economic actors. In their privileged position, the community members see themselves as performing a function that paid services cannot replace.

The distinction between elite-conferring qualities was clearly defined, along with the influence of cyberspace on individual educational trajectories, perceptions, and opportunities. Forum purists believe that those who choose to use commercial agents immediately lose their basis for claiming ability to craft individual pathways and master information-glut in a global education market. Furthermore, they derided commercial agents as opportunists and scavengers who profit by exploiting students and parents for lacking pertinent information. Despite the general vilification of paid services, there is a notable exception to the explicit negative associations surrounding commercialized practice and organizations: use of language institutions, editing, and tutoring services to facilitate chances in the admission process. My evidence suggests that learning and paying for services relating to language preparation and document refinement does not assume the same negative connotations. Instead, the practice of hiring a professional editor to enhance one's application documents is strongly encouraged. Rather than as a sign of laziness, the community found the practice of hiring a professional editor or language tutor to be legitimate and expected:

> Yeah. For American students, I sense that if they are trained from younger age till they are older, it is more likely for them to know the answers [for GREs]. However, it is challenging for us to get the same sensitivity to read and write correctly. Yeah. When reading Chinese, we are more at ease because we lived the culture, but English is…. [K: Much harder?] Yeah, much harder. Moreover, we do not get a good score. Of course, some people can and will get good grades. However, for the most part, we try to avoid finding whatever means that help us with the exams, (Interview 20181116).

In contrast to the discussion of commercial agents, discussion of both language institutions and professional editors is not penalized in the forum. In reviewing STUDYABROAD for debate of language institutions and professional editors, I found that discussion highlight the interaction, instead of downplaying its commercial nature, and the forum post discussed the price range, credibility of the editor/ institutions/ tutors at length. One veteran netizen user responded to a post

about hiring a commercial agent to express the opinion that language institutions and editors are more worthwhile:

> If your English is not good enough, spend some money on EssayEdge/ TopAdmit/ or language editor seems more helpful. I tried, and these are pretty valid. These editors are pretty good at pointing out "The American Way" of thinking and articulating your work, (Interview 20181116).

The informant's comments and the netizen's responses acknowledge that English- a cultural capital resource in a transnational setting in addition to being a useful communicative tool complicates the interplay between information, social privilege, and cyberspace. Cyberspace, particularly international student networks, both expands and limits how one can manage and capitalize on their cultivated English ability and their cultural capital. Understanding the reproduction of embodied language capital is inextricably linked to how interactions in cyberspace feature openness and timeliness, creating social meaning in mobility and the experience of living abroad. One could quickly get access to various forms of information and resources online, free or paid. But only those characteristics that one invests the effort to "cultivate" through living experience and the actual application and online interaction process can manifest an accepted sign of social privilege.

DISCUSSION

In recent years, social scientists in various disciplines have shown growing interest in how physical communities and social interactions "coexist" with online space (Hallett and Barter 2014). For people worldwide, digital space has become an immutable constant that influences how they live, interact, and relate to others across international borders (Madge et al., 2015; Ngai, 2019; Tran, 2016). As information becomes more transparent and options for education more diverse, the study author generated a research question regarding the educational process of international students. For a growing number of social scientists, the existence of online platforms marks a seminal opportunity for studies of international students—not only in terms of whether and how research generates and limits educational opportunities but also in discovering the function education still plays in defining international students' role in global higher education (Madge et al., 2015; Tse & Waters, 2013).

The world is experiencing a significant increase in international students' applications at most major universities (Madge et al., 2015). Most studies on international students focus on either the macro or the micro factors that prevail in such transnational movements (Chung et al., 2018; Madge et al., 2009). As a result, relatively few studies have discussed how social media's changing nature, a meso-level infrastructure connecting the macro and the micro factors, has renewed the global education institutional fields (Kim et al., 2009).

My fieldwork and analysis of the site and its participants reveal different modes of moralized boundaries among international students, particularly centered on ideas of individualism and merit (Chen & Berman 2022). I argue that the process of these students' identity-formation leads them to praise those whom they think are worthy and based on their signs of worthiness-independence, selfless sharing, and most importantly, loyalty to their elite peers. While performing this inculcation of value, the group also actively polices its membership by rejecting those without the same portfolio, particularly those hiring a third party to boost their applications. Notably, I showed that the boundary created between commercial and non-commercial help-seeking practices on the STUDYABROAD forums distinguishes different groups of students. In part, this study

foregrounds the pressing need to incorporate interdisciplinary conversation about the emergence and persistence of cyberspace in international student migration. Notably, as the global higher education sphere is slowly shifting online, a transnational "field" emerges that facilitates and de-centralizes the monopoly of conventionally defined boundaries between social, economic, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973). However, we have not fully understood how individuals socialize and interact with one another in such a nuanced, transnational, and virtual "field."

In this research, the manifestation and justification for differences of the privilege of "international students" for Taiwanese students and netizens go hand-in-hand—those who do or do not employ commercial agents, people who do or do not engage in charitable sharing information online, and those who are or are not willing to participate in the online group. Despite the fact that many of their de jure successes in admission could be considered upward mobility, the rules for the culturally elite nevertheless excludes these nonconforming students from being considered by the other students as de facto transnational elites (Chen & Berman 2022). Failing to conform to the norms diminishes ones' sense of valid elite-ness, particularly from the perspective of transnational mobility.

Through the discussion of this research, my paper contributes to three main conversations within this new emerging trend in literature about international student mobility and international migration literature in general.

First, I argue that, increasingly, the process of "becoming mobile" is associated with the migrant student's engagement with the social network that gives shape and meaning to the actions themselves. This work is among the few to date to consider the influence of the internet on the process, perceptions, and experience of student migration and on their in-group formation. Through this focus, I address how Taiwanese students and their perceptions of "studying abroad" enable construction of class distinction through "learning" the norms of free-sharing and openness within the online community. My work also seeks to respond to the sociology of education in considering the interaction between social privilege and spatial mobility (Findlay et al., 2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003). It further builds on the insight of Xiang and Shen (2009) and Baas (2016) on the emerging literature on the international and cosmopolitan elite subject. I argue that researchers should consider cyberspace as a critical "transnational social space" that facilitates and de-centralizes the monopoly of conventionally defined boundaries between social, economic, and cultural capital.

Additionally, my work builds on the theoretical debate between assimilation and transnationalism in studying the international student population. I contributed by describing how the benefit and prestige of Taiwanese students' perception of "studying abroad" was a product of active crafting of an individual subject, rather than simple assimilation or regression to a particular structural time/space context. I argue, along with Madge et al. (2015) and Baas (2016), that the conventional differentiation between "temporary" and "permanent" settlement on migration is not applicable for international students. Instead, my evidence renders more weight to the possibility that international students are "permanently mobile," constantly fluid, and dependent upon changes in cyberspace and other educational contexts (Baas 2016). I argue that this process is not only the product of the receiving country's regulations but rather the result of the proliferation of global resources, infrastructures, actors, and information. The result of this upheaval creates new social orders for mobile subjects and radicalizes the population that would otherwise remain stable,

motivating them to undertake the international journey. This trend is accelerating migrant assimilation to new destinations more generally.

Finally, my work also contributes to the much-needed study of the connection between online communities and the international student group. This work seeks to enhance the study of online communities and information sites for international students by investigating how the characteristics of online-community participation contribute to international students' construction of transnational subjects, boundaries of knowledge, and their class identity. Many previous studies have investigated the critical role of SNSs sites that influence students' choice of study abroad destination and their identification of educational trajectories (Forbush & Foucault-Welles 2015; Rui & Wang 2015). However, most studies assume that the knowledge and online discussion associated with international studies is a coherent space- one that unites students of similar interests and class positions. However, the evidence in this study reveals that online participation shows distinctive patterns following students' different trajectories, class aspirations, and transnational identity construction. Most significantly, individual netizens of the online forums use formal and informal cues to significantly influence students' consideration of what constitutes a legitimate, authoritative source of information. Far from being a neutral tool of information transmission, online participation creates an active social space for "doing a social class." International students re-affirm and delimit group boundaries, acquire proper perspective and cultural taste, as well as gather emotional support and create a transnational network with alumni students to assimilate to the proper class position. In other words, they adopt the perception that is required for them to "enter" the role of being international students.

The pattern seen in this study illuminates how an online network can socialize its members and create group boundaries. Those who are socially positioned to benefit from it- particularly those "worthy elites" who hold the cultural capital that provides, without necessary recognizing, their inherited positions will create boundaries and community with others. Those who did not conform are viewed derogatively and seen as failing to perform the community's dominant identity form. Overall, this paper's evidence supports the notion that identity-building and boundary-drawing in online sharing forums among Taiwanese students are highly dynamic. With international education becoming increasingly commercialized and market-oriented, it becomes more likely that student migrants will be increasingly sensitive to the drive to justify their status and identity according to the merit and the standards of the group with whom they associate (Golder & Macy, 2014b; Ngai, 2019; Tran, 2016).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

On the impact of cyberspace and online networks, most previous research generally agrees that the internet has played an increasingly significant role in global student higher education. However, opinions diverge regarding the pattern and motivation behind people's participation in those online spaces (Matzat, 2009). Some scholars believe that online sharing behaviors are motivated by an incentive to disseminate knowledge and information. Others are convinced that participation in online sites entrenches students' struggle to represent their identity and class distinctions.

One emerging challenge of the modern global education system is how academia deals with the burgeoning cultural and social trend of the "sharing economy" within academia. In the face of these new spatial-social dynamics, researchers now also face a new challenge in

redefining international students' decision to study abroad as not a single decision but as a "permanent mobility" decision that spans a more extended period of their adult life (Baas, 2016). Future research should examine how this process affects their arrival and adjustment to life as international students and how it affects job hunting after earning a degree in the destination country. Also, more comparative research is needed for distinguishing different ethnically and linguistically-specific cyberspace environments involving international students. Researchers would also find inspiration by examining the micro dynamics and educational stratification created by migrant students in online spaces, particularly their in-group orientation to ethnicity, class, sense of belonging, and self-naming behaviors (Gatson, 2011).

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp. 26-46
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.4309 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

The "Entrepreneurial University": A Catalyst for the Redevelopment of the Azerbaijani Higher Education System

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ABSTRACT

The notion of the "Entrepreneurial University" refers to a type of educational institution that enhances university-industry cooperation, applies innovative learning methods, and promotes multidisciplinary approaches. This article explores new challenges that Azerbaijani universities have faced as part of the Azerbaijani higher education transformation in the post-Soviet period. The research investigated the experiences of Western-style universities that have been building relationships with Western partners with substantial leadership experience in university innovation and, specifically, in establishing entrepreneurial universities. This paper argues that Azerbaijan's transition to a knowledge economy will require a substantive transformation of the country's higher education system and, as such, must develop the entrepreneurial university model that has been embraced as an effective response to the challenges of our time by some U.S. universities.

Keywords: entrepreneurial university, knowledge economy, university-business partnership, post-Soviet, higher education

Received June 7, 2021; revised October 26, 2021; accepted October 30, 2021

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that in today's vast knowledge economies, universities must constantly transform to stay competitive. Connections between industries and universities are necessary for universities to prepare students to successfully enter and succeed in the global economy. Their main goal must be to ensure that the education they provide reflects labor market conditions and sufficiently matches its standards. Universities need to be designed in such a way that enables graduates to succeed in reaching this target. In the knowledge economy, the university as an institution will remain at the center of the innovation system focused on the provision of human capital and to serve as a seedbed of entrepreneurship (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). The Fourth Industrial Revolution we are currently witnessing is fundamentally different from previous technological revolutions. It is characterized by a range of new technologies that combine the physical, digital, and biological worlds, to dramatically and concurrently impact all disciplines, economies, and industries (Schwab, 2017).

This reality reveals that insufficiently prepared universities must act urgently to develop a new system of higher education that will manage to transform the existing factory-style format, and make it more responsive to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Toffler & Alvin, 1980). Azerbaijan presents such a case. The existing university structure in Azerbaijan and other post-Soviet countries needs to transform itself into a market-oriented model, like the United States, if it is not only to remain competitive but also to thrive. This means that Azerbaijani universities will have to fulfil the mission of being leaders in innovation and accelerators of economic development. As the range and impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution expands and global competition intensifies, the modern phenomenon of the entrepreneurial university will play an increasingly important role in fostering economic growth. Currently, the employment skills that the markets demand are changing. Along with that, social and emotional skills are becoming particularly important. The Azerbaijani higher education system and labor market is no exception. The purpose of this study was to explore some of these new challenges Azerbaijani universities have faced in their transformation from the post-Soviet period, and to compare and analyze the approaches of Azerbaijani universities with regard to innovation and the establishment of entrepreneurial universities.

Two main questions were thus addressed:

1. Will Azerbaijani universities be able to identify trends correctly during the move from a traditional classical model to a digital age?
2. How will the Azerbaijani higher education system transform over the next 15-20 years due to the economic, social, and technological changes that are taking place?

Since Azerbaijan's transition to a knowledge economy will require a substantive transformation of the country's higher education system, this study sought to conceptualize the entrepreneurial university model in Azerbaijan as an effective response to the challenges presented by today's global economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Entrepreneurial University Concept in the Literature

Entrepreneurial universities can be understood as a myriad of things, but all of them must attract external funds through patents and other forms of cooperation with the private sector

(Etzkowitz, 1983); establish business ventures via their faculty (Chrisman, et al., 1995); create innovations that drive the business sector (Clark, 1998); deliver services to the knowledge industry (Williams, 2003); help its members become entrepreneurs (Röpke, 1998); and engage in the commercialization and commoditization of their research product (Jacob, et al. 2003). The entrepreneurial mindset that operationalizes this notion for universities means they need to engage in promoting economic development and interaction of their faculty and students in concert with local and regional business and industries. That level of interaction can be a major route for human capital flow between the public and private sectors (Douglass, 2016, p. 68).

The role of universities in today's economies is largely assessed by knowledge-based capital formation, such as Research & Development (R&D) data, software, and patents (Kaloudis et al. 2019). Universities are expected to play an important role in enhancing innovation, entrepreneurship, and structural changes (Perkmann & Walsh, 2007). Entrepreneurial universities already play a vital role in boosting innovation and business competitiveness in the economy. Research and the products that their innovation produces in the United States have played a significant role in the economic growth and prosperity of the country (Cohen, Nelson & Walsh 2002; Mowery et al. 2003; Lester, 2005).

Considering the innovation boosting role of the entrepreneurial universities in modern economic growth, transforming traditional universities to the entrepreneurial university model require the following:

- effective realization of intellectual capability;
- an advanced innovation system;
- financial resources ensuring the highest quality of education and scientific research;
  stability of educational services and products of an intellectual nature in the global marketplace;
  capitalization of knowledge;
- interdependence between university, industry, and government (Clark, 1998; Henry, 2008; Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017; Bok, 2003; Audretsch, 2014; Subotzky, 1999; Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Crow & Dabars, 2015; Pospelova, 2017; Kuzminov, Semenov & Froumin, 2015).

The new university model focused on entrepreneurialism seeks to redesign higher education according to the main demands of the knowledge economy. That is, to develop an entrepreneurial orientation guiding its mission. In implementing this goal, universities must not only change their infrastructure, but also form a new management style that can support the components of the university's competitiveness formula noted in the points above.

Due to ever-changing economic and social conditions, an important point here is to understand that the challenge for education is that teachers need to prepare their students for a future for which much-needed technologies and jobs have not yet even been created (Schleicher, 2011). A crucial ingredient for the development of the entrepreneurial university is therefore that it serves as a bridge between the knowledge sector and the economy; it must be market-oriented to not only what the employment sector requires today, but to what it will value *in the future*. The modern university must therefore provide opportunities for graduates "to gain skills and knowledge that make them adaptable in the labor market" (Douglass, 2016, p. 67). A newly developed university platform must offer a teaching process and a set of research tools that can be

used by various disciplines to acquire new knowledge and share adaptable skills and competencies, that is able to adapt to the new knowledge society's demands for education.

The new paradigm of society that ensures the integrity of the innovation development process is most fully described in the model that has been presented by H. Etzkowitz's 'triple helix' concept. The concept of the 'triple helix' refers to the mutually beneficial partnering of university, government, and business, and argues that industrial society was based on government–industry relations, and knowledge society is based on university–industry–government interactions. The university of the future, in this view, is an entrepreneurial institution with a third mission, beyond teaching and research, aimed also at transferring technology and being a proactive contributor to regional innovation (Etzkowitz, et al., 2000). According to David B. Audretsch, "the emergence of the entrepreneurial university was the need to create new interdisciplinary fields and research areas devoted to providing solutions to specific societal problems and challenges, along with a series of mechanisms and institutions dedicated to facilitating the spillover of knowledge from the university to firms and non-profit organizations" (2014, p. 320). Moreover, as Clark (2004) notes, entrepreneurial universities play a vital role in promoting and fostering economic growth and the "state-led pathway is clearly not one appropriate for change in complex universities in the fast-moving environments of the 21st century (p.182)".

University-industry-state interaction, in other words the 'triple helix' model, seeks to create the basis for the development of high-quality human capital in Azerbaijani universities. Due to the lack of strategic planning so far in this area, however, a tripartite interaction has not yet taken place in most universities in Azerbaijan. In most cases, universities show an interest in obtaining patents, but they have not considered it necessary to commercialize and apply new technologies. As a result, these universities have been unable to formulate 'rules of the game' in the triple formula of the education-research-labor market as advocated by the Etkzowitz` model. The research infrastructure of Azerbaijani universities remains a Soviet holdover, with few exceptions. As a result, Azerbaijani universities continue to face challenges to adapting to the rules of the 'triple helix' model to successfully form their own version of the entrepreneurial university.

RESEARCH METHOD

The main data sources for this paper were interviews with experts, content analysis of existing documents, and surveys conducted in Azerbaijan, a mixed methods approach to ensure the most comprehensive coverage. Interviews were conducted with researchers who had been working in the education sector for many years, which also increased the credibility of the survey data. Interviews with academics and private sector actors were conducted via Skype calls. The research subjects were asked a) about the state of Azerbaijani universities from the perspective of entrepreneurial integration; b) what they perceived to be existing obstacles to developing the entrepreneurial university model; and c) policy advice for addressing these obstacles. The interviewees, who each gave the first author express oral permission to be identified by name, included Prof. Adalat Muradov, Rector of Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC); Assoc Prof. Anar Valiyev, Dean of School of Public and International Affairs ADA University; Hamlet Isakhanli, Professor at Khazar University; and Salahaddin Khalilov, Professor at East-West Center, respectively.

To gain yet further insight into the university–industry interaction in Azerbaijan, we also conducted interviews with Mammad Karim, who is in charge of incubating start-ups through attracting venture capital. He is also founder of Khazar Ventures, an investment network. We also interviewed Bakhtiyar Aslanbayli, vice president of British Petroleum regarding necessary steps to move forward in developing the entrepreneurial university model in Azerbaijan. Karim is a member of the board of trustees at Baku State University and vice president of Caspian Communications and the advocacy unit of British Petroleum. In selecting diverse interview subjects, the researchers were able to examine the issue of university entrepreneurialism from a wide range and divergent angles.

Next, a survey on the notion of the Entrepreneurial University was conducted among academic staff at four (4) Azerbaijani universities. The survey method allowed the researchers to define the problem from inside the university, to illustrate the overall view of the current concept of the university, and to fully examine the potential for reform to a more entrepreneurial vision. The survey carried out in late 2018 records the responses at four (4) big public universities that account for more than 37% of the total share of students in Azerbaijan (MoE, 2019). The survey sample included 421 teaching staff in total, made up of 130 teaching staff from ATU, 103 teaching staff from BSU, 53 teaching staff from UNEC, and 138 teaching staff from MSU. This method enabled the researchers to identify the main differences between central and regional universities and their development of a new university identity.

The sample of universities in the study were precisely selected for their specialization: Baku State University (BSU) has a high-profile law faculty; the Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) has a distinguished Economics faculty; and the Azerbaijan Technical University (ATU) has a notable Engineering faculty. In addition to having distinguished professors and alumni, these Azerbaijani HEIs are also the most integrated with the Western education system through their scientific and academic programs and the grants supporting them. UNEC, for example, can already be seen as a leading university in how it exemplifies a viable model of the university-industry partnership concept. BSU, also mentioned above, is already where extensive scientific studies and projects have been undertaken and is considered well on its way to becoming a significantly ranked research university. Finally, for the purposes of this study, Mingachevir State University (MSU) was selected as a moderate regional Higher Education Institution (HEI) to exemplify the countrywide results.

We employed quantitative analysis to assess the level of research, acknowledgment of the University 3.0 concept, and management style in Azerbaijani universities. In order to characterize the management style, we tracked the internationalization of the faculties across the country’s top higher education institutes in view of the age structure of its university staff. These staff-age densities were determined by the following categories: below age fifty, age fifty to seventy, and over seventy years old. The age structure data repeats cross-sectional data across Azerbaijani universities and compares the change in the age structure of the facilities between 2015 and 2017. Due to the absence of some data points, however, we could not include further time periods that would have given us a better grasp of the evolution of the age structure in Azerbaijani universities.

Additionally, we also conducted quantitative analysis on the state of research at Azerbaijani HEIs by looking at the rankings of Azerbaijani HEIs and the R&D spending as a share of the country’s gross domestic product. As such, we compared Azerbaijan's GDP share of

R&D with other post-soviet countries and OECD members. We then elaborated on this regional and international level comparison for the state of research in Azerbaijan by looking at the national and international patent applications and corresponding H-index rankings. Finally, we incorporated the qualitative survey responses addressing the importance of the entrepreneurial university concepts into our overall analysis.

RESULTS

Evolution of Azerbaijani Higher Education Institutions since the Collapse of Soviet Union

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan inherited a Soviet educational system that had long faced problems and embarked on reforms aimed at improving the education sector and significantly enhancing its quality. “Higher education (at that period) reflected the ideological and industrial aims of the Soviet regime and functioned to meet its socio-economic needs” (Ahn, 2016, p.8). Azerbaijan had been left not only with teaching materials, textbooks, and pedagogy from former times, but also with thousands of instructors, faculty, and researchers trained under the former system. Moreover, the absence of strategy to work for the market economy led to a situation wherein HEIs produced graduates unequipped to meet the new demands of their country’s quickly changing economic system and labor markets.

Since the mid-1990s, adapting the system of education in Azerbaijani to the needs of the modern marketplace has been one of competing necessities and deficiencies. Following a strategy to modernize its HEI system, in the mid-2000s Azerbaijan joined the European Bologna process (Crosier & Parveva, 2013). As a participant in Bologna, Azerbaijan contributed to the modernization of its university education system, however to an admittedly very limited extent. Although a two-tier system in higher education had been introduced in Azerbaijan in 1993, only after signing the Bologna Declaration did it start to implement the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

Despite the positive aspects and impact of that move, joining the process also created a myriad of challenges, particularly for the higher education sector. By the middle of the next decade, the national report on Azerbaijan’s progress in integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) revealed that although the country had taken a significant leap forward in the higher education sphere, numerous gaps in the implementation of Bologna reforms also became apparent (BFUG, Azerbaijan Report, 2012-2015).

Azerbaijani universities have not rapidly overcome many of the challenges left in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet education system. Kuzminov, Semenov and Froumin (2015) argue that the formal structure of Soviet universities has stayed virtually unchanged since Soviet times. The industry affiliation of universities has remained at a formal level, reflecting the reality today that acute change is still needed to transform and replace the legacy of the Soviet mindset in Azerbaijani HEIs with a wholly new strategic view. To put a finer point on it, the emerging Entrepreneurial University trend has not yet been realized. As Farsi, Imanipour and Salamzadeh (2012) state, “the existing universities are more staying at the second generation and are just in the transit era” (p.197). Most Azerbaijani universities continue to implement traditional higher education practices and procedures rather than adapting broader socio-economic development and transitions the rest of the country is experiencing. While the Academy has the potential to change, to do so requires it to grasp the moment and seize the opportunity.

As noted in the Education Development Strategy (EDS) of the Republic of Azerbaijan (EDS, 2013), universities in Azerbaijan were established on a traditional (classical) basis, which does not provide opportunities for new fields that have developed in the 21st century. Azerbaijani universities therefore must embrace the concept of entrepreneurialism if they are to meet the modern demands of the economy head on. If they hope to sustain skilled human capital development in the whirlwind of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, they have no time so spare. However, doing so in many cases is exceedingly challenging, but not impossible. Ultimately, successful university reforms require new frameworks that can contribute to and promote technological and socio-economic developments of any nation.

Existing Challenges of Azerbaijani Universities in the Transition to the Entrepreneurial Model Research at Universities

So far, development in the HE system in Azerbaijan has focused on improving the teaching skills and competencies of educational staff rather than on transforming the broader institutions themselves into research universities. However, large-scale transformation is crucial for the development not just of universities themselves and their integration with the third mission of the higher education sector but is also critically important for the overall development of Azerbaijan itself. Transitioning traditional, teaching-based universities into research-based ones remains a significant challenge for the higher education sector in Azerbaijan.

One way to measure the innovation-creating capacity of a university is to look at its ability to secure patents, an indicator that can be used to assess whether HEIs and their countries are successful at transforming public research into broader societal innovation. According to research by Clarivate Analytics (CA), 364 scientific results were patented between 1999 and 2017 as indicator for the commercialization of scientific results in Azerbaijan. Table 1 below shows that in patent applications, Azerbaijan had significantly lower results than its regional peer Belarus and to a lesser extent Georgia.

Table 1: Patent Applications by Selected Countries (WIPO, World Intellectual Property Indicators of 2017 and 2019, https://www.wipo.int/publications/)

Country/Year	National application		PCT international applications by origin	
	016	018	2016	2018
Azerbaijan	*63*	*71*	*4*	*15*
Belarus	21	47	14	23
Georgia	71	60	13	6
Bulgaria	41	98	58	60
Austria	315	207	1422	1475

In 2016, Azerbaijan had 163 national patent applications, compared to 513 patent applications by Belarus and 274 applications by Georgia. Although Azerbaijani patent

applications for 2018 increased to 171, they were still below the indicators noted in the other two countries. The National Aviation Academy (5 patents) and Baku State University (4 patents) had the highest IP registrations in 2017 in Azerbaijan (CA, 2018).

Table 2: **Quality of Research is Relatively Low Compared to Other Countries- H Index Ranking (Scimago Journal & Country Rank, 2018 https://www.scimagojr.com/countryrank)**

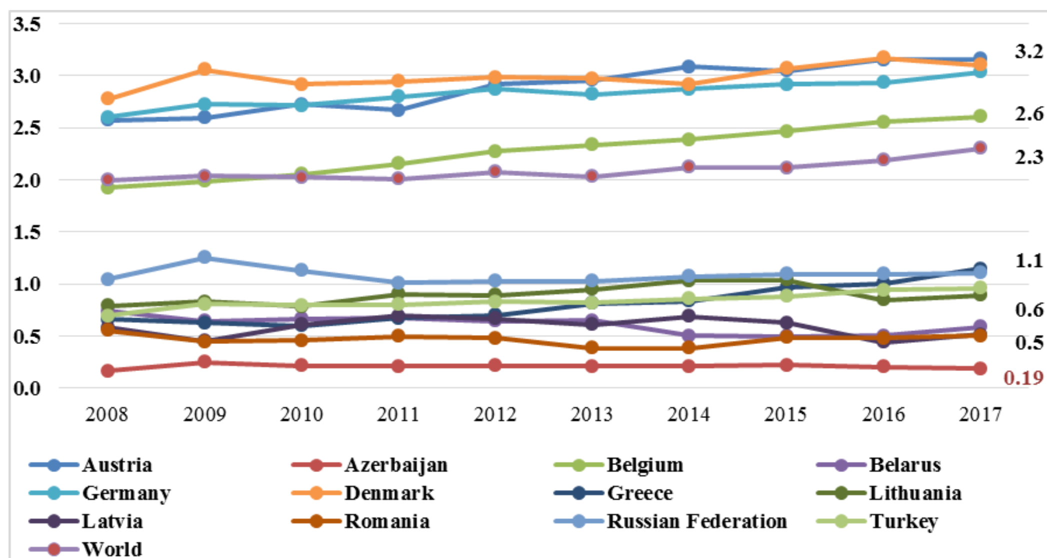
Rank	Country	Citable documents	Citations	Self-citations	Citations per document	H index
1	United States	570104	528530	268883	0.77	2222
2	China	569227	399135	273126	0.67	794
3	United Kingdom	172148	187806	60392	0.89	1373
4	Germany	158437	154187	54430	0.85	1203
11	Russian Federation	95359	34723	17562	0.35	540
53	Slovakia	7757	4561	1128	0.55	263
59	Slovenia	5729	5616	922	0.9	278
65	Kazakhstan	3606	1917	399	0.5	95
66	Lithuania	3523	3413	596	0.9	203
71	Estonia	2975	3980	663	1.18	255
79	Georgia	1837	3098	359	1.47	172
92	*Azerbaijan**	*1235*	*1569*	*211*	*1.21*	*103*
		1053	*478*	*148*	*0.44*	*87*
108	Uzbekistan	581	233	43	0.38	86
115	Mongolia	462	277	37	0.56	91
117	Moldova	419	249	39	0.51	106
132	Kyrgyzstan	278	719	37	2.29	67
207	Turkmenistan	9	4	0	0.36	26

Further, publication of articles in impact factor journals can also be used as a metric of the success of research universities and an initial step for Azerbaijani universities to adapt the entrepreneurial university model. Azerbaijani universities have managed to get a significant number of publications into journals with impact factor metrics. In 2018, for example, Azerbaijan was first among the South Caucasus countries in terms of the quantity of publications. Nevertheless, the quality of research remains low compared to other countries. According to the H-index (Table 2), Azerbaijan ranks 92nd (albeit up from 113th in 2017) based on the quality (impact) of its worldwide research productivity. However, it still lags behind its regional peers of similar or smaller size, such as Slovakia (53rd), Slovenia (59th), Estonia (71st), and Georgia (79th) (WB, 2018).

Another metric for observing innovative development by universities is by measuring funds that have been allocated for scientific research. Government funding for universities should be directed toward enhancing the entrepreneurial university. However, in Azerbaijan, the majority of governmental funds, about 70 percent, are spent on salaries since available funds are limited. As a result, conducting new generation research is hampered by old tools, lack of funding, an unfavorable environment for entrepreneurial activities, and a lack of new research thinking. These

are some of the main reasons why research conducted in Azerbaijani universities is not competitive, as noted in the World Bank Report (World Bank, 2018).

Figure 1: Gross Expenditures in Azerbaijan on R&D as a Percentage of GDP in Comparison with Select Countries from 2008-2017 (Source: WB, World Development Indicators)



Note. Azerbaijan spends less as a share of GDP on R&D compared to countries of a similar size.

As indicated in Figure 1, analysis of the levels of spending on research and development (R&D) by the institutions of higher education in Azerbaijan and OECD countries demonstrates the relative weaknesses of Azerbaijani universities' position in the R&D sector. In 2017, the percentage of Research and Development spending totaled 0.19 percent of GDP in Azerbaijan. This is exceptionally low compared to the allocation of funds toward research and development in OECD countries. Azerbaijan even falls significantly behind another post-Soviet country Belarus, which allocated 0.6 percent of its GDP toward R&D.

However, there are signs of progress. UNEC, one of the leading Azerbaijani universities in economics, in 2015 established a wage system linked to the scientific performance of its faculty, giving productive professors monthly payments several times more than their base salary. As a result, 89.7% of published articles by UNEC faculty during 1991-2020 and 80.1% of published articles by UNEC faculty during 1975-2020 correspond to 2015-2020 (WoS, 2020). These figures indicate that when the right kinds of incentive are offered, Azerbaijani HEIs has the potential to increase its research output and thereby strengthen the potential for a tangible transition to an entrepreneurial university model. However, HEIs in Azerbaijan need to create and embrace this vision for a transition to the entrepreneurial model; once it does it can reap the fruits of the promise this new model holds.

Nonetheless, Azerbaijani universities have not yet adequately understood their new mission, in which the development of knowledge should be a driving force for economic advancement. The potential for innovation in higher education in Azerbaijan is constrained by its

traditional theoretical, less applied research tendencies, which severely limit the prospects for commercialization and more energetic collaboration between its universities and industries to capitalize on greater opportunities for innovation (A. Valiyev, personal communication, November 20, 2019). According to 2020 university research rankings, Azerbaijan ranks 82nd of 131 countries in the Global Innovation Index of 2020 (WIPO, 2020). One metric in the report, knowledge, and technology output, has Azerbaijan ranking 118 among 120 economies, clearly highlighting one of the country's primary weaknesses. The low level of collaboration between universities and industry in innovation opportunities shows that the most important link for the entrepreneurial university model, to say the least, is out of place.

None of the HEIs from Azerbaijan were included in The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings in 2020, which measures HEIs` performance through teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook (THE, 2020). In the QS World University Rankings in 2020, Baku State University and Azerbaijan State Economic University (UNEC) were the only Azerbaijani HEIs to be listed among the 1001+ institutions ranked (QS, 2020).

Management Style. Rankings, however one views them, undoubtedly play a crucial role in attracting research investment and a highly skilled academic labor force into the university sector of any country. A university's ranking is important for attracting private funding. Broadly speaking and with some notable exceptions, primarily universities that have substantial resources and a faculty with global experience and impressive publications are listed. One of the key indicators among well ranked universities is the percentage of foreign teachers and students; instructors who have worked abroad are also considered important for providing quality education (ARWU, 2020; QS, 2020; THE, 2020). In contrast, a university with a substantial number of holdover faculty from the Soviet system and considered "too old to teach," research, or analyze modern Western science can mark an HEI as a non-developed university.

Table 3: The Number of Students and Teachers from Different Universities Who Participated in the Exchange Programs

	BSU	ASPU	GSU	ADAU	ASOIU	ATU	BEU	AUAC
Number of teachers invited within the last several years to foreign countries	130	17	4	40	16	18	3	5
Number of teachers invited from abroad to work	41	4	3	7	14	3	0	1
Number of teachers taking part in the exchange programs	18	3	15	58	8	2	13	5
Number of students taking part in the exchange programs	19	4	33	90	21	24	18	23
Number of foreign students	444	224	41	161	323	190	126	554

Table 3 indicates the ratio of teachers and students by different universities who participated in exchange programs abroad. These figures illustrate the home countries of the teachers who are invited from abroad, as well as the foreign students enrolled in Azerbaijani universities. It is evident that the number of invited academic staff in Azerbaijan is very low, even 0 at some universities. Important to note is that since the BSU has a large student enrollment, a higher number of invited teachers from abroad does not necessarily indicate it is in a relatively

better situation. The number of students in exchange programs is also at a very low level, which highlights the low level of international cooperation among Azerbaijani HEIs.

Another critical issue with Azerbaijan's HEIs is the lack of young forward-thinking personnel, and therefore the lack of a competitive environment. Most of the university administrators surveyed about the innovation ecosystem at their universities indicated difficulties introducing major changes within their universities because senior faculty reacted negatively to proposed changes. This is likely due to aging personnel and faculty, and few international exchange programs with Azerbaijani universities.

Lisyutkin and Froumin (2015) argue, "many faculty members perceive structural development and increasing internal competition as a threat to their job security. Indirect quantitative indicators of this factor are the average age of professors, the average length of tenure, and the proportion of graduates studying under professors younger than 45 years"(p. 455). This is the same situation at most Azerbaijani universities, where the problems of poor instructional quality and insufficient numbers of instructors are compounded by the unwillingness of universities to offer a competitive environment to their staff. A summary of the age structure of Azerbaijani universities appears in Table 4, below.

Table 4: Summary of the Age Structure of Pedagogic Staff at Azerbaijani Universities

	BSU		ASPU		GSU		ADAU		ASOIU		ATU		BEU		AUAC	
Age structure of the scientific pedagogic staff of HEI	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017
Below 50 years	-	35%	33%	36%	56%	54%	42%	43%	20%	27%	23%	25%	-	83%	32%	35%
Between 50 and 70 years	-	51%	49%	49%	25%	35%	43%	46%	57%	53%	54%	55%	-	15%	47%	48%
Over 70 years	-	14%	18%	15%	19%	11%	15%	11%	23%	20%	23%	20%	-	2%	21%	17%
Total number of teachers	-	1080	702	720	555	548	934	839	600	583	667	610	-	246	543	511

As Table 4 indicates, the importance of youth in the age structure of scientific and pedagogical staff of Azerbaijani universities had been growing since 2015. At both the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University (ASPU) and the Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU), the two largest universities in the country, this difference is more tangible. Even in Ganja State University (GSU), which is considered a provincial university, this difference has gradually changed in favor of youth. Nonetheless, the ratio of faculty under 50 is still significantly low, around 30% at most universities. Since the majority of staff over age 50 are

alumni of the Soviet system, it will be additionally challenging to transition their institutions to the entrepreneurial university model.

Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) and Start-up Activities

Within the entrepreneurship ecosystem, Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) are responsible for the commercialization of research output. TTO's are a substantial phenomenon for the promotion of the state-university-industry partnership exemplified in the "triple helix" model. The World Bank (WB, 2018) explains, "TTOs are not only responsible for the legal procedures related to patenting and licensing, but they also help to define the host institution's commercialization strategy"(p.21). Through strong leadership, outreach, and encouragement to apply for commercialization grants, TTOs at regional and also more renowned schools involve faculty and support their universities to move toward the entrepreneurial culture.

However, when TTOs are inserted into the traditional academic culture, like the one in Azerbaijani HEIs, they may encounter indifference or even resistance (M. Karim, personal communication, November 24, 2019).

Table 5: **Technology Transfer (TT) and Innovation Promotion by State and HEIs in Azerbaijan, WBG, Azerbaijan Human Capital Forum, December 19-21, 2018.**

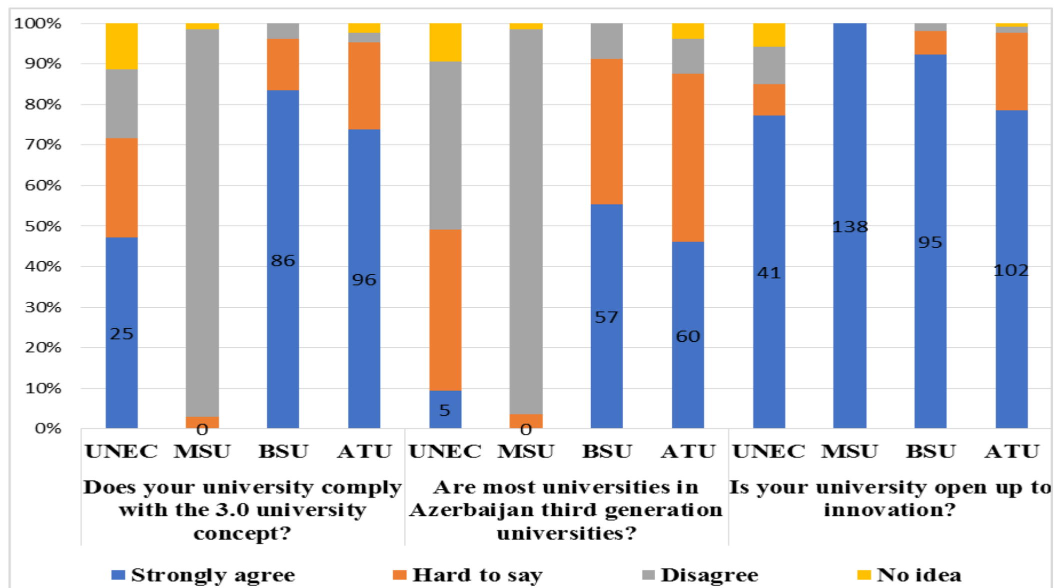
The State	HEIs
Traditional TT facilities are not widely developed	No university has assigned funding or specialists to implement expensive IP registration
Current legal framework does not efficiently support IP rights	TTOs at HEIs play a negligible role in actual commercialization of research
There is no effective linkage between R&D and private sectors	Universities and research institutes with potential to produce valuable IP do not have a practical platform for disclosure and allocation of IP rights or experience to commercialize their innovations

Despite several Azerbaijani universities--such as the Azerbaijan State University of Economics, the University of Architecture and Construction, and the Azerbaijan Technical University--having formed TTOs, they have yet to effectively carry out their mandate to support research commercialization. Since they perform poorly in commercializing inventions, there is no single funding allocated for universities to accomplish expensive international IP registrations (WB, 2018).

The challenges that face the work of TTOs at Azerbaijani universities affect the innovative aspirations of their university ecosystem, which is related to their efforts to engage in start-up activity. In terms of the quantity of start-ups, Azerbaijan ranks 67th among 202 countries. Despite this relatively high ranking, Azerbaijan has both wide scale deficiencies but also great potential opportunities for robust development of start-up activity within its higher education

sector. Professor K. Imanov stresses that incubators and accelerators, funding and venture funds, at universities create a supportive environment for student start-ups (2019, p. 72). In this environment, universities increase their capacity to go beyond their traditional roles and more effectively develop innovative technologies. However, the commercialization of the knowledge produced at Azerbaijani universities is not yet sufficiently fostering their innovation incentives.

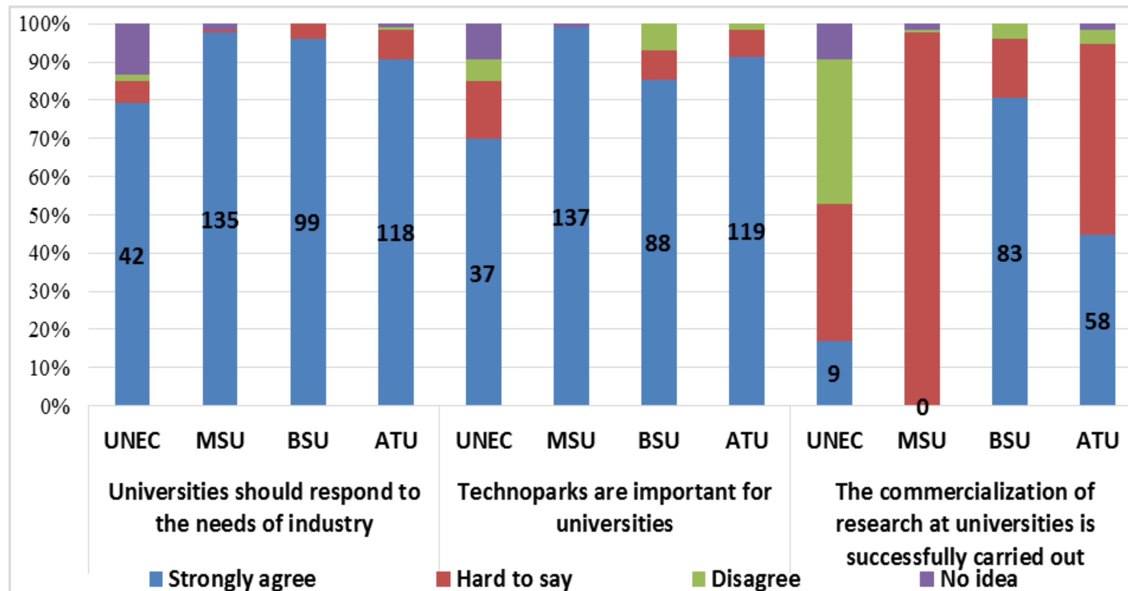
Figure 2 ***University 3.0:*** **Results of the Survey Regarding University-Industry Partnerships of Local Universities**



The University 3.0 model adds knowledge commercialization to the education and research missions of HEIs. To further measure the existing challenges involved in transitioning to University 3.0, we conducted a survey of academic personnel to query their transition to the Entrepreneurial University model. The main objective of our survey was to investigate ways that local universities understood the idea of University 3.0 and adapted, or failed to adapt, to this process. Additionally, it aimed to assess the level of University-Industry Partnership and how to upgrade to a University 3.0 concept. “Strongly agree” responses to the question, “Does your university comply with the University 3.0 concept?” by BSU and ATU were very high, whereas teaching staff at UNEC also believed that their university complies with this concept. However, MSU faculty believed that their university does not adhere to the University 3.0 concept.

Responses were similar to the question, “Most universities in Azerbaijan are third generation universities?” Whereas BSU and ATU agreed, MSU fully believed that they had not switched to being a 3rd generation university. As a response to the third question, all four universities believed they were open to innovation.

Figure 2: Results of the Survey Regarding University-Industry Partnerships of Local Universities



Note. Numbers indicate the 'strongly agree' responses. Source: Author 1.

The results of the survey reveal that these universities are aware of the importance of techno parks and industries for universities and for the knowledge economy. BSU and ATU were able to commercialize most of their research. MSU, as a proxy for regional HEIs, could not commercialize at all, however. It is obvious that MSU could be taken as a proxy for regional HEIs, which do not have capacity to be third generation universities and have little understanding of the University 3.0 concept. Despite this, both MSU and other regional universities are open to innovation. In summary, although academic personnel were somewhat aware of the importance of innovation and the entrepreneurial university model, a significant share of the academic personnel do not yet believe that HEIs in Azerbaijan comply with the concept of University 3.0.

What needs to be done?

In the higher education literature, it is broadly accepted that universities generally have teaching (1st) and research (2nd) missions, and over time may also develop social, enterprise, and innovative (3rd) missions (Zomer & Benneworth, 2011). In light of this developmental process, adapting an entrepreneurial mission is vital for Azerbaijani universities. As Imanov (2019) has argued, entrepreneurial universities must play leading roles in the modernization of their societies and in their successful transformation to knowledge economies. Creating a suitable environment for an entrepreneurial system to thrive requires adopting certain, carefully considered global trends. Taking the suggestions of the above-mentioned academics in the Azerbaijani Higher Education system into account, we grouped these trends into themes summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Global Trends in Higher Education and Rebuilding Azerbaijani Universities (Valehov, J., 2017)

#	Themes	Trends
1	**The globalization of HE**	Teacher and student mobility are increasing. Universities are opening campuses abroad. Highly qualified personnel are being recruited, domestically and internationally. The role of the English language in the learning process is increasing.
2	**Establishment of non-traditional educational institutions**	Corporate universities, specialized research centres, and online universities are being created.
3	**Diversification of financial sources and strengthening of competition**	The share of the state in financing and profitability is declining. Aggressive fundraising campaigns are making competition for financial support more difficult.
4	**Increased focus on interdisciplinary subjects**	Departments are redesigning and intensifying their interdisciplinary activities.
5	**Increased links between universities and foreign partners**	The role of cooperation with the economic sectors and the business community is increasing.
6	**The 'academic direction' and the changing concept of being a student**	There needs to be an increase in 'digital' students and a modification toward online education. The transition from the traditional higher education pyramid (bachelor - master - PhD) into a system that offers different diffused academic degrees must be smoother. Investment and the demand for specialization and additional education needs to increase. There need to be changes in student acceptance criteria and greater inclusiveness. The salaries of teachers, professors, administrators, and partners must be based on an evaluation of their work.
7	**The professionalism of HE Leadership**	There need to be more differentiated categories of teaching staff (research, teaching, practice, and general skills). There needs to be greater involvement of professional managers to support institutional strategy, planning and other key processes.

Another important factor in the entrepreneurial development of the Azerbaijani university sector is related to the role that intellectual property (IP) plays. This role has changed to some degree in today's modern Society of Knowledge. It must also be stressed that within universities, innovative centres, such as business incubators, and scientific-technological and innovative clusters need to be created (B. Aslanbayli, personal communication, December 12, 2019). Such structures both boost innovation and serve as primary vehicles for changes in environments undergoing transformation.

Finally, transformation also requires students to develop skills for the emerging green economy, not only to augment the old business model but also because their innovation and creativity can develop sustainable enterprises (Wagner, 2012, p.3). However, for that to happen, the abilities and skills of educators require switching from a 'brown economy' to a 'green economy' (Bapna & Talberth, 2011).

Considering the contextual elements of Azerbaijani HEIs, recommended actions in support of adapting to this modern, changing environment are listed in the table below. Considering the varying nature of the proposed policies, we categorized recommended actions according to the expected main actor in the implementation of the policy.

Table 7: Distribution of Recommended Actions by Implementing Policy Actors

Government	**Private Sector Actors & University Collaboration**
Wide implementation of STEAM models as early as middle school.	Promoting science and technology parks under the lead of large universities with ready-to-use infrastructure and facilities, through a substantive amount of support and incentives for investors (e.g., free-of-charge staff insurance, tax exemption).
Improving teaching skills and competencies of educational staff.	Spending on R&D to develop a modern infrastructure, especially in universities so they can create an entrepreneurial landscape, TTOs, start-ups, incubation centres, techno parks and other hubs of innovation.
Government & University Collaboration	**Private Sector Actors & Government & University Collaboration**
Improving the efficiency of clusters to create an efficient and progressive entrepreneurship function of Azerbaijani universities and redesigning the curriculum.	Transferring technology to the labor market through licensing new discoveries of the university by a company that will generate a return from it.
Connecting with international research networks and encouraging and incentivizing research partnerships.	Encouraging higher education institutions to engage in distance education programs (especially in social sciences, such as business and education) for privately funded or company-sponsored students and workers who cannot attend scheduled classes.

As we indicated above, the funding of the R&D projects and the sustainable research environment is carried out by the private sector in modern economies. Since some policy

implementations requires governmental legislation (such as distance education for company workers and students), we created separate categories of Private Sector Actors & University Collaboration and Private Sector Actors & Government & University Collaboration. Further, some of the policy actions advised herein are under the responsibility of the government with regard to the preparation of university academic staff and preparation of students for modern university curricula. Considering the higher education environment in Azerbaijan, actions like redesigning the curriculum and incentivizing research activity needs government stimulus and legislation to support it. However, it is also worth mentioning that as these integration efforts and innovations grow in Azerbaijani HEIs, their sustainability will need to be maintained through the involvement of private sector actors and the significant incentives they must also provide.

LIMITATIONS

A key limitation of this paper is that while we collected survey data to illustrate the level of university–industry partnerships, these surveys provided the opinions of HEI staff members only, rather than possibly more objective voices in other sectors to look at the context of entrepreneurial education from a different view. For example, such data would include Return on Investment (ROI) analysis for the funds allocated to research and allow for the development of a generalizable metric to compare the level of integration to the entrepreneurial university model among Azerbaijani HEIs. Constructing and collecting such data would also have enabled us to conduct comparative analysis with the HEIs of other emerging economies.

While our study sheds light on the state of the Azerbaijani higher education system and discusses some of the necessary steps to integrate modern entrepreneurial higher education institutes, and the interaction with the labor market is stressed as a vital variable in the integration process, our study only covers one side of this interaction by focusing on higher education institutes. Focusing on the opportunities in the labor market that can be captured by universities and conducting a sectoral analysis to differentiate the nature of university–industry interaction would have complemented our analysis further.

Finally, our study does not capture the regional heterogeneity in the academic and industry integration level of Azerbaijani universities. Although some of the surveys contain the data of the regional universities not situated in the capital, further analysis is missing. Considering the significant socioeconomic differences at play we could expect to find different labor market conditions and educational capacity in more regional settings. Varying initial conditions ideally require consideration of socioeconomic and educational differences in policies describing what steps are involved in adaptation to the entrepreneurial university concept.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Innovative higher education is one of the key factors that stimulate economic growth in any country. Especially during the period of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, doing so depends on how universities have been redesigned. According to numerous prominent researchers the third mission of universities is to create an organizational development process that can transform traditional universities into more self-sufficient, progressive, and responsive institutions that can adjust and adapt to changing environmental demands (Clark, 1998; Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Beecher, Streitwieser & Zhou, 2019). Through adjusted professional norms, acceptance of new responsibilities and accountability, and enhanced collegial

and administrative participation in decision-making, entrepreneurial responses to rapidly changing and extremely demanding environmental conditions are possible. In the end, the entrepreneurial university concept will not only bring about alternative revenue for an institution, but it will also build a stronger, rejuvenated, and ultimately more autonomous identity than has been the case in the past, while at the same time giving it a more trusted place in society.

In this research we outlined the importance of the adoption of the entrepreneurial university model by Azerbaijani HEIs. We identified the existing challenges among Azerbaijani universities and what we see as the necessary steps to undertake in order to overcome these challenges in terms of transitioning to the entrepreneurial university model. The formation of innovation clusters at Azerbaijani universities should go far in improving their patent activity and the quality of their scientific publication output. The nature of the existing challenges in Azerbaijan's higher education system hinders both the adaptation of universities to rapidly changing labor market demands and the formation of a knowledge society. Implementation of the entrepreneurial university model holds out great promise to catalyze the redevelopment of higher education in Azerbaijan.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: During this study, numerous social scientists working in this field were interviewed about how Azerbaijani universities should be designed to meet new realities. Interviews with professors A. Muradov, A. Valiyev, A. Abdullayev, S. Khalilov, H. Isakhanli, E. Alirzayev, actual and former longstanding university officials contributed to enrich this study on a new mission for Azerbaijani universities. Additionally, advice from Fikrat Valehli and Khasmamad Shabanovi proved valuable in this research. Also, we are appreciative of advice from Professor Jim Chung from GWU, Washington, DC, USA, and from Professor Yasar Kondakci from METU in Turkey. Lastly, we are thankful to Mary Beth Warner for her invaluable editorial assistance.

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp. 47-65
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3453 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Faculty Experiences of Higher Education Internationalization in Post-conflict Iraq and Tajikistan

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ABSTRACT

As Iraq and Tajikistan recover from the impact of conflict and international isolation, spaces are being created for higher education to internationalize by opening up and (re)connecting with the international academic community. Drawing on 25 field-based interviews, this article examines how academics in these two countries interpret these processes of higher education internationalization. Four main themes emerged: bridging the gap created by conflict, reconnecting with the world, importing prestige, and integrating into the international academic community. Most respondents viewed internationalization processes positively even while recognizing that national political and economic factors are constraining how these processes develop.

Keywords: post-conflict, higher education, internationalization, education reform, Iraq, Tajikistan

Received January 1, 2021; revised September 3, 2021; accepted September 10, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

War and organized violence continue to afflict countries around the world, with 52 active state-based armed conflicts and 76 non-state conflicts recorded in 2018. Despite a decrease in the amount of recorded violence at the turn of the twenty-first century, there has been growth in both the number and complexity of these conflicts (Pettersson et al., 2019). In cases where conflict has been brought to an end, education has been shown to be "critical to reconstruction" (Johnson &

Hoba, 2015, p. 119) with wide-ranging potential to support the post-conflict recovery of states, from teaching about peace and fostering social cohesion to engaging with international partners and supporting system rebuilding (Milton, 2018). The act of conflict and the ensuing post-conflict period can be viewed as a critical juncture offering "opportunities for positive transformation of education systems" (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p. 482).

This article compares the cases of Iraq and Tajikistan as a sample of two societies that have experienced significant change as a result of recent conflict, and which have since begun to make reforms in higher education. In Iraq, the fall of the authoritarian one-party regime after the 2003 US-led invasion appeared to mark the beginning of a transition to a democratic society but gave way to a disastrous sectarian conflict. In Tajikistan, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created the conditions that led to a vicious civil war between 1992 and 1997 as well as near total economic collapse. As these two states recover from the impact of conflict and international isolation, spaces have been created for higher education to internationalize by opening up and (re)connecting with the now highly globalized international academic community. These parallel processes and activities of internationalization justify the comparison of post-conflict Iraq and Tajikistan. The comparison of these two countries, which have been relatively absent in English language studies on higher education, is further warranted by similar chronologies in the development of their higher education systems during the twentieth century and the timing of their conflicts.

Despite the significance of internationalization in contemporary global higher education, it has rarely been studied in the context of post-conflict settings, and the studies that do exist have been dominated by practice (Maringe et al., 2013). Previous studies of post-conflict higher education have substantially advanced understanding of how higher education is affected by conflict, for example discussing the potential contribution of higher education in post-conflict reconstruction, state building and peacebuilding (Milton & Barakat, 2016) and how to rebuild higher education in post-conflict affected society (Babyesiza, 2012; Johnson & Hoba, 2015). However, less attention has been given to the role of internationalization in reforming higher education systems in post-conflict settings and to the lived experiences of those working at the frontline of changing higher education contexts.

This paper therefore aims to fill a gap in the literature about the internationalization of higher education in post-conflict settings from micro-level (faculty) perspectives, recognizing the importance of the international dimensions of higher education in assisting with the process of rebuilding higher education systems and institutions in the aftermath of violent conflict (Heleta, 2017). As internationalization is interpreted differently across actors, cultures and political settings (Knight, 2007), the study addresses the following research question in the context of Iraq and Tajikistan: How are processes of higher education internationalization interpreted by faculty in post-conflict settings?

The next section provides a definition of internationalization as it is unfolding in Iraq and Tajikistan. The conceptual framework developed for this study brings contextual factors (pre-conflict history and conflict as a critical juncture) to the fore. After discussion of the methods, the findings of the interviews undertaken for this study are presented under four headings. These are broad and inclusive themes that emerged from the interviews: reconnecting with the international academic community, opportunities and challenges of student and faculty mobility, exploring

international research collaborations, and importing prestige through branch campuses and joint programs. This study contributes to research on higher education internationalization by extending the analysis to post-conflict settings and by engaging with educational norms and structures that are brought forward from the pre-conflict period.

HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION IN IRAQ AND TAJIKISTAN

The internationalization of higher education is by no means a new phenomenon, but there is agreement that the scale and scope of internationalization activities have been amplified in recent decades (De Wit, 2002). A common definition of internationalization is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2004, p. 11), incorporating goals such as improving quality, building capacity, enhancing students' competencies, and creating a culture that promotes and supports international and intercultural understanding. Internationalization processes in higher education have traditionally been motivated by economic, political, academic, socio-cultural, and reputational rationales (De Wit, 2002; Knight, 2004). Some emerging voices have also flagged the social responsibility of internationalization and how it can contribute to rebuilding in post-conflict situations (De Wit et al., 2017).

Contemporary higher education internationalization has rapidly diffused around the world (Buckner, 2019) and has been similarly understood in conceptual and programmatic terms across a very wide diversity of global settings (Zapp & Ramirez, 2019). This can be seen in the highly compatible definitions of internationalization activities in the ostensibly divergent Arabic and Russian language worlds applicable to Iraq and Tajikistan. In the Arabic language literature, internationalization is defined as a "long term strategy for establishing external relationships and links, for students' mobility, professional development of faculty members, curriculum innovation and modernization, and support for research projects" (Khater, 2015, p. 230). In the Russophone academic space still shared by Tajikistan, internationalization is similarly defined as greater interaction with foreign colleagues, student and faculty mobility, internationalization of the curriculum, creation of joint programs, and hosting international students (Forrat, 2009).

In Iraq, the 2011-2020 National Strategy for Education and Higher Education set out a comprehensive reform plan including the section, Going Global, with seven goals that include adopting a culture of internationalization, increasing international students and faculty, expanding partnerships and joint research with international universities, and opening international branch campuses (Government of Iraq, 2012). The 2018-2022 Government Program to reform higher education institutions in Iraq has set developing twinning programs with reputed international universities and encouraging private local and international investment in higher education as key internationalization goals (MHESR, n.d.). Tajikistan's National Education Development Strategy governs the country's vision for the whole education system. The 2012-20 strategy set out the ambitions for "[t]he entry of Tajikistan into the international community, signing international conventions and acts, integration into the world education system, exchange of students and faculty, recognition of degrees and many other tasks connected with teaching and training students and researchers, have opened a path to wide international cooperation, which should be developed in all directions" (Government of Tajikistan, 2012, p. 8).

Studies of higher education internationalization in post-conflict Iraq and Tajikistan are scarce. In Iraq, Mohamed (2012) found that the internationalization concept is not widely

understood among academics, noting that Iraqi universities have limited relations with international institutions through signed agreements because of political influence. Nevertheless, some universities were able to develop partnerships with international universities for the benefit of postgraduate researchers. Similarly, Ahmad (2014) found that the key factors in internationalization in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq at the government level are investing in human resources and research infrastructure, innovation, and creativity in the curriculum. Ahmad argues that the 2003 invasion "in a sense was a gate for paving the path for internationalization and bringing new technology to the country" (Ahmad, 2014, p. 35). However, institutional level interest in internationalization is still unclear, particularly because the implementation of internationalization in public universities is regulated by government policies and there are limited resources available for them to invest in international partnerships and collaboration.

In their review of higher education reform in Tajikistan, DeYoung et al. note that when internationalization processes began, they were "taking place according to the Bologna Process" (DeYoung et al, 2018, p. 382), a European program for harmonization of higher education that has spread far beyond the European Union's borders (Hartmann, 2008) and which has also played a pivotal role in higher education internationalization across the former Soviet space (Soltys, 2015). Two of the most common forms of internationalization programs in Tajikistan and elsewhere in Central Asia have been student/staff mobility programs and joint universities (Merrill, 2020). However, Merrill has also noted that "Tajikistan… has neither the financial wherewithal nor the infrastructure to focus on substantial higher education reforms" (Merrill, 2011, p. 161).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework developed for this study supports the interpretation, analysis, and comparison of the internationalization of higher education in the post-conflict settings of Iraq and Tajikistan by focussing on educational reforms in conflict impacted societies in which pre-conflict histories, conflict, and post-conflict challenges are inter-related. Two key notions supporting the framework are path dependency and critical juncture.

Pre-conflict History

The conceptual framework underscores the criticality of the settings' historical paths and the importance of contextual factors (Crossley, 2010), both to map the institutional structure in Iraq and Tajikistan as well as to understand current reforms and trajectories. The notion of path dependency suggests "that the institutional legacies of the past limit the range of current possibilities and/or options in institutional innovation" (Hausner et al., 1995, p. 6). The weight of history means that even following periods of major change such as conflict, organizations and structures retain similarities with or return to their pre-major change configuration (Steinmo, 2008). However, while history may be a powerful predictor of future action, it is nevertheless possible to change the direction of a path, particularly if change comes about abruptly at a point of critical juncture (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

Prior to their recent conflicts, Iraq and Tajikistan shared rich and extensive histories of higher learning and discovery. The court at Baghdad (Iraq) and centres of academic excellence across Central Asia attracted "brilliant figures" in the eighth and ninth centuries CE, "one of the most astonishing periods of scholarship in history" (Frankopan, 2015, p. 97). Patterns of mobility within the Islamic world are ancient, with mediaeval scholarly hubs such as Baghdad attracting

scholars and students from many parts of the world (Welch, 2012). Scholarship continued to flourish in what is now Tajikistan during the golden era of Islamic philosophy and science in the ninth to eleventh centuries CE (Achrorova, 2007).

In the case of Iraq and Tajikistan, the pre-conflict history of higher education places particular attention on developments of the twentieth century. It was during this period that both systems were institutionalized, which this has subsequently provided the basis for the reconstruction of higher education after conflict. Iraq's higher education sector thrived in the 1960s and 1970s. Its universities and technical institutions were highly regarded among other Arab states, attracting many international students from the region. Iraqi higher education played an important role in developing the nation's workforce and economy through its 19 universities, 9 technical colleges, 38 technical institutes as well as several research centers (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2016). As a republic of the Soviet Union for much of the twentieth century, this was also a formative period for Tajikistan. A formal structure for higher education was established for the first time (Krasheninnikov & Nechaev, 1990), with the country's first higher education institution opening in 1931. By the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan had 10 higher education institutions and an Academy of Sciences representing a population of five million (DeYoung et al., 2018). Teaching and research in the Soviet era were largely separated, a legacy that continues to impact research capacity in contemporary Tajikistan (Sabzalieva, 2022).

Conflict As a Critical Juncture

The critical juncture in this conceptual framework is the conflict itself, and this dimension of the conceptual framework emphasizes the potential for reform in education that opens with the cessation of conflict. The post-conflict literature is replete with examples of the potential contributions of higher education in the aftermath of contemporary conflicts, to, for example, stabilizing the institutional framework, reconstruction, and peacebuilding (Heleta, 2017; Johnson, 2013). This paper builds on these works, in particular the smaller number of studies examining higher education reforms that stem from conflict or occur in post-conflict settings (Babyesiza, 2012; Milton & Barakat, 2016).

The decline of Iraqi higher education began with the Iraq-Iran war (1981–1988) and continued during brutal economic sanctions (1991–2003). Both events resulted in significant destruction to the higher education infrastructure, quality and reputation of the system, and unprecedented brain drain. The further development of higher education was put on hold with the onset of conflict, which was stimulated by the US-led invasion in 2003. While it was assumed that the fall of the authoritarian one-party regime would lead to a democratic transition, it instead led to a period of sectarian conflict within the country, pervading all aspects of Iraqis' lives. The conflict escalated between 2006 and 2008, leading to the displacement of almost 1.6 million people during this period alone (IDP Working Group, 2008). Many cities in Iraq witnessed unchecked looting of state institutions, including universities, research centers, museums, and libraries, followed by the terrors of sectarian violence (Milton & Barakat, 2016). The politicization of higher education intensified following the De-Baathisation policy after 2003 that removed all qualified and experienced academics and administrative staff who had links with the previous regime, creating a vacuum for relevant skills to reform and manage higher education (Harb, 2008).

A decade earlier in Tajikistan, a lesser known but vicious civil war fought periodically between 1992 and 1997 was the fall-out of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The civil war

displaced around 700,000 people – nearly one in six citizens – and almost 85,000 people were killed (Olimov, 2016). The civil war has had a "strong negative and lasting effect" on educational attainment (Shemyakina, 2011, p. 3), at least in part because of the "severely reduced capacity of the central government" during the conflict (Whitsel, 2009, p. 34). With the eruption of conflict, the pace of out-migration hastened among Russians and other ethnic minorities in Tajikistan who had traditionally been over-represented in Soviet academia (Rahmonova-Schwarz, 2010). Conflict in Tajikistan disrupted the transition that had only just begun away from the centralized Soviet system, leading to a total hiatus in areas such as faculty professional development (Ministry of Education et al., 2005). The ability of the system to grow and diversify during the conflict was severely challenged during the war (DeYoung et al., 2018). While peace has been successfully maintained since the end of the civil war, the increasingly authoritarian government – led by the same President since 1992 – has systematically closed spaces for political and social diversity, deliberately exploiting and perpetuating widespread fear of a return to conflict.

In both Iraq and Tajikistan, conflict thus served as a critical juncture. Once the conflict had ended, it opened up the potential for reform in higher education. At the point that conflict ceased, both countries brought forward a legacy from the previous regimes wherein higher education was highly centralized in governance, funding, and organization, having been used as a tool by the state to achieve its economic and political agendas (DeYoung et al., 2018; Harb, 2008). As in other post-conflict settings, the current environment in Iraq is characterized by instability, sectarian divide, corruption, economic uncertainty, and a fragile state (Milton, 2018). The higher education systems in both countries experienced a range of challenges as a result of conflict, including the immediate need to address physical damage. Reconstruction was particularly urgent in Iraq, where it was estimated that 84% of the higher education institution infrastructure was burnt, looted, or severely destroyed in some form (Milton & Barakat, 2016). As a result of the critical juncture of conflict, Iraq and Tajikistan's higher education systems began to internationalize somewhat later than in other settings; internationalization processes are further differentiated by the complexity of the context that affects how internationalization is interpreted, implemented, and adopted.

METHODS

This comparative study pays attention to the way that internationalization is understood and practiced at the micro (individual) level, with empirical data coming from in-depth field interviews with experienced faculty members in Iraq and Tajikistan. Both authors have extensive experience in the respective higher education system, which helped to understand the contextual nature of higher education in each country as well as to recruit respondents for this study. The interviews with faculty provided rich information and first-hand experience of internationalization of higher education in both countries, helping to compensate for the lack of existing literature on this topic.

In total, 13 interviews in four public universities were completed in Iraq and 13 interviews were undertaken with respondents based in six public universities and the Academy of Sciences in Tajikistan during the second half of 2017. In the case of Iraq, three respondents were female and ten were male with teaching experience in public higher education ranging from 10 years to over 20 years. In Tajikistan, the sample consisted of six female and seven male respondents. Most participants were extremely experienced and had first-hand experience of both

pre-conflict and post-conflict periods. For example, one interviewee from Tajikistan had remained at the same university with only one break since completing undergraduate studies there in the late 1950s. Respondents worked across the range of academic disciplines.

Interviews were conducted in locally dominant languages in which the authors are native/fluent speakers (Arabic in Iraq, Russian in Tajikistan). As in other recent studies of conflict affected education systems (Milton, 2019), snowball sampling was an effective method to identify suitable participants. Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate method for this small-scale qualitative study, allowing respondents to construct their own narratives and sense-making processes (Merriam, 2009; Miller & Glassner, 2004). During the interviews, which ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, participants were asked about their professional journey and the benefits and challenges of post-conflict changes in higher education at system and organizational level. The interview protocols were grounded in both the pre- and post-conflict contexts that connect to the conceptual framework (Crossley, 2010; Merriam, 2009).

Constant comparison and qualitative case study methods were used to gain an in-depth view of the internationalization of higher education within the context of conflict and its legacy. An iterative process of coding and constant comparison (Fram, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2008) was conducted, first using the participants' interviews then comparing this to the definition of the internationalization of higher education, thus adding credibility and reliability to the study (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The Constant Comparison Method (CCM) is an iterative and inductive process of reducing the data through constant recoding and it involves breaking down the data into discrete 'incidents' and coding them to categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Selected quotes exemplify how, in their own words, respondents discussed the themes and perceive the role of government. Where respondents made statements that were potentially inaccurate or problematic, a footnote to contextualize their comment was added. Due to the authors' institutional ethics board requirements, quotes have been fully anonymized and are identified in the paper by whether the respondent is based in Iraq or Tajikistan.

This study is limited to higher education in Iraq and Tajikistan as two post-conflict societies. It takes a micro-level perspective through its use of interviews and therefore limits the scope of the study to the responses of this group of faculty members. Perspectives of other pertinent actors (e.g., ministry decision and policy makers, prospective students, academic leaders) were not represented in this study.

INTERPRETING INTERNATIONALIZATION

The analysis of the 26 interviews and locally based definition of the internationalization of higher education led to four broad and inclusive themes on faculty perceptions of higher education internationalization in Iraq and Tajikistan, each of which connects to the ideas raised in the conceptual framework and are introduced with an excerpt of a quote from one of the respondents. The first theme discusses "how to introduce yourself to the world" – that is, reconnecting with the international academic community; the second theme explores how "scholarships opened many horizons" for student and faculty mobility; the third, "we do the research together," explores how faculty members have been able to engage in international research collaborations; and the fourth theme, "it's like the sky and the earth," examines how

branch campuses and joint programs are being used to import prestige. The following sub-sections discuss each theme and compare findings between the two countries.

"How You Introduce Yourself to the World": Reconnecting with the International Academic Community

Years of isolation due to war and the degradation of higher education after 2003 have magnified the role that Iraqi respondents felt could be played by internationalization. As one respondent described it:

> Iraqi universities … for 35 years were distanced from the international space, distanced from international classifications, distanced from many aspects. One of the issues is how you introduce yourself to the world … partnership is the best way to take your university to the world.

Because of conflict, economic sanctions/crisis, and, in Iraq, sectarian divisions, the two higher education systems have been kept out of the latest developments and trends in global higher education. As one Iraqi academic put it, the internationalization of higher education is a way to "learn the international language," to bridge the gap created by conflict. In Iraq, reconnection was also related to recollections of the country's pre-conflict higher education system. Another faculty member viewed internationalization as a means of re-establishing a position on the academic map through strategies such as publishing in international journals, asserting "we started to introduce our university to the world by encouraging faculty to publish their academic work in internationally recognized journals that can be read by others outside Iraq."

Iraqi respondents also made clear connections between publishing in international journals and collaborative research, noting how this facilitates knowledge transfer and moves beyond local knowledge as elaborated by an Iraqi professor "a faculty member should engage in joint work with international scholars. The most important thing is to get out of the trenches of local knowledge, there are no limits out there."

Most Iraqi universities present themselves as research institutions. As such, publishing their research is a key component in faculty members' promotion. The pressure to publish in highly ranked journals is exacerbated by a sense of urgency to reconnect to the global academic space through rankings. Iraqi academics understand that to enter the global arena of rankings, they should internationalize their activities. As a respondent from Iraq commented "we should focus on research and publications because this will raise our position in the university ranking."

The entry of Iraqi universities into international rankings is the first of five goals laid out in the 2018-22 government program. In the program, rankings are considered an indicator of the quality of higher education (MHESR, n.d.). Similar strategies were seen as important as they add a competitive edge to Iraqi higher education, bringing it back to its perceived former glory. As one respondent recalled:

> In the 1970s our education was the best internationally, not only in the region. In the 1950s and 1960s, before the 1958 revolution, Baghdad University was ranked 50th worldwide. We hoped that after the fall of the previous regime in 2003, Iraq would go back to this era.

While university ranking is a recent trend in the landscape of higher education worldwide, this metaphorical connotation reflects how Iraqi academics perceived it as a fast track

to restore the reputation of their public universities and ultimately be able to place a position in the international academic map.

Respondents in Tajikistan experienced a different form of isolation before conflict; they were linked to some peers but generally as part of international communist networks. In this context, reconnection for academics in Tajikistan was often associated with former metropole Russia. For example, although a 2011 regulation means that Tajikistan is no longer reliant on Russia to approve postgraduate degrees, one respondent spoke of how the Tajik government continues to look to Russia in making changes to the higher education curriculum stating, “they blindly take the [Russian] program, make light changes to it – they don’t bring in noticeable changes – and they promote it as ‘our’ program.” Thus, while Russia and Tajikistan are now positioned as international partners, the Soviet-era legacy that placed Tajikistan (and some other republics) in the periphery with unequal access to some forms of higher education and the resulting intellectual dependency on Russia persists, even now that the countries have been independent for almost 30 years. As the literature also shows (Merrill 2020), the theme of reconnecting with the world in post-conflict Tajikistan exposes a disconnect between government rhetoric about joining the ‘world education system’ (Government of Tajikistan, 2012) and the lived reality of respondents for whom such connections relate not internationally but primarily to Russia’s aims and visions.

“Scholarships Opened Many Horizons”: Opportunities and Challenges of Student and Faculty Mobility

Student and faculty mobility came up as critical mechanisms to overcome years of isolation (Iraq) or little prior global engagement (Tajikistan). In Tajikistan, this was not only the result of conflict but also connected to the collapse of the Soviet Union:

> In 1992 [a year after the collapse of the Soviet Union], I went to Iran for a physics conference. In 1994, I went to New Delhi and so it went on, travelling around the world from Norway to Nepal, from Turkey to Mongolia. I’ve been able to do this because Tajikistan is independent.

Respondents in both countries tended to focus on student (as opposed to faculty) mobility, emphasizing the benefits of study abroad to experience the world and live in a different society after years of isolation. Immersing in these new experiences was seen to provide positive educational opportunities for students to be exposed to the latest technologies and techniques in their respective fields. This is reflected by a Tajikistani respondent:

> Globalization is happening, and it’s important that our students’ degrees can be recognized everywhere. This allows them to enrol not just in Tajikistan, but it also means they can further their studies in other countries… There shouldn’t be barriers for citizens of Tajikistan.

These comments resonate with the experience of non-conflict afflicted countries, where international student mobility is seen to contribute to global understanding as mobile graduates utilize the knowledge they accumulate about other countries and understanding of the diversity of cultures and society (Kehm, 2005). The quotes also connect to the literature on internationalization in Iraq and Tajikistan, where student mobility is identified as one of the most common ways in which internationalization takes place (e.g., Merrill, 2011). In relation to student mobility, many respondents in Iraq also discussed the role of funding for students to study

abroad. One respondent in Iraq recorded "Scholarships opened many horizons, people went to China, US, Canada, UK, Australia, German, Malaysia, so many countries. Cultures and knowledge started to transfer."

This interpretation is in line with government policy, where the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research launched a 'Study Missions (Scholarship) Program' in 2009 for graduate study with a preference for the US and western European universities, and in 2011 launched the Iraqi Scholarships Scheme/Future Capacity Building Program to fund 10,000 scholarships for graduate study abroad. These scholarship initiatives were framed around narrowing the gap between the standards of education in Iraq and those of the world. This gap was believed to be reduced through increasing the exposure of Iraqi students to modern international standards of research and methodology, to encourage Iraqi academics to improve their teaching and research skills, enhancing curriculum that is compatible with international standards, and improving the administration skills of higher education leaders.

The Tajik government has also provided some support for study abroad through the Centre for International Programs, established in 2008, and a state scholarship program for around 200 students a year (Asia-Plus, 2013; Hasanova, 2009). However, funding for students to study abroad was seen by one respondent in Tajikistan as a form of "humanitarian aid," suggesting a connection between the raft of international aid organizations that came to work in the country as a result of the civil war and the continued need for such support even as the country's conflict experience fades.

As such, the theme of student and faculty mobility describes the ways in which respondents felt internationalization could support them to catch up with other settings that began to open up earlier, but it is also a way of demonstrating that the gap remains wide because governments have limited financial resources to propel reforms such as international mobility programs on a large scale. This also applied to the Iraq case. In addition, even when financing has been made available, the impact that returning scholarship holders have been able to make has been restricted, as one respondent from Iraq commented:

> The education system in Iraq is old. No updates, reforms, or modernization have happened. Those who went on scholarships were not able to make real changes because the system is old, and the Ministry is making many ad hoc solutions that do not make real changes or reform movements.

A finding specific to Tajikistan was the importance ascribed to integration through the implementation of the Bologna Process. Some faculty felt it offered important opportunities for greater integration into a globalized world:

Because of the European Union's support, I think that all higher education institutions in Tajikistan are able to be part of big projects…many students and academics can participate in international summer schools, courses, trainings. I think it's giving a great result.

However, other respondents felt that this form of internationalization would not, in fact, lead to greater integration for the Tajikistani academic community as presented in this quote "just because the Bologna Process works in Germany [and other EU countries] doesn't mean it's the best process for our education. Our people have a completely different mentality." Respondents, therefore, had mixed views about the suitability of the Bologna Process as a means for Tajikistan to use academic mobility to integrate into the international academic community and no consensus emerged from the interviews.

“We Do the Research Together”: Exploring International Research Collaborations

In both Iraq and Tajikistan, faculty members emphasized the importance of research collaboration, working with other universities/Academies of Sciences either on a bilateral basis or as part of larger consortia. The way these features play out in practice was exemplified by one respondent in Tajikistan “some people from here went to Paris to do internships; they helped us organize conferences, to publish books. Those are the types of collaboration we have.”

As the literature also shows, research collaboration is a longstanding strategy to share knowledge and resources that brings important benefits to individuals, institutions, and national and regional education systems (Knight & Lee, 2012). Research collaboration in the specific post-conflict settings of Iraq and Tajikistan is also a means of (re)connecting with the world and taking a position on the international academic map. There was little expectation that taking a position in the international community would be the same as countries considered to be more ‘advanced’ in the global higher education system, but there was a great desire among faculty members to have the opportunity to become integrated and to be considered on their own merits. In Tajikistan, one respondent explained how this connection could work in a mutually beneficial way:

> When they [the foreign partners] come here to do, for example, an archaeological excavation, we provide them with everything – accommodation, transport, people. If it’s an international expedition then there would always be two directors, one from their side and one from ours. We do the research together.

In many respects, there is a universality to academic research and knowledge creation. It has always been and will remain important to academics to collaborate with their epistemic communities, which may not necessarily be co-located in the same geographic space. Thus, even during the isolated Soviet period in which teaching and research were largely separated, researchers co-authored internationally, albeit at lower rates than would be expected given the size of the Soviet research system (Frame & Carpenter, 1979). However, a respondent in Tajikistan explained “when the war was happening, no one talked about research. It was all about surviving,” which reflect that relative isolation coupled with conflict led to at least a temporary hiatus on research collaboration.

Research collaboration was seen by one faculty member in Iraq as “part of the requirements of a modern college”– that is to say, an integral and normal activity for higher education. There are, however, concerns that such collaborations may privilege or reify a model of higher education grounded in Western (Anglo-American) thinking. Some Iraqi academics were alarmed about the lack of equality and fairness of research collaboration in terms of the applicability of the research to local problems of post-conflict societies. This concern is reflected by a respondent in Iraq:

> We should not give a student a scholarship to study abroad unless we send him with a specific research problem that solves a local problem. I should not send a student abroad and spend a lot of money and then his supervisor tells him your research will be on this problem. And he solves a problem abroad and only the supervisor gets benefit.

"It's Like the Sky and the Earth": Importing Prestige through Branch Campuses and Joint Programs

Respondents in both Iraq and Tajikistan discussed how internationalization was being used or had the potential to enhance the reputation and quality of higher education, which can be termed importing prestige. The role played by branch campuses and foreign universities came up as an important recent development in both countries. Faculty respondents in Iraq view international branch campuses as better alternatives to the low-quality private institutions that mushroomed after the 2003 conflict, as a respondent reflected "if we have reputable international universities, believe me, all these private universities will end." This aligns with the literature, particularly for the Middle East region, that suggests that economic, political, and cultural shifts led to a demand for improved local higher education options (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). In Iraq, two private American-style universities already operate in Kurdistan Region and an American-style university in Baghdad officially opened in 2018. Also in 2018, the Minister of Higher Education called on British universities and institutes to open branch campuses in Iraq (Al-Iraqia University, 2018), reflecting greater opening up of higher education at the policy level.

This emphasis on international branch campuses and universities is also a response to widespread corruption in the public sector, which is seen to have limited the capacity of higher education to contribute to post-conflict recovery. Coupled with state control over public and private universities, respondents in Iraq saw a need for alternative ways to improve the status and the reputation of higher education such as building partnerships with western universities through the import of foreign institutions. The transfer of experience from international partners was perceived by respondent from Iraq as" a competitive factor and a stimulus for innovation, so it is an opportunity for development."

In Tajikistan, all bar one of the branch campuses are operated by Russian state-run higher education institutions. This includes Moscow State, the most prestigious Russian university, which was the first branch campus to open in 2009. Faculty respondents in Tajikistan were uniformly positive about the arrival of Russian branch campuses. The following respondent's comments are typical:

> It's like the sky and the earth – their [Moscow State's] requirements are different. When you ask more of a student, they will try harder. They don't accept bribes there; students only get knowledge… In the final year, students do a month-long exchange at the main campus in Moscow. They can attend any lectures they want. It's great. Moscow State is genuinely an international [world class] university.

This quote shows several factors that imported institutions are deemed to bring to higher education: quality of education, lack of corruption, the possibility for mobility, and the opportunity to receive a degree from a university known around the world. This resonates with another study that found that "where Russian universities have a monopoly on transnational provision, Russian international branch campuses enjoy high prestige" (Chankseliani, 2018, p. 7).

Respondents also described the importance of working with external institutions of repute through twinning initiatives and joint degrees. The notion that the prestige of the partner university would transfer to their institutions was described by a respondent in Iraq "I think that one of the things that could upgrade the quality of higher education is twinning with other universities. Then the names of these universities will be used."

Tajikistan has only one university offering joint degrees, the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University. For several years after it opened in 1996, it was considered to be the most prestigious university in the country, not least because it was considered to offer a new start for higher education in the dying days of the civil war. It has now garnered enough of a reputation that one respondent suggested a degree from the university offered a ”guarantee of knowledge.” However, this has not led to a demand for additional joint universities. Rather, the international branch campus model with Russian universities continues to be the dominant partnership model in Tajikistan.

Bringing in programs and curricula from other settings were seen as important aspects of internationalization driven in part by the urgent needs of academics to be exposed to the latest developments in their academic disciplines. As a respondent in Iraq recounted “in our department we try to understand how the world is doing in our area.” The adoption of imported curricula from predominantly western universities in Iraq is perceived as not only prestigious but a practical way to bridge the gap created by conflict that respondents saw as extending beyond the curriculum itself. As a respondent from Iraq expressed:

> The name of these institutions [that are used for the imported curricula] is something for people as they are looking for quality—we are all living in this system, we are all complaining, we are all trying to make a change.

While this may be a common theme in some countries, Tajikistan’s universities do not have formal arrangements to import curricula or programs from other settings. The university curriculum is managed by the government (as it was in the Soviet era) and there is limited autonomy for academics to introduce innovation into the curriculum. Even the privately-run University of Central Asia has found itself subject to government control, forced to add in some of the state-mandated compulsory modules to its degree programming. This difference between how Iraq and Tajikistan are importing prestige through internationalization connects to the continued legacy of the previous regime on higher education in Tajikistan as well as how the government has sought to cement its authority as the aftermath of conflict receded (Sabzalieva, 2020).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explored how academics in two post-conflict societies have interpreted the internationalization of higher education in connection with their pre- and post-conflict realities. Our interviews highlighted four themes in these perceptions that were illustrated using quotes from respondents: “how you introduce yourself to the world,” “scholarships opened many horizons,” “we do the research together,” and “it’s like the sky and the earth.” Each of these pithy statements conveys some of the opportunities and challenges now being created by different internationalization activities, which have included student and faculty mobility, international research collaborations, international branch campuses and joint programs.

These dynamics presented under the four broad headings are inter-related and are connected to how the internationalization of higher education has been defined and how it continues to be shaped by contextual factors. For instance, government bureaucracy and corruption were seen by respondents in both Iraq and Tajikistan as constraining internationalization processes. In Iraq, for example, imported curricula generally do not go through the same bureaucratic approval process as for local curricula and were therefore seen by some as a means of avoiding ministerial control. As one respondent stated, “there is a lot of red

tape, we are always trying to update our curriculum to make it close to the western or the international ones." Another respondent in Iraq clarified that the political context also led to a preference for international universities, which are seen to be independent from the sectarianism that still permeates the government "we hope these [international] universities have their own independence without the interference of the Ministry." In Iraq, high levels of government corruption and corresponding low levels of public trust led faculty to support international over local higher education standards and models, whereas in Tajikistan corruption came up as a driver for the introduction of major reforms such as the European Bologna Process. As one respondent observed:

> The World Bank gave a large grant – huge sums of money – and one of the main conditions was that the Bologna Process be introduced. It was a requirement of the donor… Our functionaries need money, you understand… we don't know whether the grant was used for its intended purpose or not.

This may also connect to the relatively low resources available to fund higher education in the country, leading to ongoing reliance on external funders (Sabzalieva, 2020).

Iraq and Tajikistan may be later adopters of internationalization practices as a result of conflict, but the ways in which internationalization is unfolding appear to be similar to practices seen around the world (e.g., for other Asian settings, see Palmer & Cho, 2012; Wang et al., 2019; Xie, 2018). In these studies, the imperatives for internationalization are presented as a response to the pressures of globalization, where internationalization is increasingly based on competition rather than a collaborative model. While the motives are somewhat different from Iraq and Tajikistan, the interpretation of these practices is similar. However, in this study, we did not find any themes related to competition or an economic-driven orientation that is dominant in the internationalization activities of many global higher education systems.

In both countries, respondents largely discussed internationalization as a positive development, with little mention of its associated risks or the disadvantages that it may bring to societies already facing significant challenges such as brain drain (Barclay, 2002) and the reproduction of aid-dependency (Samoff & Carrol, 2004). Confidence in the benefits of internationalization was demonstrated across the four themes in the paper. One clear example of this was study abroad, widely recognized by interviewees as a tool to transfer knowledge and culture that provides students with the opportunity to obtain an education abroad and later return home to help the development of their home country. In this way, student and faculty mobility serves to bridge the gap created by conflict and to reconnect with the world. Notwithstanding the identification of political and economic constraints, the idealization of internationalization by respondents avoids critical reflection on how the higher education systems in Iraq and Tajikistan may be detrimentally impacted by the pursuit of criteria and practices that have evolved in a Western paradigm.

Although there has been debate about whether the era of internationalization of higher education has come to an end (Altbach & de Wit, 2018), these findings show that internationalization is still an emerging phenomenon in Iraq and Tajikistan. This paper's focus on how internationalization processes in Iraq and Tajikistan are interpreted by faculty respondents sheds new light on how those on the frontline are engaging in internationalization and how they view its role in higher education. The emphasis on path dependency in pre-conflict history and conflict as a critical juncture brought the specific context of these two states to the fore and put

forward a framework to better understand how these contextual factors are intertwined and influencing faculty perceptions of internationalization.

This paper offers three contributions to the study of internationalization of higher education in contemporary post-conflict settings. Firstly, relaying the frontline experiences shared by 26 faculty respondents demonstrates how higher education reform is playing out in practice in two post-conflict settings. This adds to previous studies that have primarily focused on the role of higher education in reconstructing and stabilizing post-conflict societies. Secondly, whereas the act of conflict often forms the focal point for analysis as a critical juncture for post-conflict higher education, this study has shown the importance of also accounting for path dependence, the pre-conflict norms and values brought forward to higher education in Iraq and Tajikistan today. Thirdly, while internationalization has been dominated by practice (Maringe et al., 2013), this study added conceptual framing by examining it within the context of (post) conflict settings.

Future research could analyze how post-conflict societies fit into the global landscape of higher education, opening up scope for a more critical approach to the impact of internationalization in post-conflict societies. There is also ample scope for research comparing experiences of internationalization of higher education between conflict-affected and non-conflict affected settings. An area not covered directly in this research, but which would also add to the literature on Iraq and Tajikistan would be a more detailed study of the impact of internationalization processes at both policy and institutional levels, for example in the development of institutional strategies for internationalization. Finally, this study could be extended to include the voices of students and policymakers in both countries.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp. 66-84
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3215 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

"Native Speakers Do Not Understand Me": A Phenomenological Study of Student Experiences from Developing Asian Countries at an American University

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ABSTRACT

International students from developing Asian countries where English is the second and foreign language are marginalized in some American Universities due to language barriers. Native English speakers often assume that whoever comes to the United States should be able to speak and write English perfectly. In developing Asian countries, such as South Asia, however, the English language belongs to the families of the Middle and Upper classes. They can get admission in English spoken countries' higher education institutions. However, when those students come to English-speaking countries, they feel othered, left alone, and disappointed. This study utilizes a phenomenological research method to tell the students' lived experiences from several Asian countries, including some isolated nations. Specifically, this study focuses on the writing challenges of students and how they utilize the limited resources to help them succeed.

Keywords: international students, developing countries, English language, imperial tongue, language of the middle-class

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Received November 8, 2020; revised August 15, 2021; accepted September 10, 2021

INTRODUCTION

English is academia and scholarly research (Altbach, 2007; Yao, Garcia, & Collins, 2019). In some developing countries across the world, school systems teach English in primary schools to equip their citizens with language skills from a young age. However, English has become the language of higher education institutions (Yao, Garcia, & Collins, 2019). According

to the World Forum Report, there are more non-native English speakers than native speakers. Similarly, more students are studying English in China than in the United States, and more people speak English in India than in Great Britain (Altbach, 2007). Colonialism instigated the spread of the English language to the Global South and made it the language of prestige, middle-class, and white and wealthy people (Altbach, 2007; Singh, 2017). In the same vein, English-speaking countries have become the land of opportunity for international students since getting an education in English promises better career opportunities (Koustoubos, 2018; Yao, Garcia, & Collins, 2019). As a result, international student enrollment in higher education institutions in the United States has been significant (Gurel-Cennetkusu, 2017; Hu, 2014; Okusolubo, 2018).

This study explores international students' academic challenges in developing Asian countries face in U.S. higher education institutions (HEI). Specifically, the current study examines the difficulties in writing assignments and understanding academic expectations in central and southeast Asian nations as previous research has done in east Asia and China. There is extensive research about Asian (primarily Chinese) students' overall academic challenges in English language schools (Baker, Child, et al., 2007; Berno & Ward, 2003; Campbell & Li, 2008; Carson, 1992; Durkin, 2004; Huang, 2007; Hu, 2014; Lo, 2010; Phakiti & Li, 2011). However, few studies have been conducted concerning the academic writing challenges of students from developing Asian countries found in Central and Southeast Asia. Also, within the current literature, there is a lack of contextual (Kaplan, 1966; Lo, 2010; Wang, 2005) exploration of the students from the mentioned regions. Hence, research is necessary to understand the gap and the way forward for the U.S. HEIs (Campbell & Li, 2008; Hu, 2014). Therefore, this study will address the question: How do students from developing Asian countries understand and experience academic writing at University A, a large, urban research-focused university?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some Asian students come to the States with little knowledge of English as well as little awareness of the educational system and academic demands. They come with knowledge about their country's institutions (Phakiti & Li, 2011; Wang, 2005). Even though students who gain admission to the United States HEIs show good skills in the English language, comprehending academic writing becomes a challenge (Campbell & Li, 2008; Phakiti & Li, 2011; Wang, 2005). The Test of English as a Foreign Language or TOEFL measures "the ability of nonnative speakers of English to use and understand English as it is spoken, written, and heard in college and university settings" (ETS, 2007, para.1). Students' academic success depends mainly on performing well on various academic writing tasks at most universities. Most graduate-level courses require papers and other forms of academic writing as evidence of students' understanding and mastery of course materials. Universities that rely on TOEFL scores to make admissions decisions are expected to benefit if students' writing performance on the TOEFL is comparable to how they would perform in writing tasks in university settings.

Llosa and Malone (2018) focused their research on undergraduate students in their first year of postsecondary work, and the researchers analyzed both first and final drafts of course assignments. In this way, the researchers could isolate students' writing ability from post-instruction performance. Llosa and Malone (2018) found that a version in the TOEFL Writing section was somewhat associated with all dimensions of writing quality in academic writing tasks in a required writing course. At the same time, their findings indicated that the TOEFL Writing

section was most strongly associated with "grammatical and cohesive control in their writing and with the writing they can do in first drafts" (p. 254). Hence, it is demonstrated that standardized tests such as the TOEFL and GRE may not help in predicting academic success (Phakiti & Li, 2011; Wang, 2005).

According to the Institute of International Education (2015) published data, the United States hosts more than 4 million international students each year. Thus, some American campuses are internationalized, eager to bring students from different parts of the world for diversity and financial reasons (Gurel-Cennetkusu, 2017). This phenomenon caused educators to create writing centers as a source of support for all students, especially international students. It is observed that even students with a previous degree in English from their home countries struggle academically in the U.S. HEIs (Kaplan, 1966; Phakiti & Li, 2011). Research demonstrates that international students lack an understanding of academic expectations in their fields of study rather than speaking and understanding English (Braxley, 2005; Gurel-Cennetkusu, 2017).

International students who have difficulty with academic writing may look to various sources for assistance, including a campus-based writing center, academic tutors, faculty members/mentors, and online sources. Although seeking help is understandable and even expected, the type and level of appropriate or ethical help are not always clear, (Kim & LaBianca, 2018). These authors examined the perceptions of faculty and international students of what is ethical in providing academic writing help for international students. Their findings indicated that students often lacked certainty on whether a specific service they may receive is ethical. The perceptions of students from East Asia often showed notable differences from other international students.

However, language barriers exist to a vast degree. According to Zhang (2016) and Sato and Hodge (2009), language barriers impact students' confidence and social lives. Chai et al. (2020) elaborate that integrating social and academic life is critical for international students in their host countries' institutions. Wang et al. (2017) found that 46 percent of East Asian students avoided interaction with American students due to their perceived American bias (p. 11). Similarly, 41 percent of East Asian students said they avoided American students because they looked down on them or stereotyped them (p. 10). Along the same line, their study showed that 23 out of 28 (82 percent) American students preferred to interact with East Asian students with a better English accent. Vandrick (2014) found that status effects are not abstract but strongly affect lived experiences. He explains that other students or even instructors may look down on ESL students or underestimate their intelligence and knowledge in the classroom because they do not speak English well or do not understand the dominant culture well (Vandrick, 2014, p. 89). Also, native English speakers often assume that whoever comes to the United States should be able to speak perfect English. Finally, there seems to be an assumption among many Americans that everyone in the world can and should speak English.

Zhang (2016) argues that among international students, Asian students are the ones who face the most severe academic challenges in U.S. HEIs. Among Asian students, however, those from Central Asia or countries that are underdeveloped or isolated may experience even more significant problems. In such countries, English is the language of "the Middle-Class" and the language of the "rich and powerful" (Koo, 2016, p. 5; Singh, 2017, p. 1). Writing according to academic standards is a challenge for all students, regardless of nationality and international students face additional difficulties when expected to produce academic essays or theses (Braine,

2002; Braxley, 2005; Gurel-Cennetkusu, 2012 & 2017). Graduate-level academic writing, with its structure, clarity, the flow of language, and use of literature, is a massive challenge for students with English as a second or a foreign language (Gurel-Cennetkusu, 2017, 2010, 2011; Li, 2007). In Gurel-Cennetkusu's (2017) survey of international students' academic challenges with writing their theses, almost 88% of the participants did not have any academic writing courses in their degree programs (p. 312). At United States HEIs, international students are put into classes without preparatory academic courses (Hu, 2014; Phakiti & Li, 2011).

METHODS

This study is based on a phenomenological tradition where an in-depth description of the "lived experiences" is brought into a broader discussion (Van Manen, 1990, p. 25). As Wynne (1997) explains, a phenomenological study is about pure description and interpretation of an experience; it aims to dig into a phenomenon and discover the "meaning and essence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 27) of lived experiences of the participants. Moustakas (1994) indicated that "phenomenology refers to knowledge" and knowledge "rests on inner evidence" (p. 26). To discover the wisdom and extend it, one must go deep into the phenomenon. This is where Geertz's (1973, p. 10) "thick description" comes into play. As he indicates, a more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon will increase the dialogue and interpretation in experiencing a particular aspect of the culture (Geertz, 1973). As Vagle (2018) states, every phenomenon has different essences. Further, Dalhberg (2009) indicates that essences are found in everyday life, and world experiences; essences are not something unexplainable or mystical.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilizes a phenomenological design within a social constructivist paradigm. This paradigm explores the environment that plays a role in lived experiences. With social constructivism, there are multiple realities, not just one, as well as a focus on the "how" and the "what" revealed by the information disclosed in the data collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Epistemology refers to how the research process constructs knowledge – how we know what we know (Hays & Singh, 2012). In the case of social constructivism, knowledge is built between the participant and the researcher (Hays & Singh, 2012). Collecting individuals' experiences, the researcher did not intend to theorize but rather to "discover and describe the meaning or essence of the participants' lived experience, or knowledge as it appears to 'consciousness' (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 50). To that end, phenomenology helped to explore individuals' experiences.

Context

University A, where this study was conducted, has over 24,000 students, including 4800 graduate students. The University offers 41 master's degrees and 22 doctoral degrees in Engineering, Health Sciences, Education, Business, and Arts and Letters. According to the most recent data, 769 international students from 89 countries enrolled at the university. To retain the anonymity of the participants and the university they attended, I refer to University A., a large, urban, research-focused university in the southeastern United States. Individual and focus group interviews took place at the university's student center. All of the observations took place in the participant's off-campus room while she was working on a writing assignment. One observation addressed the time before she began writing and while she was reflecting on the project. All three

comments took place in the same setting and covered various phases of the participant's writing process.

Participants

Seven participants took part in this study, all of whom were international graduate students from several different Asian countries at University A. These students participated in the study in one of three ways: four participated in individual interviews; one participant was observed on three occasions, and four participants were in a focus group. To keep the anonymity, I used digital codes, such as #1, #2, and #3 (as indicated in Table 1), for each participant and did not indicate their home country or the name of the university they obtained their previous degree. They were at different stages of their graduate degree. Each from 30-60 minutes in length; three 20-minute participant observations with one individual and a 1.30-minutes focus group interview. The number of individuals in this study is suitable for phenomenological research design. As Vagle (2018) devices, it is acceptable to research with one individual to get a sense of their lived experiences or lifeworld.

Table 1:Participant Characteristics

Participants	Gender	Year	Academic Program	Home Region
Participant #1	Female	1	International Education	Central Asia
Participant #2	Female	1	Educational Leadership	Central Asia
Participant #3	Female	2	Educational Leadership	Southeast Asia
Participant #4	Female	1	Oceanography	Southeast Asia
Participant #5	Male	2	International Relations	South Asia
Participant #6	Male	5	International Relations	Southeast Asia
Participant #7	Male	5	Technology Education	Central Asia

The selection of participants for this study resulted from a snowball sampling process which included assistance from the Center for Global Engagement at the university. The initial contact with the participants had a general description and the purpose of my study. If the individual expressed interest, they were provided with more information about the various data collection options. If the individual continued to express a willingness to participate, they were given consent forms well before the data collection. All participants were provided a hard copy of

the consent form to explain the nature of the study, potential risks and benefits, their rights as participants, their ability to withdraw from the study at any time, and a request for permission to be digitally recorded. Before each interview, the participants were encouraged to ask questions. IRB approval was obtained to conduct the discussions, and the individuals did not receive any compensation for their time and sharing their experiences.

Data Collection

Individual interviews were the first method of data collection for this phenomenological study. Interviews offered articulated stories, thoughts, and feelings about the lived experiences or "lifeworld" (Vagle, 2018, p. 77). Semi-structured interviews utilized a prepared interview protocol to serve as a guide for the interview; however, once the interview was underway, the interviewee had more influence over the flow of the conversation (Hays & Singh, 2012; Kvale, 2008). According to Barriball and While (1993), semi-structured interviews "are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of participants regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers" (p. 330). For a phenomenological study, observation is one of the critical data collection methods, as the researcher aims to connect herself to the meaning of the phenomenon she studies (Vagle, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). During the observations, data were obtained by observing participants experiencing the phenomenon. Detailed notes about how a student went through writing an assignment, for example how she wrote essays/papers, where she gets support, etcetera were taken.

Data Analysis

I used thematic coding because this approach deals with exploring the participants' meaning of lifeworld and emotional experiences (Saldana, 2013). Following the initial step of creating summary memos, I continued to organize the text, coded, and identified themes and patterns. I first used the word frequency on NVivo 12 Plus software. Looking at the repeated words, I identified articles related to students' experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). After completing the coding, I checked the code stripes, and there were a few unnecessary codes that I encoded. After obtaining much information (Hays & Singh, 2012; Vagle, 2018), a few primary and sub-teams were identified (see Table 2).

Reflexivity

Hays and Singh (2012) and Moustakas (1994) stated that removing all researchers' biases in a qualitative study is impossible. I approached this research with a rich understanding of my biases in this field (Wynne, 1997). To set aside my biases, I used bracketing and horizontalization methods. Bracketing in phenomenological study design alleviates the researchers' influence and prejudices that may influence the research process (Hay & Singh, 2012; Tufford & Newman, 2012). This process eliminated any section not directly related to the research questions or the participants' experiences. As Eddles-Hirsch (2015) explains, through this process, I made sure that my data were my "participants' descriptions rather than my perceptions" (p. 255-256).

Credibility

Since I had walked the same path when I came to the United States for my undergraduate degree, it was hard to realize my position as a researcher. However, I bracketed my biases and used reduction or elimination processes to gather and present biased-free data and analysis. Furthermore, after each data collection phase, I kept journaling to separate my probable biased feelings from what I observed. I heard about others' experiences and was fascinated by them.

FINDINGS

Through a systematic process of analysis of the data from the interviews, focus groups, and observations, four main themes were identified: (1) the background in English; (2) English in the United States; (3) the writing process; and (4) support from the school. Each of these central themes contained different sub-themes, which are discussed in Table 2.

Table 2: Identified Main Themes and Sub-Themes

Number	Main Themes	Sub-Themes
1	Background about English	English as a Language of the "Middle Class
2	English in the United States	"I Cannot Understand What My Professors Say."
		"Teachers Do not Explain Their Expectations."
3	Writing Process	"I do not know where to start from."
		Connecting the Dots
		"I Did Not Know What Plagiarism Was"
		Domestic Peers
4	Support From the University	

Background About English

The participants were in different phases of their education at University A and from diverse backgrounds. Participant #2, for instance, had a bachelor's degree in Commercial Law in English from her home country. She thought she was mentally, emotionally, and even

academically prepared for a different environment; however, she still faced challenges. For her, it was difficult to understand the U.S. grading system:

> For example, we have the highest 10 points [in her school]. I assumed eight out of 10 was a good mark here. But eventually, I realized that it was not so, and at this point, I was a little bit confused at the beginning, and I didn't know what my level was.

Participant #3, on the other hand, did not have a degree in English before coming to the U.S. She said that those who work with English-speaking companies or NGOs knew English well in her hometown. In her country, English was taught as a language in school but not in a way one would become fluent, just basic grammar and conversation. She learned to speak English from the community: "I learned English by engaging in organizations and club meetings. I tried to engage a lot, so I can use my Inglis [English] as a spoken and I tried to be active in class regardless." She had not studied English previously, and her exposure to academic English was limited:

> In my undergraduate and high school, English was not the language of instruction. And we learn English only about grammar and structure. They don't emphasize writing and conversation. I know English outside of school, in British Counsel [in her country]

Participant #4, however, got her master's degree in Australia and then came for her Ph.D. in the U.S. She said she was exposed to the English language from childhood at home and school.

> English is considered our second language, but we all learn English as early as nursery or kindergarten. So, people starting from K 12 would always have English in their curriculum and textbooks other than the [native language]. All the books and instructions and exams are all in English.

Coming to the U.S. and enrolling in an American university has not presented her with specific challenges because she learned English as early as high school.

Participant #5 was from one of the developing countries in South Asia. He considered English a second language in his country, and he studied finance as an undergraduate and received an MBA at a public university. He attended a public university where courses were taught entirely in English, particularly those with the highest status. Three of the study's participants, numbers 1, 6, and 7, also had extensive backgrounds in the use of English within an academic environment.

English as a Language of the *"Middle Class"*

Listening to the participants, I realized that exposure to the English language depends on socioeconomic background. Although Participant #4 indicated that one single curriculum is practiced in all schools nationwide in her country, socioeconomic background played an important role. Participant #5 took immense pride in coming from a middle-class family exposed to the outside world compared to his fellow citizens. In some South Asian countries, English is the "middle-class" family; hence, only middle-class families can afford to send their children to English language schools and get tutors from a young age. He was bragging about his hard work, traveling to more than ten essential countries, and going to a good school back home. He stated, "I have traveled to other critical [developed and English speaking] countries, and I did training once in Australia for three months. Another one was in the Netherlands for 40 days, and both were conducted in English."

Participant #6 showcased that he worked with non-governmental organizations and got his Master's in the Netherlands. Hence, those who could afford it were exposed to a more intense

or academic English language. As a result, I thought Participant #4 spoke English better than a native English speaker. Participant #3 was the only one who was not exposed to academic English and did not have the opportunity to travel for training to English-speaking countries, presumably due to financial issues.

English in the United States

The writing assignments were challenging for most participants during the first academic semester. One described the semester as a "shock," but Participant 3 used the word "nightmare: "In my first semester, I just want [wanted] to cry for the first few months because I thought that there are [were] a lot of papers and I cannot [could not] combine the resources into papers." She feared academic failure in the first semester. With a new language and an entirely different educational system, she doubted her ability and proficiency in the English language.

"I Cannot Understand What My Professors Say."

Participant #2, despite studying English in her home country, had difficulties understanding her professors in class, and she said she still has trouble. She indicated there was one course in particular in which she struggled to understand what the professor was saying; she blamed "the language issue." However, she seemed satisfied with her English proficiency in understanding the content of the course. Having said this, she admitted that sometimes she did not understand some of her professors. She specifically mentioned new idioms as a challenge, but she felt it was not an issue in her understanding of course content. Participant #3, at times, did not understand her professors' language in class and at other times during office hours.

> Sometimes I cannot understand what the professor says in class. So, I usually ask my friends to make sure that it's those kinds of things that the professor wants from us ... somehow, I cannot keep up with the speed of the professors speaking in class. She also said I am more comfortable asking a classmate sitting next to me rather than asking my professor to repeat.

"Teachers Do not Explain Their Expectations."

Understanding what the instructors expect from students was another challenge for some students. For participant #2, however, it was hard to understand the assessment components and what teachers looked for:

> They [home institution] would concentrate more only on the quality of our analysis, quality of ideas. But here, I don't know if it's the requirement of American universities; they pay attention to everything, including the references and the formatting of the whole paper.

Participant #1, for example, had written her assignment a month ago. However, after comparing her essay with her classmate, she realized that she had not done what the professor had expected. In other words, she did not understand the syllabus. I asked her why she did not go to the professor before beginning the essay to ensure she understood the concept and structure. She said she had thought she understood the professor's expectations and that she had completed the assignment correctly. Like cultural shock, the academic shock could be nerve-racking for students from a very different school system, even if they studied English in their home institutions. In addition, understanding the writing structure in specific fields was a common challenge the participants experienced. Participant #4 described the level of intensity in her first semester as "as difficult as hell:"

> The only thing that I had to improve was how to structure the stuff better…I find that difficult because I'm in the field of marine sciences; you have to have a different way of making technical reports as opposed to like, for example if you're writing for a publication, it's different from when you're doing something for an article in the news. And in the first semester, it can be as challenging as hell!

Writing Process

"I do not know where to start from." Each individual who participated in the study had unique challenges with academic writing. In one of the observations, participant #1 had chosen cross-border education in the national policy of internationalization of higher education policy in the United States. She searched online databases but could not find anything useful. She did a Google search and found a few non-academic pieces that had discussed the challenges of the policy, but she could not find anything about the impact and benefits of cross-border education; the assignment required this information. She searched for the phrase "benefits of cross-border education," and nothing she needed appeared. I suggested that she might need to narrow down the search terms and add a few words about the U.S. national policy on internationalization. She then found some specific points that UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank had written. From there, she heavily relied on Google search. She began to use those pieces from the mentioned sources.

Participant #1 had issues using the right words or terms to connect her ideas. For example, she had written and looked for a synonym for the word "interest" in her sentence: "…for the students' interest." She thought this was an economic term, and thus she had to find another word used in education. Then she looked for the synonym for "opportunity" and utilized "perspective," which was not the right word. In some cases, she forgot to use the pronoun instead of the phrase "cross-border education" at the beginning of each sentence. She kept writing the essay.

I observed that writing in English is not difficult for participant #1. She paid particular attention to her writing style and grammar, but she was not familiar with academic writing in English. For instance, when she wrote from her point of view, without any obligation to provide citations and references, she wrote well; however, she did not know how to incorporate them into her writing when she found references. When she borrowed an author's words, she used the exact words without citing or quoting. For Participant #3, significant issues were grammar, clarity, and sentence structure. She was prone to making grammatical errors as well as errors in the flow of her sentences and coherence:

> For the grammar, I [get] help a lot from the Grammarly, and I also just [follow my] feeling in my sense. Usually, it is wrong if I do not make sense of those words. Somehow, if you learn English a lot, you can get the importance of the grammar, whether it is inaccurate.

Connecting the Dots

Participant #3 said her most significant obstacle in writing an academic essay was connecting ideas she generated from theoretical readings: "I have lots of resources. Connecting those ideas from all books and journals in flowing and natural academic writing is a challenge." Connecting the authors' points and weaving them into their writing was also a challenge for participant #1. Like many graduate students, she did not know how to connect multiple ideas

from a journal article into a coherent paper. She did not learn how to connect all those ideas in the essay.

Because I was sitting next to her, she asked me how to use the points mentioned in the article: "Shall I Write the Whole Sentence and Quote or Write Down What They Have Written and Cite?" I advised her not to do either. I told her to paraphrase and cite instead. She did not know how to paraphrase. I went closer to her computer screen to read the points she referenced. As an example, I selected a point for her and asked her to write it in her own words. What is written here is my idea; in what other way could I write that? She said. I told her not to look at the sentence the author had framed; instead, I would grasp the idea and write how she would own words and then cite it in her language. She wrote a couple of paragraphs, paraphrasing from one source or author. She was stuck with one head and elaborating on one idea about the impact, and she moved to the next point, benefit, and moved to another source. She continued writing; I realized she was jumping from one theme to another without proper explanation or developing her points.

All of the students had some level of struggle with the English language. Participant #3 sounded as though she struggled to read and then write an essay for any of her classes. She said it took a long time to write an essay because she had to read it first, which was a challenge. Indeed, academic reading is difficult for everyone; even native speakers need time to understand the concept. However, Participant #3 said that she had to read line by line instead of skimming or looking at the main points of different sources, which was a challenge, then write. In addition, for Participant #4, Participant #5, and Participant #3 integrating literature into their writing was and is one of the most challenging tasks:

> When you integrate literature into your writing, you're trying to understand the concept. And that's what I've been struggling to do. Reading through much information, comprehend that, and then transfer that into a paper.

"I Did Not Know What Plagiarism Was"

Participant #5 did not know about plagiarism in academia. Even though he had studied English previously, the structure of academic writing was different for him at University A. He said that copying and borrowing ideas from other sources did not mean plagiarism in his country. His professors asked him to bring his attention to plagiarism. It was challenging to paraphrase initially, but he admitted that it was good practice. "…it has helped me improve my writing without doing any copy and paste."

Plagiarism came up in my participant observation as well. For instance, during one of the observations, my participant had one paragraph of citation, which was the author's exact words. She left it without specifying, explaining, or connecting it to her writing. There was also a quotation copy-pasted from an unexplained source. Apart from those two sources, everything was written from her point of view, borrowing ideas from Google search. For her, it did not make sense to paraphrase others' ideas and cite them. She said what was written here [in the article] was my idea. In what other ways could I write that? These students came to the United States with knowledge about their academic disciplines but not about U.S. academic culture and mores (Phakiti & Li, 2011; Wang, 2005).

Domestic Peers

For Participant #3, group work or projects have been challenging because her group members were native speakers, and it was difficult for her to work at their speed. She indicated

that her student cohort could complete assignments faster than she was able due to language issues. She was stressed that she could not contribute as quickly during group assignments. She continued with a lower voice:

> I am disappointed in the groups with the domestic students because I asked them to meet even through calling or something, but they did not want it, and they rushed one day before. So, I found it challenging to keep up my writing and speak with them because English is their native language. They do not encounter difficulties with it.

Participant #3's pain was very evident and difficult to hear. On the one hand, I wondered how she survived the past three semesters; but on the other hand, I saluted her patience and commitment and strived for an education.

Participant #4, who seemed to be more connected with domestic students in her field, said she sought help from them. She indicated that when she began to accept help from her American friends, her reading habits and ability to summarize improved. Her friends also gave her study tips and advice, which was very helpful. Participant #3, on the other hand, would rely on readings as she does not have one or two readings but so many:

> So yeah, I have to work hard, read more, and then make a draft. And then I did [do] think more, and more so it looks more flow and natural…there are differences between Asian and American cultures. Asians work collectively, and Americans like to be independent, and if you disturb them, they don't like it. That doesn't mean they are not good, but this is how their culture is.

The frustration of Participant #3 was evident when she said that not only was her academic writing a challenge, but her spoken English was also unclear to native English speakers. She could quickly form ideas and thoughts in her mind, but she was often misunderstood when she verbally expressed her opinions and perspectives.

Support from the University

None of the students I talked with sought help to overcome their challenges by seeking help from the university resources. Participant #3 did not want to approach her domestic peers for support and did not find the writing center helped. She was not comfortable going to department or program leaders, faculty members, or her American friends. She added that her American friends and classmates did not offer to help her and never seemed to have time for her.

Each participant mentioned different obstacles with the writing center tutors. Participant #4 and Participant #6 did not need to go there, as they thought they were doing fine. For Participant #3, the writing center could not help her with grammar. Yet, Participant #3 said she had difficulties making her writing understood by native speakers. Her essays' sentence flow and structure made it difficult for readers to understand. She suggested that her challenge is synthesizing different ideas into a coherent paragraph. She struggled to create a natural flow within her academic papers. Her frustration was again evident when she recalled native speakers asking her, "What do you mean by this?" Participant #5 said:

> I am from an international relations background here at [University A]. They are not from the exact location when they send someone [tutor]. They try to help us, but they may not help us in the right direction because they are not from the same background.

Likewise, when Participant #1 went to the writing center, she was told about the writing problems found in her essay, but there was no instruction on how to fix the issues.

DISCUSSION

All the participants had different writing challenges—from grammar to structure, integrating literature, reading, understanding instructors, and not being understood. No matter their school, socioeconomic background, and exposure to English, they had difficulties in their ways. As reported by the World Economic Forum, there are more non-native English speakers than native English speakers (World Economic Forum, n.d.). To that end, speaking English in each country varies with accents, grammar, and pronunciation. Participant #4, whose English was like that of a native speaker exposed to academic English from a young age, had challenges structuring and summarizing academic writing. Participant #5, with a BBA and an MBA in English and who had traveled to almost twenty countries for English training purposes, had no idea what plagiarism was (Abbasi & Graves, 2008). Participant #2, with a degree in Law in English, had a hard time understanding her professor and the system in America.

Similarly, participants #1 and #7 with a degree in English and teaching English for many years at the university level in their hometown, had no idea what an academic paper looked like; Participant #3, who was less exposed to English initially, had a higher level of challenges – e.g., grammar, clarity, sentence flow, connecting ideas, and so forth. However, the biggest challenge for all of them were integrating literature into their writing. Thus, the findings supported (Kaplan, 1966; Phakiti & Li, 2011; Wang, 2005) that acquiring English language skills and passing standardized tests do not guarantee academic success and understanding of the system.

*"*I came from a middle-class family, so I was repeatedly exposed to the English language*",* said participant #5. In developing Asian countries, only those who can afford it can learn English and go to English-medium schools. Families must put effort into helping their children learn English and go to English medium schools within and outside of their country of origin. In South Asia, English medium schools are for the families of the "rich and powerful," in Singh's (2017) words. Those families are categorized as the middle-class (Koo, 2016), which grants status and prestige. However, they are marginalized due to differences in English and the academic system.

"Native speakers don't understand me"*,* said Participant #3, or native speakers did not make an effort to listen to her. Research indicates that one of the barriers between the domestic and international students interacting socially is English because it affects their ability to communicate, comprehend, and interact on academic and social levels (Geary, 2016; Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2014). In line with some of the literature reviewed in this paper, domestic students often do not make an effort to listen to someone who does not speak English at their level. Consequently, participant #3 did not feel comfortable asking for help from her team members because she felt they rejected her. She said she was "disappointed" in her domestic peers.

" Professors outline in the syllabus, but they do not tell their expectations ", said participant #2. This is in line with the arguments presented by Braxley (2005) and Gurel-Cennetkusu (2017) regarding the lack of understanding of academic expectations among international students generally and students from Asian countries in particular. For example, it is essential to remember that higher education institutions do not utilize a syllabus in many countries. For students from isolated countries, the concept of a syllabus may be confusing rather than helpful. The participant's statement about professors not spelling out certain things in the syllabus also involves cultural factors. For example, it is essential to remember that higher

education institutions do not utilize a syllabus in many countries. In a nation that values individualism and personal liberty, like the United States, communication and learning through online courses on a computer are shared. International students in the United States who are not native English speakers might have more difficulty understanding the professor's requirements in online or computer-dependent courses.

Also, in some Asian countries' teaching methods, integrating literature into academic writing does not make sense. The best academic paper would be the writer's analysis. From participant #1's point of view, citing or paraphrasing did not mean much. According to Abasi and Graves' (2008), students who are less familiar with the genre of academic writing are prone to unintentional plagiarism. Students from different school systems may not know what plagiarism is because they have never practiced it in their home institutions. Hence, as Zhang (2018) said, "cultural background influences" one's writing mode (p. 1). Zhang (2018) states that the view of plagiarism, structure, and source material in the Asian context is different than in the Western countries; these differences are reflected when Asian students write academic papers in English.

Participants #2 and #3 reflected on the speed of professors' language. For students for whom English is a foreign language, professors' and instructors' rate of spoken English is a challenge, mainly if idioms or vernacular phrases are used. For instance, in some Asian cultures, students do not address questions to instructors. In other words, teaching is based on the lecture. In some cases, listening to or understanding the professor is not a must (Geary, 2016; Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2014). A lecturer in the U.S. may think that students learn because they do not ask questions, yet this misunderstanding between the instructor and students creates a significant challenge.

*"*Teachers return my paper and give me two or three days to do it again if it is not good*"*, said Participant #3. However, the question is, what if she does not understand the structure or the way of writing for the second time? Therefore, instructors need to understand and make educational experiences achievable. Students' success is based not only on submitting good assignments but also on engagement and a clear communication channel between teacher and students (Tran, 2020). In Tran's (2020) words, engagement between teacher and students should be "meaningful" and "productive" to understand international students' learning needs and expectations.

"Tutors at the writing center cannot help us in the right way", said Participant #5. Participants sought help from different resources to tackle their writing challenges; however, none went to the writing center where they were supposed to. The findings also supported Zhang's (2016) lack of support at the university writing centers. Participant #5, for example, was satisfied with his instructor's supervision and guidance about plagiarism and how to overcome this challenge. For Participant #4, her domestic peers were a source of support. She went to them to get help maneuvering structures required in her field, although she still struggled with integrating literature. Participant #6 went to his department when he had a question about academics, particularly writing. He said that you have the professors to talk to once you have difficulty, and the department supports sending students to conferences. Participant #3 relied on her reading resources and Grammarly, and participant #1 remained helpless in submitting "however it is," in her words.

This circumstance requires that there should be a more in-depth support system such as short-term training about academic demands, expectations, rules, and regulations. The problem is

not the English language but rather understanding the system, educational requirements, academic writing structure, and the teachers' explanation in the syllabus. Therefore, having a tutor at the writing center who is a native English speaker seems inadequate without any experience with international students. As Participant #1 said, the tutors do not know international students' needs, demands, and problems. Instead, she preferred to talk to another international student who understood the issues. In brief, the writing center existed for students at this particular university; however, it was not helpful for any of the participants. Thus, this service was not a source of help but a waste (Di Maria, 2020).

For the universities that claim diversity in their student bodies, it is vital to have a sound support system for international students, especially students from very different educational backgrounds. Similar to Di Maria's (2020) argument, international students services should continue to refine regularly to be effective. American colleges and universities are helping international students adjust through programs such as orientations, international students' offices, and organizations (Geary, 2016); however, there are gaps to fill. The language barrier could make it difficult for international students to gain and generate knowledge. As Gresham et al. (2012) indicate, the college's responsibility is to create a space for intercultural engagement so students from different cultures do not feel left out or disappointed. Obeidat (2017) says that colleges and universities' environments should be free of biases and discrimination, so international students feel encouraged.

Limitations

A few limitations existed when conducting the study. First, I had a limited number of participants and observations. Given the phenomenological design, however, my goal was to learn the lived experiences of these international students by observing and hearing from them thoroughly. My study would have been more vibrant if I could capture their feelings when they went through those extreme challenges rather than hearing about them. The findings would have been enriched if I could follow some participants writing their papers and seeking help from their professors, classmates, and any software.

Future Directions

Research indicates that international students' challenges in American universities and colleges are not limited to writing. The psychological effect of being cast out, interacting with domestic students and professors, identity struggles, cultural shock, socialization on campus, etc., could be studied separately. Future studies could focus on international students' experiences in the classroom to explore how they interact with professors and domestic peers.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I described the meaning of a few international students' experiences. In their "lived experiences," I explained or interpreted the explicit purpose of what they go through while writing their assignments in a language other than their own. This study elaborated that no matter the individual's exposure to the English language, they experienced feelings of alienation while reading, listening to class lectures, working with classmates, writing essays, and approaching for help.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp. 85-95
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3572 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

International Student Mobility and Internationalization of Higher Education in Hungary and China: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Global competition is currently reshaping higher education worldwide. Hungarian and Chinese higher education institutions are increasingly channeling resources to higher education development to promote the internationalization of higher education. There have been few studies specified differences between Hungarian and Chinese higher education internationalization. Over the past few years, both Hungarian and Chinese governments have started to prioritize raising international student mobility to enhance countries' competitiveness at the global level. This article outlines the definition of higher education internationalization to provide a comprehensive understanding of this term. This article also briefly describes the background of higher education in Hungary and China and compares determinants of higher education internationalization between the two countries, particularly focusing on the context of international student mobility. This article summarizes and compares higher education internationalization indicators between Hungary and China. This article contributes to a better understanding of the development of higher education internationalization in Hungary and China.

Keywords: internationalization, higher education, international student, international education, student mobility

Received February 2, 2021; revised September 9, 2021; accepted September 15, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Understanding of Higher Education Internationalization

The understanding of internationalization of higher education is not unified. Efforts have been made to define "internationalization" in a way which can be accepted widely. The

commonly accepted definition of internationalization is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight 2008, p21). Thereby, the definition of higher education internationalization refers to the primary and universal functions of an institution of higher education within the framework of the cross-border communication.

Higher education communication across countries is quite complicated. Different countries have varied emphases and expectations confronted with this theme. Worldwide, internationalization is becoming increasingly important in the higher education sector. A diversity of views calls for further clarification and specification, and the discussions on internationalization are diverse across countries. A country's unique history, indigenous culture(s), resources, priorities, etc. shape its response to and relationships with other countries (Qiang, 2003). Hence, in order to meet the demands of the international cooperation of societies and labor markets, multilingualism and intercultural competency are of great importance. Given the various historical, regional and cultural differences, several countries have put forward characteristic understanding and emphasized the role of higher education internationalization. For example, higher education internationalization in the U.S. highlights the importance of campus leadership in effectively managing the change and coping with the challenges of increasing globalization (Said, Ahmad, Mustaffa & Abd Ghani, 2015). In Germany, higher education institutions pay attention to the growing impact of English language use in higher education internationalization (Erling & Hilgendorf, 2006).

The understanding of higher education internationalization can be described from two perspectives. Firstly, the basic function of higher education is academic, the level of specialization in research and the size of the investments that are indispensable to certain fields of research and development requires collaborative efforts and intensive international cooperation. Secondly, the understanding of higher education internationalization calls for a wider goal that contributes to the sustainability of the international dimension, e.g., restructuring and upgrading of higher education functions and services to meet the requirements and cope with challenges related to globalization.

Higher Education Internationalization in Hungary

Until the late 1980s, a Soviet-type interpretation of internationalization was used in Hungary, which isolated countries of the communist bloc within the Iron Curtain. At that time, government interest went beyond academic or market concerns in higher education. The old type of higher education policy was replaced with a European mode by the first democratic government. Since then, the internationalization process progressed in Hungary. Starting from 1989, multitudes of youth entered the Hungarian higher education system which compelled Hungarian higher education systems to expand their capacity. After joining European Union (EU) in 2004, Hungarian higher education participated in more and more academic cooperation with other European countries as well as in the formulation of new academic networks among higher educational institutions. The development and transformation of higher education in Hungary has a close connection with politics and policy.

After the collapse of state socialism in Hungary, the socialist concepts of growth and development were replaced by capitalist concepts of growth and development (Kulcsar &

Domokos, 2005). Changes in higher education in Hungary are strongly related to those in the economic and social environment since the change of the political system (Pusztai & Szabó, 2008). Post-socialist countries (e.g., eastern Europe countries) are still lagging behind the developed western Europe countries; therefore, Hungary must grow fast to catch up. The reforms of higher education called for a wider aspect to all these challenges, which slowly progressed the internationalization process.

The Bologna process played a radical role in Hungarian higher education reform and internationalization. Driven by the pressures and provisions of the Bologna process (1999), Hungarian higher institutions escalated the significance of student mobility and exchange. Furthermore, Hungarian education policy puts a special emphasis on internationalization strategies based on the foreign student mobility (Pusztai et al. 2006). Hungarian higher education institutions were motivated to participate in the internationalization process because the competitiveness of higher education institutes resides in student mobility. The number of international students coming to Hungary to pursue academic degrees increased every year since 2000.

However, experts analyzing changes from an economic and social point of view are not optimistic concerning the reforms. These reforms do not represent a way to "Bologna heaven", an ultimate expectation to establish the three-cycle degree structure (bachelor, master's, doctorate) nor do they adopt shared instruments, such as the European Credits Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The changes in higher education should be viewed in a wider economic, social, and historical context. For instance, social consequences answer to the challenges caused by the growing number of participants in higher education internationalization (Kozma, 2004). With regard to Hungary, even though realization of Bologna process received criticised opinions, researchers point out that the comparability and mobility declared as major objectives are still goals rather than features of reality (Bokros, 2007).

Higher Education Internationalization in China

Higher education internationalization in China entered into a period of rapid development since the 1990s with the implementation of open-door policy and reform. At that time, higher education internationalization was a relatively new conception. Research on higher education internationalization mainly focuses on: exploring the meaning and features of higher education internationalization; promoting higher education nationalization; discovering the trend of higher education renovation; and coping with China's politics, economy as well as society, culture etc. In China, the economy developed at a high speed and Chinese society was changing vividly. As a result, the mission of higher education was changing overtime in China. In the recent decade, the research focus in higher education shifted to identifying opportunities, challenges as well as solutions China is facing in the globalization process and to be prepared for worldwide competition.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese government controlled higher education internationalization, and all types of collaboration with foreign institutions including foreign student enrollments, of which, governmental approval was a requirement. Since 2000, socio-

economic development in China has prompted the Chinese government to begin to allow institutions to have more autonomy as well as to speed up the process of internationalization (Li, 2016). Entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) provided new impetus to the development of transnational educational programs in China. China came to attach great importance to the cultivation of technology, knowledge and talents with the development of economic globalization and internationalization. The economic growth requires overseas higher education support, which is a driving power of higher education internationalization in China. The Chinese government launched a goal to construct Top One World Class Universities in 2015, the most active strategy of which was international exchange of students such as enrollment of foreign students, and sending students abroad for long-term or short-term study (Huang, 2003).

Higher education internationalization brought a lot of benefits to China. On one hand, cross-border education provided powerful support to the knowledge exchange and culture integration between nations. On the other hand, higher education facilitated social development and accelerated the process of globalization in China. The globalization of the Chinese economy has a positive impact on the government's role to internationalize higher education. With the support of the Chinese government, internationalization of higher education in China continues to develop and expand because internationalization of higher education in China is one of China's national goals, and the process is still developing (Lin, 2019).

Progress of Internationalization of Higher Education in Hungary and China

In recent decades, both Hungary and China have made considerable progress in the internationalization of higher education. Higher education institutions (HEI) in Eastern European countries were eager to build connections with other institutions through student mobility since the 1990s (Kasza, 2010). Hungary's government also established scholarship programs and called for the promotion of student mobility. In China, economic development was the main task in the past few decades. International higher education communication and cooperation was relatively weak compared with the western countries 20 years ago. Higher education internationalization in Hungary and China is an increasingly important sector in promoting the work of higher education institutions, and also facilitates socio-economic development. Considering the trend in both countries to promote higher education internationalization, it is of importance to compare their similarities and differences in higher education internationalization process.

Student Mobility

The mobility of international students is a highlighted factor in evaluating the quality of higher education internationalization (De Wit & Knight, 1999). Also, the mobility of international student has been viewed as one of the indicators of campus diversity, internationalization, and a prime source to boost the revenue of the institution of higher education (Bista et al., 2018). Additionally, evidence shows that the mobility of international students impacts the reformation of culture, economics and even politics (Cohen & Sirkeci, 2011; Kell & Vogl, 2008). Therefore, the mobility of international students is of great importance in formulating the trend of globalization. Given the complexity and multifaceted issues which go beyond international student mobility, Hungary and China launched student mobility programs to attract international students. Both Hungary and China are trying to enroll an increasing number of international students as a strategy to improve national impact globally. To better understand the context of

higher education internationalization between Hungary and China, the determinants of international student mobility are discussed followed by comparing student mobility.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aims to provide a better understanding of higher education internationalization. Additionally, this article describes the brief history of higher education internationalization in Hungary and China. By comparing the higher education internationalization determinants, this article focuses on the context of international student mobility to compare the similarities and differences between the two countries.

The outcomes of the present study follow a two-step process. Firstly, the higher education determinants are selected from previous published articles, which provide comprehensive examples of higher education internationalization indicators. The descriptive analyses compare the data between Hungary and China regarding to the summerized indicators. Secondly, given the importance of student mobility in higher education internationalization, detailed number of inbound and outbound international students in Hungary and China is presented, by which, descriptive comparisons are made.

The selection of the two countries (Hungary and China) was determined for the following reasons:

- Changes of society and economy: Historical evidence shows that changes of society and ecnomic in both Hungary and China calls for attention of higher education internationalization. Therefore, it will be interesting to compare these two countries.
- Governmental control and execution: Both countries have experience in the system of socialism. The sructure of high education development is associated with governmental control, which contributes to the necessity of higher education comparison.
- Culture and language: Chinese and Hungary are both faced with linguistic isolation, culture variance, information isolation and strategic alliances with foreign partners. It will be intersting to discuss the two countries considering these similarities.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Comparison of Higher Education Determinants between Hungary and China

This section discusses the major determinants of internationalization in higher education. A comparative analysis of those determinants that may influence student mobility is made between Hungary and China. This article only addresses these two countries for the following reasons. First of all, English language use is regarded as an important indicator of the internationalization of higher education, because both Hungary and China are non-English speaking countries and their native languages are regarded as the most difficult languages in the world. Second, both countries emphasize student mobility in higher education internationalization. Thirdly, the two countries can serve as examples of internationalization of higher education. For instance, China represents a country in Asia; Hungary, represents a country in Europe. By comparing the similarities and distinctive aspects of higher education

internationalization between these two countries, this article obtains insights into higher education determinants.

Studies in the European area have surveyed the influencing factors on student flow. Country size, cost of living, distance, educational background, university quality, the host country language, climate as well as a country's characteristics and time effects are all found to be significant determinants (González et al., 2011). To our best knowledge, there is no article discussing the higher education determinants in Hungary, however, a study investigated 33 European countries (including Hungary) and demonstrated that educational factors, political/ social/cultural factors and economic factors influence international student mobility (Caruso & De Wit, 2015). In China, findings reveal that "cost" and "quality of education" play leading roles higher education internationalization (Cao, Zhu & Meng, 2016). This article summarized a number of determinants that have been reported as influential indicators for internationalization of higher education. The summarized indicators are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Higher Education Internationalization Indicators between Hungary and China

Determinants	Hungary	China
Native Language	Hungarian	Chinese
Climate	Typical European continental influenced climate with warm, dry summers and fairly cold winters.	There is tropical zone, subtropical zone, warm temperate zone, middle temperate zone, cold temperate zone and plateau zone.
Location	Central Europe	East Asia
Socio-economic status**	Developed country	Developing country
Top1000 ranked universities (by QS) [#]	6	42 (mainland China)
Higher education system	Three-circle education (4 years' bachelor; 1.5/2 years' master; 4 years' PhD)	Three-circle education (4 years' bachelor; 3 years' master; 3 years' PhD)

Main discipline focus	Medical and Health Science; Agricultural Science; Computer Science and Information Technology; Arts; Architecture; Business; Chemistry; Engineering; Finance; Mathematics; Sport science	Clinical Medicine; International Economics and Trade; Computer Science and Technology; Business Administration; Chinese Language and Literature; Civil Engineering; Mechanical Engineering; Architecture; Communication Engineering; Chinese Language Training

Note: ** source of data: World Bank; # source of data: QS Top university ranking 2020

Hungary and China share a number of broader similarities that are relevant to discourse on higher education internationalization. In addition to the comparisons of higher education described above, Hungary and China share different external interactions to higher education internationalization. Hungary, with the entry into European Union, develops its higher education under the framework of European Higher Education Area. China, as the biggest country in Asia, is trying to find its own way together with taking experiences from developed countries to promote its internationalization of higher education.

International Student Mobility in Hungary and China

International student mobility and exchange is one of the most significant ingredients for assessing internationalization (Ternai & Szabó 2016). Hungary has one of the lowest levels of general mobility of the population compared to western European countries (Hárs & Sik 2008; Juhász 2003). Yet, the Hungarian higher education system expanded very quickly as measured by numbers of higher education institutions, numbers of students and disciplines after reforming the higher education system with the enaction of Higher Education Act (1993). In China, the international student mobility changed between 1999 and 2020 with the economy's needs and motivations to build research excellence (Choudaha, 2017). Chinese government control is arguably semi-peripheral economically and symbolically and there are asymmetries and inequalities in international student mobility in China (Yang, 2020).

In recent decades, international student mobility has become an increasingly important part of the international higher education landscape. Significant changes in the infrastructures and capacity of higher education systems encountered speedy growth across the world. Also, the international student market is changing by seeking potential benefits for stakeholders. It is widely acknowledged that an increasing number of higher education opportunities for study at home and abroad is contributing to raising competition in the international student market. At the same time, a majority of national governments have been allocating more funds to higher education to improve the quantity and quality of tertiary education with the purpose of education reputation at the world level.

European countries are increasingly seeking to recruit international students and send their native students out for international study because, in an era of globalization, international students hold several short- and long-term gains for institutions and countries. Meanwhile, Asian countries have entered the market with declared ambitions to become regional and global education centers by attracting as many international students as possible to their countries. This article chooses Hungary and China as examples to represent Europe and Asia, and compares the international student mobility data to provide a clear picture of internationalization of higher education by comparing the number of student mobility. Table 2 shows the number of inbound and outbound students in Hungary and China from 2014 to 2018. The "Rate" in Table 2 indicates the inbound and outbound rate of international students compared to the total number of students.

Table 2: Number of Inbound and Outbound Students in Hungary and China

Yea	**Inbound Students**				**Outbound Students**			
	Hu	R	C	R	Hu	R	C	R
2	23	7	1	0	95	2	7	1
2	21	7	1	0	10	3	8	1
2	26	8	1	0	11	3	8	1
2	28	9	1	0	12	4	9	2
2	32	1	1	0	12	4	9	2

Note: The dataset only focuses data on mainland China. http://data.uis.unesco.org/

Despite that there was a temporary decrease of inbound students in 2015, Hungary enrolled an increasing number of international students and sent out a climbing number of native students. The Erasmus program promoted short-term Hungarian student outbound mobility within Europe. From 2013, with the establishment of the StipendiumHungaricum Scholarship, an increasing number of international students outside Europe come to study in Hungary (Tompos, 2019). In China, both inbound and outbound international students are increasing, but as shown in Table 2, China sends more students to study abroad than attracting students to study in China. There is an imbalance in outbound and inbound student mobility in China, which indicates that

China is “outward-oriented” in higher education internationalization (Wu, 2019). However, Hungary is more successful in attracting students to study in Hungary than sending native students abroad compared with China. In Hungary, even though the number of inbound and outbound students are lower than China, both inbound and outbound mobility rate is higher than China.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, Hungary and China have made significant progress in promoting higher education internationalization with the strategy of enhancing student mobility. The student mobility flow has considerably increased in both countries. To our best knowledge, this is the first study to compare the higher education internationalization and student mobility between Hungary and China. Given the similarities and differences from historical, social and economic perspectives in both countries, the present study shows comparability of the two countries and presents interesting results. This study discusses student mobility, which is a dominant indicator of evaluating higher education internationalization. With the increased number of mobilized students, higher education evolutes from national level towards international level. The justification of higher education internationalization determinants is county-specific. The collected data in the study provides an overview comparison of the Hungary and China, which helps to better understand the reality of higher education internationalization processes.

Hungarian and Chinese governments hold positive attitudes toward internationalization student mobility initiatives and activities. They promote higher education internationalization as an important initiative due to their increasing awareness of the strategic position of higher education on international impact. From the experience of higher education internationalization, the role of government should be highlighted. The strategy of student mobility and expectations on student mobility reflect the country’s role as either sending partner or hosting partner. Both outbound-oriented and inbound-oriented strategies may enhance its worldwide positive impacts and its status in the world community system. In addition, the typology of “inbound-oriented” and “outbound-oriented” higher education internationalization provides appropriate perspectives to identify each country’s long-term and short-term goals in promoting higher education and international relations. Student mobility is an effective strategy in higher education internationalization. Rather than focusing on student mobility, the governmental policy should also formulate the trend of higher education internationalization. Considering the differences in higher education determinants, it is reasonable to encourage each country to make decisions on higher education internationalization based on their own situations by emphasizing the international role of higher education.

The main significance of the study is that the goal of higher education internationalization is associated with globalization including economic, culture, politics, etc. By summarizing higher education internationalization determinants and comparing the data of student mobility, this study provides critical analysis for the development of higher education internationalization. The comparison between Hungary and China can add evidence in today’s discussion on higher education internationalization and has an impact on the international trend of promoting higher education progress.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp. 96-111
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.4300 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

What a Difference a Zoom Makes: Intercultural Interactions Between Host and International Students

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ABSTRACT

International students contribute to the academic and cultural life of universities yet they often face discrimination and isolation. Studies highlight that support from the host students can make the difference between an easy or difficult transition. This article is part of a larger project about host student perceptions of international students. Initial analysis indicated that social interactions among international and host students do not become intertwined informally and work best through planned interventions. During the pandemic institutions transitioned from face-to-face to online learning using zoom. We noticed a marked increase in interaction among students online and returned to our research participants to enquire what differences online learning had made to their intercultural experiences. This study focuses on the impact of Virtual Classrooms (VCs) on intercultural relationships, and shows that VCs offers a platform for increased interaction compared to face-to-face classrooms.

Key words: host students, intercultural behavior, international students, virtual classrooms, Zoom

Received July 3, 2021; revised October 4, 2021; accepted October 21, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Second World War the UK, along with many other Western countries, has experienced substantial increases in international student enrollment (Gu et al.,

2009). We define international students as individuals who leave their home country and move to another to study, while host students are studying at an institution in their home country. At the time of writing, however, many international students studying at UK institutions are learning via Zoom in their home countries. How remote or virtual university education will be in the post-pandemic era is unknown.

Changes in student populations, both in numbers and proximity to their sites of learning, have important implications for students' experience of intercultural contact, understood as "direct face to face communication encounters between or among individuals with differing cultural backgrounds" (Kim, 1998, p. 12). To date, most research on intercultural contact has been conducted from the perspective of international students and concluded that they expect to have significant contact with host students (Pitts, 2009; Sherry et al., 2010; Ward et al., 2001). Interacting with host students benefits international students' academic performance and sociocultural adaptation (Sawir et al., 2008), yet studies on the nature and extent of such contact reveal a worrying disparity between international students' expectations and experience, indicating low and superficial contact between the two groups (Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013; Volet & Jones, 2012; Wright & Lander, 2003). These studies confirm that international and host students have minimal intercultural interaction under standard face-to-face arrangements, enjoy little meaningful interaction with their host counterparts, suffer anxiety and lack a sense of belongingness (Glass & Westmont, 2014), occasionally worsening into hostility and discrimination (Dunne, 2013). In a global society where students have to develop transversal skills, overcoming divisions is essential (Eberle et al., 2019). Instead, conational networks comprised of students from the same country have formed to provide support to international students in foreign institutions (Gomes, 2015; Hendrickson et al., 2011).

Few studies have examined host students' perceptions of international students; indeed, Jon (2013) highlights the lacuna in research on host students' experience, and Ward (2001) concurs that most research has focused on the viewpoint of the acculturating group, that is, international students. The impact of this gap is that the state of intercultural understanding and knowledge of international and host student interaction lacks the contribution of host students' perceptions about what it means to study and learn alongside international students.

Motivated by what is absent in the literature, and given the relative infancy of the impact of technology on intercultural behavior, we pose two overarching research questions:

- What are host students' experiences of intercultural contact with international students, physically and virtually?
- What factors have an impact on – either support or prevent - greater contact between international and host students, from the host students' perception?

Our article makes two contributions. First, it focuses on host students' perception of international students and contributes to scholarship around intercultural spaces, both physical and virtual. Secondly, it identifies VCs in general and Zoom in particular as a mediator.

The paper is structured as follows: following a discussion about international students across higher education, intercultural contact and the impact of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), we explore host students' perceptions of international students under two headings: physical and virtual. Following our findings, we discuss our contribution to the field and suggest areas for further research.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Historically, international education lies at the heart of university formation. According to Lee and Rice (2007, p. 383) "cross-border education has existed since the earliest formations of higher education, beginning with the University of Paris opening its doors to scholars outside France to train its students in the 13th Century." Stonequist's The Marginal Man (1937) looked at the difficulties facing individuals caught between two cultures. Two decades after The Marginal Man two new concepts were developed, the U-Curve of adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955), and the notion of culture shock (Oberg, 1960). The U-Curve posits that international students go through four phases: honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, recovery, while Oberg's culture shock captured the emotional problems encountered when moving to a new culture.

For universities, besides the obvious financial benefits to the institution (Cantwell, 2015), the presence of international students in the classroom has the potential to change both the content and process of education. International students' choice of a particular country and university enhances its reputation and "contributes to the intellectual capital of the host country" (Smith & Khawaja, 2011, p. 700). For host students the opportunity to share their educational experience enriches their learning and broadens their outlook, and many recognize the personal and career benefits of an international network (Pittaway et al., 1998; Rientes & Temperaar, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, there is evidence that in spite of culturally diverse classrooms, host and international students do not readily mix and tend to study in parallel throughout their program, remaining in homophilic groups for both study and social purposes. Homophilic behavior, the tendency to and stay within one's own cultural peer group, is common among all groups, including our participants (McPherson et al., 2001). In contrast, intercultural behavior refers to actions that unite people of different cultures. Deardorff (2006), a well-known scholar on intercultural behaviors, suggests that intercultural competence comprises five components: knowledge, skills, attitudes, outcomes (internal and external). The latter, external observable behaviors and responses, is the focus of this study.

Many universities may assume that intercultural learning will develop naturally if students from diverse backgrounds share learning spaces, yet there is evidence that physical proximity alone does not increase interaction (Leask & Wallace, 2011). In some cases, opportunities for student support exist, but are either framed in ways that are not useful to students (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013), or are part of a larger institutional habitus that may be hidden to students who are not familiar with the ways to leverage existing programs. An outwardly diverse student body can lead to feelings of apathy or complacency among students, resulting in an unintended justification for their lack of interaction. In such circumstances, many students (and possibly their institutions) believe that passive forms of interaction such as sitting in the same room can suffice as intercultural interaction (Halualani, 2010). Indeed, the claim that exposure to intercultural learning without structure and preparation that enables students' sense making of their new experience can result in negative learning outcomes has led to calls for more attention to host students' perceptions and prompted greater engagement with these students. While some studies such as Lee (2006), Gareis (2012), and Sam and Berry (2010) have included the perspectives of host students, and the reciprocal nature of intercultural contact acknowledged,

few have considered host students' perceptions wholly. As the dominant group on most campuses, these students are a fundamental part of intercultural relations among students.

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING ON INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION

Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), as the application of tools such as discussion boards and conferencing systems, bound together in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) offer distinct benefits to students and to their institutions. Benefits include on-demand learning characterised by recorded lectures (Syynimaa, 2019) and self-assessments (Wanner & Palmer, 2018), their reach across time zones with asynchronous tools such as discussion boards (Alzahrani, 2017; Blackmon, 2012), a reduction in geographic barriers with synchronous web conferencing and the availability of their recordings (Nagy & Bernschütz, 2016) and live chat systems (Blackmon, 2012). More innovative tools such as Audience Response Systems like TurningPoint (Good, 2013) and Social Annotation tools like Diigo (Sun and Gao, 2017) offer feedback and feedforward data that is unattainable without the supporting technology; for example, instant feedback from an almost unlimited audience (not necessarily co-located) to tutors questions during a session. Skilled online instructors can achieve outstanding results using such technologies, and develop new approaches to education, such as Eric Mazur's Peer Instruction (1999), David Nicol's Peer Review (Nicol et al., 2014) as exemplified by Callaghan and Collins (2020); or a Social Annotation described by Sun and Gao (2017) and Zhu et al. (2020). For students with auditory or visual impairments, video lectures that offer live captioning and/or a large view of the speaker's face that facilitates lip reading provide a more equitable experience. While most of the benefits espoused to date focus on the educational advantages, yet cognizant of the fact that we are social learners, it prioritizes the learning over the social, and there is a lack of research about the social impact of online learning among students, and thus on its effects on intercultural relations. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that for many learners, Zoom has become their learning tool as well as their social window and outlet. Zoom, like all online teaching tools, introduced barriers, most notable being a massive reduction in social presence (Garrison, 2007) that mask the distinct features of each student, offering instead a face on a screen, or worse, text on a page, or even lost in the sea of an audience response system. This removes nearly all the nonverbal communication (NVC) that has long been held as key to developing relationships between peers and teaching staff (Garrison, 2007). We are at an interesting juncture where the relationship between emotions and virtual learning is well recognized (Henritius et al., 2019), the impact of the pandemic on forced virtual learning is not yet well understood.

When the COVID virus escalated in March 2020, institutions withdrew face-to-face teaching with little or no notice. The move to online teaching was seen as the obvious alternative, although there was very little time for planning or staff training. Some suggest the majority of tutors lacked the technical and pedagogical skills and experience to provide an equitable online experience (McCabe et al., 2021), yet others, on reflection, found "Established practices changed quickly, with educators showing 'pedagogic agility'" (Kidd & Murray, 2020, p. 542). Some characterise the move to online teaching as "Emergency Online Teaching" (E. Jubb, personal communication, June, 2020) and "Emergency e-learning response" (Kidd & Murray, 2020, p. 552). Inexperienced tutors tried to replicate face-to-face delivery with zoom lectures rather than

move to an online delivery model. This, as Zhu et al. point out "…is misguided, and is destined to miscarry" (Zhu et al., 2020, p. 261).

To allow for planning, some institutions, such as mine (LSTM), pushed back their delivery timetable by one or two weeks that gave academics and support staff a window to develop model frameworks such as the pre-recorded lectures or similar content provision and asynchronous online activities. Pre-pandemic this was followed up typically by face-to-face sessions facilitated by web conferencing system – an "inverted" (Lage et al., 2000) or "flipped" (Kaw & Hess, 2007) approach that, as Akçayır and Akçayır's review of 71 research articles on the pedagogy (2018, p. 343) found that "… the flipped model in education yields positive academic outcomes."

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a three-phased approach in which the first two phases overlapped somewhat. The first phase was a series of conversations about our observations of student interaction online. Phase two involved in-depth interviews with 36 participants that aimed to gain deeper insights into the reasons for our observations and to analyze host students personal accounts of their intercultural experiences in a face-to-face setting and via Zoom. The third phase was a focus group comprised of over 20 participants where we revisited the interview questions as a group conversation.

The research applied a qualitative methodology and the data gathering method was semi-structured in-depth interviews (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Interviews took place between March and September 2020, the first eight before the first lockdown and the rest online via Zoom. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using broader questions throughout focusing on narrower areas of inquiry as data collection and analysis progressed in parallel (Spradley, 1979). For example, the interplay between challenge and opportunity emerged early as significant themes, so we revised our questions accordingly. We asked follow-up questions to clarify information. Questions were open-ended and aimed at allowing "unanticipated statements and stories to emerge" (Charmaz, 2006 p. 26). Interviews were recorded with participant consent, allowing us to focus on asking questions and listening, picking up nuance in the moment (Anderson, 2013). In addition to the transcriptions we had taken notes of content that was not recorded to preserve insights that could later inform coding and analysis.

After our interviews and notes from our VC observations of increased intercultural interaction, we invited all participants to an online focus group called *What difference does zoom make to intercultural interaction*? 22 participants attended for just under an hour and the discussion was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The Participants

Out of 140 students contacted by email, 38 agreed to participate, with over 30 of these aged 18 -24. Two subsequently dropped out citing work pressures as the reason. Four students were over 30 and the majority were female (24). 20 participants were postgraduates and 16 undergraduates. Most students were from the city in which the research took place or within a twenty-mile radius. All participants were interviewed once with interviews lasting approximately 40 minutes.

So, 36 students across two universities in one UK city participated, and all participants were full time undergraduate or postgraduates. With approval from program leaders, students voluntarily participated following an email request and an online talk from one of the authors

explaining the research questions and inviting host students to participate. We also used snowball sampling by asking for suggestions of other potential interviewees. From this, some new names emerged but convenient times for interviews were hard to find so no further interviews took place. We kept interviewing until data collection and analysis stopped generating new themes, signaling theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data Analysis

Because several participants were interviewed individually through initial conversations, interviews and the focus group, the analysis was consistent with a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and data analysis began concurrently with data collection through team meetings and discussions of interview notes. Each interview transcript was coded using line by line coding, with in vivo descriptors to assign labels to codes. Through initial coding, 21 categories and later under two broader core categories: "challenge" and "opportunity." Although there were nuanced differences between these two categories, both indicated an understanding of what intercultural behavior entailed, physically and virtually. Emerging findings were discussed with participants at random intervals that served as a means of improving their reliability.

Drawback of Methods

The methodology is subject to several drawbacks. The relatively small sample size means that findings are not generalizable; reliance on interviews implies that student reported conversations rather than observed actions and behaviors were privileged, and the coding process subjective and open to different interpretations. Further, the students were mostly female, studying in the same city (albeit at two universities), and most participants were from the same city or its the surrounding area. The study focuses mostly on host students. In light of the relative lack of attention afforded to this group in existing research, such a decision is justified. The main challenge in an exploratory study such as this one was to balance description with comparison to enable analytical generalization.

FINDINGS

This research focused on host students' perceptions of intercultural interaction using Zoom. Students reported that sharing their programs with international students offered meaningful opportunities to engage with students from other countries and different cultural backgrounds; all too often, however, there was a gap between students' aspiration about what working alongside international students could be like potentially and their actual experience. We present these experiences in participants' own words, differentiated by pseudonyms. The work of Deardorff et al. (2012) has been useful to frame commonalities and develop themes. We discuss the main findings under the two broad headings of opportunity and challenge, each with two sub sections: physical space and virtual space that align with our research questions:

- What are host students' experiences of intercultural contact with international students, physically and virtually?
- What factors have an impact on – support or prevent - greater contact between international and host students from the host students' perception?

We define opportunity as a set of circumstances or resources that make it possible to do something, and challenge as circumstances or resources that make it more difficult to do something.

Opportunity

Physical Space. If proximity is a prerequisite to physical interaction, it seems that encouraging intercultural interaction was slightly doomed from the outset, since in both our research sites international students lived in separate accommodation to host students. What's more, within the classrooms and lecture theatres, groups of international students, in common with groups of host female/male often sat together in small cliques, further reducing the opportunity for intercultural collaboration, formally or informally. Several participants also mentioned that they came across very few international students socially in pubs and clubs and assumed that international students socialized either not at all or only with their own nationality in their flats. This physical remoteness between international and host students was expressed as both a matter of fact and a source of sadness by many participants.

Many participants mentioned the lack of (organized) opportunities to mix with international students: "It's like we are on the same campus but separated by parallel lines, doing the same courses, sometimes eating in the same restaurants but never actually spending time together." (Sian)

> Apart from on your course, and only then for group work, do we ever communicate, host and international. Personally, I wish there were more opportunities because I want to have an international career and what better place to start my networks than at uni? (Ryan)

In contrast, organized activities that enabled intercultural contact to develop were praised:

> The best thing outside of my course was the global fair. I volunteered to help set up and it was such hard work, but I actually have three international students in my social group now. Just hanging around with people doing what was necessary to get the fair off the ground was such good bonding. Just seemed like a bit of hard work at the time but as the days went by, we really got to know each other, more than that, like being with each other. That was so rewarding. (Anna)

Many participants expressed a frustration at having to engineer and self-organize opportunities to mix with international students, and felt that opportunities ought to be organized by the university:

> I want to have a network for my career. I want to get an international placement in a couple of years. LinkedIn is ok but I want to know people, you know like face to face. I find myself deliberately trying to make opportunities to mix and it is hard because we just don't share the same space. I really have to go out of my way. The uni or course or union could do much more. (Jan)

Two further themes related to opportunity were the impact of single international students, and group learning, in particular action learning. Research has uncovered the significance of 'one off' students, often sole students from one country, perhaps more motivated to socialize with host students, and act as a bridge between cultures (Hendrickson et al., 2011). This highlights the role of social capital to forge relationships beyond homophilic ones, in

particular Putnam's (2000) assertion that while bonding and binding ties keep one secure in one's group, it is bridging ties that enable external relationships to develop.

Second, the postgraduate students at both institutions undertook their dissertation module for their master's programs in Action Learning Sets (ALS). Developed by Reg Revans in the 1940s to unite individuals with a major piece of work to do, organizes groups typically comprised of eight members who meet regularly as a group over a number of months. For our participants, the first meeting was face-to-face and, due to the pandemic, subsequent meetings were online. For many, it was a very useful intercultural opportunity:

> "The ALS groups were great for mixing and learning about international students. All the effort of trying to get to know others was taken out by the ALS" (Annette).

> "For most it was the first time I had heard them (international students) speak, loved it. After the first set, we set up WhatsApp and really began to get to know one another; then the pandemic kicked in so it continued online" (Dave).

> "The ALS became at first just about our course, so learning focused in one room but in the next few days people were inviting members to social event too. I wish we could have worked in these sets for other modules too" (Lawrence).

> "I want to build an international career. The Action Learning gave me the opportunity during my PG time to do this; without the ALS I would have to make do with LinkedIn" (Lawrence).

The desire to mix and connect with international students for social and future career reasons was highlighted by a few participants:

> I really want to mix with international students and find limited chance to do so. I have actually joined a language group hosted by students from Southeast Asia, more to mix than learn the language. (Connie)

Virtual Space. At an early stage in semester two, due to the pandemic, most students' learning shifted online. Initial adjustment issues included technical problems, establishing online etiquette over, for instance, keeping cameras on or off, punctuality, informal or formal participation protocols. By the end of the first month of the first lockdown, online learning had become the new norm. For many, this foregrounded a new way of relating to their peers, particularly those peers whom they had previously

had little interaction.

> You know I have made some good friends on my course but, it kind of sometimes holds you back. It sounds daft but it's like you can't dump your group once you have them. Zoom has freed me up to chat to lots of different people in groups; I wish I had not been so narrow before. I love breakout rooms and finding myself with new people. See it as a challenge now but face-to-face I would never just walk into a new room. (Sian)

Another commented how Zoom provided more sustainable contact that was somehow less daunting and less intense than face to face, for example:

> I was an international student buddy last year and it didn't really create any sustainable bond between international students and host students. This year, though online, it has been miles better. We had induction on Zoom and everyone mucked in more than f2f,

then weekly zoom catch ups with our buddies., no pressure just like an informal Q&A session if anything had cropped up they were unsure of, less full on than last year. I think both host and international have benefited. (Ross)

Yet another commented how Zoom made lighter work of interaction: "I kind of get to build my relationships with a wider range of students, including international, without having to commit too much."

Already having enough friends was cited by several participants as justification for not reaching out too hard to international friends who some perceived as potentially more demanding than homophile friends. For instance: "I've got friends and can't afford any more with study and work",(Connor). But later Connor said, "I would say my study has improved massively through getting involved with international students on Zoom. I hadn't realized just how stuck in my own little world I was." Interrupted by his friend who added:

> I don't think you were stuck in your own world. To be honest I think Zoom has been great because you can get to know more people, cultural barriers are down and you don't feel obliged to go for a coffee afterwards, win-win. (Dan)

For others, there was a sense of regret that it was not until they started the ALS towards the end of their program that they saw the value of mixing with international students, and they expressed sadness that the opportunity had not arisen sooner:

> For the ALS you just do end up getting to know more international students on many levels, either face to face or online. We became a group pretty quickly and started to share both academic and social support, sort of letting people into our group and WhatsApp, just nice getting to know people. The ALS gave us the space to get to know each other, and the pressure to be too much was lower on zoom. To be honest I was a bit sad at what I thought losing the ALS group with the pandemic, but it was even better online, less pressure, just hanging out going through feedback without having to commit to being BFF … (laughs). (Lucie)

Challenges

Physical. Participants highlighted the effort required to communicate and befriend international students. When pressed to talk about the challenges, many referred to issues such as the difficulty in understanding each other's culture, sense of humor, work ethic, group norms, routines, expectations, even time-keeping was mentioned. As Lucy said:

> "I'm not being deliberately awkward, but when you already have friends and a good social life, why go to the effort of meeting international students. For a start often their English isn't that great and the sense of humor is different, so what's in it?

However, many repeated the feeling that single international students both made more effort and were more worth the effort. The first occurred in the context of international students with few co nationals to depend on who might therefore be 'forced' to interact socially (Hendrickson et al., 2011). For example:

> "If there's only one international student it's better for mixing, they make more effort" (Sophie).

Alice commented: "There's a Mongolian student on our course and last year there was a guy from Ukraine. They really made an effort, I suppose because they are on their own and didn't have anyone else to rely on."

Later on during the interviews, participants discussed the deeper impact of the isolated international student who is not in a clique, usually because they are the only one from their country, that can be quite profound:

"(name) was great because she sort of brought us all together. When she was in the group East met West so to speak - she was like the gel that helped us all mix" (Rachel).

And another: "I did enjoy her company and it kind of opened up a bit of a new world to me. To be honest I wish I had made more effort sooner. What I had previously seen as sheer effort now seemed like worth it."

Over time and once host students had interacted a little with international students, they began to regard the challenge of mixing with international students as a mutual behavior, rather than the previously held belief that international students ought to put more effort in:

" once I had worked with ….. and enjoyed it, I saw that I too should put more effort in. After all, why should it just be up to the international students, it's kind of bad manners really the way I was."

And many returned to the theme of the single international student:

"Everyone makes more effort with one - we got really good insights into this student's culture. She made effort and we did, too. It all had a knock-on effect as the more effort everyone put in the more worthwhile it seemed. (Alice)

Virtual. Overwhelmingly, participants reported that intercultural relations were 'easier' and 'more natural' online compared to their previous experience face-to-face. For many, like Olivia below, Zoom heralded a new kind of interaction that seemed to require less effort:

> Our course and teaching went fully online with the pandemic. It was so odd how relationships changed. I spoke to people who I would never ordinarily talk to, in breakout rooms. It was random and great. It's not that I was biased about international students, more I couldn't be bothered making effort. But it's been really good and relaxed chatting online"

So, the online environment had the effect of making connections easier for some, requiring less effort, as Ryan expressed:

> It was as if all the walls we build around each other when we have so called choice slipped away and we mixed much better. Zoom smashed down walls that we had constructed - not sure why but maybe it's that 'little Britain' mentality or too much effort, but it was worth it. I have got to know some Chinese, a couple of Nigerians and a French now pretty well

Others spoke of how their own attitudes had shifted on Zoom. For example:

> Once we had got over all the techy issues and it kind of became the new norm, I would say I had an attitude change to international students. I hadn't really put any effort in previously and couldn't be bothered mixing. (Tom)

Similar comments about the extra challenges entailed in relating to international students were discussed in the focus group. For instance:

> I hadn't appreciated how much my own biases stopped me mixing with international students. If I am honest, I thought it was too much effort and they should do all the running

Here's an interesting perspective, shared in the focus group and summarized by Sian:

> You know I have made some good friends on my course, but it kind of sometimes holds you back. It sounds daft but it's like you can't dump your group once you have them. Zoom has freed me up to chat to lots of different people in groups; I wish I had not been so narrow before. I love break out rooms and finding myself with new people. See it as a challenge now but face to face I would never just walk into a new room.

Several host students mentioned the difficulties around starting and maintaining relationships with international students that might involve the provision of practical support or the perceived effort many students associated with such support. Many participants acted out a mental cost-benefit analysis, whereby they might get involved with an international student if they deemed it to be 'worth the effort', resonant of Homan's social exchange theory (Zoller & Muldoon, 2019). Whilst not commonly applied to analyzing intercultural contact, social exchange theory provides an explanation for the tendency of people in mixed culture groups to form 'cliques' with people from their own culture. Sometimes, this might be due to the perceived benefits of interaction with individuals from different cultures are perceived as lower than from own-culture interactions.

This was exemplified in the following comment, with similar sentiments echoed by four other participants:

> I was kind of reluctant to start a chat that might lead to getting tied and labelled as the go to person. I can see the mutual benefits but as well as my study I work and already have enough friends. Hanging out on zoom for both teaching and just social is so much less pressure. (Hannah)

Later, Hannah said:

> Zoom and especially the breakout rooms have been a boom haha. I have got to know not only more of my course like English students but lots more chatting to internationals as well. It's far less a big deal online like who you are sitting next to or get into a group with and then feeling obliged to stay with them or sit with them in future. Much prefer Zoom, more chilled.

DISCUSSION

Deardoff (2011) asserts that respectful and open-minded attitudes are antecedents to the development of positive intercultural relationships; these attitudes were present in all our participants. The comments and ideas presented above indicate that host students value the presence of international students and the opportunities to develop more intercultural friendships, whether physical or virtual. Like many students, these participants were seeking experiences that increased their knowledge of global issues and enabled them to interact with people from other cultures and build a network that might benefit their future careers. Many participants shared their belief that better intercultural relations could be possible if opportunities to interact were more frequent and organized, aligning with Jon's (2013) research, which suggests that the purposeful development of intercultural learning opportunities can have a positive outcome for all students. Host student participants in this research broadly suggested that planned rather than voluntary interaction worked better on the basis that voluntary interaction typically resulted in homophile behavior by both international and host students. A lack of engagement between host and international students has led many authors to suggest that institutions of higher education

should take a more active role in facilitating intercultural behavior (McLachland & Justice, 2009; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013).

The overwhelming message from this study was that intercultural contact does not happen if left to chance. Instead, it has to be organized, purposeful, and timely, whether physical or virtual. Interventions need to start early on before patterns are set and groups or cliques form. A recurring theme in the study was the tendency for all students to form homophilic groups if allowed to do so, and supported by existing studies (Barron, 2006; Volet & Ang, 1998). Creating the social context and the social environment for mixed groups to form has to be planned and engineered, and Zoom's breakout facility created that for many. Many participants spoke of the need for planned space to meet and mix, so we should not underestimate the importance of dedicated physical or virtual space: space to 'perform' intercultural behavior, to organize, collaborate, and mix, beyond as well as inside the lecture theatre.

Online platforms obscure most of the characteristics that give rise to homophile behaviors (gender, race, age, and ethnicity). Names can often identify gender and ethnicity, but they do not carry the impact of a physical presence. Thus, the reader of a forum post focuses on the message, not the messenger, hence lowering cultural barriers. Further, technology makes all peers equally accessible, contrasting sharply with a physical space, where communicating with students from a different group requires more physical and social effort. These ideas dovetail with Anna's and others' experience of swapping information on their respective subjects that "… wouldn't have happened in normal [f2f] modules" (Anna).

Asynchronous forums offer time to reflect on contributions. From authors' observations and anecdotal feedback from some students it seems that for some students whose first language is not English, such as many international students, reflection time is also translation time, improving their understanding, facilitating better responses, further lowering cultural barriers.

Web conferencing systems like Zoom facilitate more of a social presence than a forum, enabling students to see and hear their peers, thus making characteristics that seed homophilic behavior more visible than in a forum. However, homophilic groups are difficult (if not impossible) to form unless forced by the leader via breakout rooms or similar; thus, communication between international and host students is far more likely. This is evidenced by [Mentor Buddy] who said, "We had induction on Zoom and everyone mucked in more than f2f."

Whatever shape the worlds of work and study emerge in the post-pandemic period remains to be seen. What is clear from this study is that there is a desire to mix, that virtual classrooms have in part awakened from dormancy, and that technology has removed cultural barriers making communication likely between all peers enabling host and international students to collaborate and socialize. Maybe if we return to traditional teaching and learning, virtual classrooms have provided an opportunity for meaningful intercultural engagement and potential personal transformation that we should cherish. Challenges for institutions lie in both a general acceptance and encouragement of such groupings as vital sources of learning and support for international and host students. Such diverse classrooms and interaction that virtual classrooms provides is one of the key aspirations for universities as they seek to become more global in nature (Killick, 2018).

Study Implications

We found that international and host students do not engage in intercultural behavior spontaneously, remaining instead in homophilic groups. Overwhelmingly, host students reported that it was through organized activity, physical or online, that they came to know international students better and welcomed these opportunities. Prior to the pandemic's lockdown and suspension of face-to-face contact, organized social opportunities, across academic and extracurricular contexts, were hugely popular and successful in enabling interculturalism. Interventions such as group learning, action learning, charity events, and social events were highlighted as 'brilliant' chances to network and make friends, and indeed some of this had been replicated online. In the words of one participant "it is often just the simplest interventions that bring people together, like a Zoom drop in about an assessment, and stop that awful separation and distance from each other that can be so tough to crack." Our study advances research in this field in two ways. First, we elevate the significance of host students' role in intercultural relationships. Second, we have demonstrated that successful intercultural relationships can develop in both face-to-face and virtual worlds and both methods can share and learn from each other.

Further Research

Host students are the main contributors to universities financially and educationally, and universities can reciprocate by understanding their perceptions. This paper raises many questions. For instance, young people experience more loneliness than other age groups (Achterbergh et al., 2020), likely exasperated by the pandemic, so what is the impact of online learning on loneliness? We listened to participants' stories of getting to know international students either face-to-face or online, and while organized activity via both spaces was essential, online offered the most comfortable and less pressured environment. Does online interaction offer a temporary escape from homophilic pressure to stay in your group? Do international students currently studying in their home countries feel more inclined and able to interact online wrapped in the safety net of their own culture? Do some teaching and learning styles work better online? Is there a generational difference and do millennials simply feel more relaxed online? Finally, the perceptions of host students are an area of nascent research and more understanding of this might resolve some of the tensions that can arise, leading to a better experience for both. Of course, this can be supported by further research into the perceptions of international students.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp. 112-125
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3808 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

The Smell, the Emotion, and the Lebowski Shock: What Virtual Education Abroad Cannot Do?

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ABSTRACT

In response to the international mobility challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions have tried to shift to virtual programs in an attempt to provide continued education abroad experiences. This situation has amplified discussions about online education abroad programs as a way to address some equity issues in the internationalization of higher education. However, there seem to be few discussions about differences between physical and virtual programing with regard to students' intercultural learning experiences. Fundamentally, what dimensions of traditional education abroad programs can and cannot be replicated by online programing? Through a narrative inquiry with three international educators on their own intercultural learning experiences, this study argues that the personal cultural immersion and the associated embodied learning of complex nuanced cultural instances cannot be replaced by virtual programing.

Keywords: study abroad, virtual, online, intercultural learning, immersion, embodied learning, small culture

Received April 30, 2021; revised October 20, 2021; accepted October 26, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Education abroad is a major vehicle for students to obtain intercultural competences. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption to students' study

abroad plans. With a ban on international travel adopted by almost all countries as a measure to slow down the spread of the virus, students' international mobility came to a sudden halt. During the long lockdown period, higher education institutions around the world were forced to switch to online offering of their programs, including some study abroad programs. Due to the apparent advantages of online study abroad, such as high accessibility and low cost, it has been seen as a silver lining of the pandemic. Many educators predict that the virtual study abroad on Zoom will continue to stay after the pandemic due to its advantages (Lashbrook, 2020). There are discussions about virtual study abroad programing as a viable solution to the deep fraught equity challenge in international education. Can virtual education abroad replace in-person education abroad when it comes to intercultural learning? What are the aspects of the overseas experiences that cannot be achieved through virtual platforms? This is the question we hope to answer in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education Abroad for Intercultural Learning

Intercultural competences involve the ability to adapt behavior and communication to intercultural contexts, using a variety of skills, knowledge and attitudes (Bennett, 2009; Deardorff, 2006). Given today's growing interdependence among nations, intercultural competence is seen as an imperative for students' global success (Reimers, 2009). One important goal, if not the most important goal, for universities and colleges to engage in internationalization is to help students acquire intercultural competences so that they are able to fully participate in the international world (Stier, 2004). Universities around the world are aiming to turn their students into "global-ready graduates" or "global citizens" (Hunter et al., 2006; Paige & Goode, 2009). But what is the best approach to students' intercultural learning?

Research has shown that students' immersive exposure to different cultures through study abroad opportunities is the greatest condition to develop their intercultural communication skills (Williams, 2005). Education abroad experiences benefit university students in their development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills in cross-cultural communication so much so that it can be a transformative experience for some individuals (Root & Ngampornchai, 2012). The main outcomes of study abroad experiences may include foreign language acquisition, an increase of intercultural sensitivity, a decrease in xenophobia, fear or ethnic distance, and improved intercultural communication skills (Parsons, 2010). One of the five most important outcomes of study abroad experiences identified by NAFSA is that study abroad fosters intercultural understanding, provides a global context, and builds enlightened nationalism (NAFSA, 2021a). A study in the U.S. shows that an interest in improving one's understanding of other cultures and countries has a positive influence on American students' intent to study abroad (Stroud, 2010). This is not to say that simply sending students on planes and getting them to another country will naturally lead to intercultural learning. Instead, carefully planned activities, meaningful interactions, and scaffolded reflections need to be done to increase chances of intercultural learning (Nguyen, 2017; Williams, 2005).

Despite its many benefits, education abroad is not without problems. There is the danger of shallow experiences and even strengthened cultural stereotypes for students if not done properly. It is also expensive, and not all students have the financial means to participate. This has created an ethical problem in education abroad as a learning opportunity (NAFSA, 2021b). In this context, virtual online programing has been seen as a possible solution to the equity issue in international education as it is cost effective and thus more accessible (Halpern, 2020; Mitchell, 2020; Ogden & Hulse, 2021). Collaborative Online International/Intercultural Learning (COIL), diverse online programs for students to communicate and collaborate with peers from across the world in real-time but virtually (Rubin, 2015), has become a catch phrase in international education, attached with high expectations of making global learning universal. Even if we

assume that the economically advantaged and disadvantaged students have equal access to a high powered computer and high speed internet (which is not at all the case), are virtual programs and physical programs the same quality? Are we able to fully solve the equity issue by sending financially capable students to go on a physical in-person education abroad program and providing financially challenged students with a virtual online program?

Experiential Learning of Small Cultures

What makes cultural immersion during education abroad so crucial to intercultural learning? To answer this question, classical literature on "experiential learning" and "small cultures" is reviewed to inform this study. Dewey is one of the earliest champions for experiential learning. In *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938) carefully developed a philosophy of experience in education. He views life experience as the foundation for learning. According to Dewey, learners are not blank slates waiting to be filled. Instead, everyone has the intellectual capacity to learn from experiences. An educator's job is thus no other than to create an educational experience. For experiences to be educational, interactive processes of learning in a social context are important. In relation to Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning, Johnson's (1987) experiential philosophy also points to the importance of embodied experience as a way of knowing. According to him, our physical body is the basis of our meaning, imagination and reason (Johnson, 1987). Specifically, the meanings that we make out of the experiential environment are filtered by the schematic structures that are based on our bodily functions. Conversely, the schemas based on our bodily functions shape and constrain our understanding and reason about the world. This is how we learn. We learn through our body. Intercultural learning through education abroad is a typical kind of experiential learning. The embodied dimension is key to immersive experiences overseas. Hall (1976) used the iceberg as a metaphor to refer to the complexity of a culture. Each culture has some elements shown above the water that are easily visible to people, but much more is hidden under the water that is difficult to see.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Holliday (1999), we need to distinguish two paradigms of "culture". The default "large culture" refers to the prescribed ethnic, national and international cultures that are by nature vulnerable to stereotypical reduction. Different from "large culture", "small cultures" refers to small social groupings and activities wherever there is cohesive behavior, and the focus on small cultures can best embrace cultural complexity and avoid cultural stereotyping. In students' intercultural learning, do we want them to engage in "large culture" learning or "small cultures" learning? The broad strokes of large culture differences are important for students to know as tendencies and general patterns. But it would be more important for students to realize the complexity within each large culture, to avoid sweeping cultural stereotypes, and to acquire the ability to detect, define and demystify nuanced small cultures within a large culture.

The experiential learning of small cultures is used in this paper as a theoretical framework to understand the differences between physical and virtual study abroad experiences. This conceptual framework has an ontological dimension and an epistemological dimension. Ontologically, the focus is on the complex, nuanced small cultures, as opposed to the streamlined and reduced large culture. Epistemologically, the framework endorses embodied experiences as the foundation of deep constructive learning, as opposed to deductive abstraction in theoretical learning. These two dimensions adopted as a theoretical framework allow us to foreground the issue of quality when examining physical and virtual education abroad experiences. According to Kolb (1984), good-quality learning goes through holistic cycles of experience, perception, cognition, and action. We cannot cut corners. With a focus on the quality of learning experiences, this study hopes to determine whether physical and virtual education abroad programs are equally effective in helping students learn the nuanced small cultures.

METHODOLOGY

Through this paper, three international educators at a large Canadian university, one with a PhD and the other two with master's degrees, revisit and reflect on their past intercultural learning experiences abroad against the backdrop of their current experiences engaged in virtual intercultural programing for students. Narrative inquiry, one of the five approaches in qualitative research (Creswell, 2006), is deemed to be a suitable methodology in their inquiry, given its focus on lived experiences as the ontological center in their entirety and complexity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Social sciences need fewer theories and more stories to honor the experiences of those involved (Coles, 1989). Narratology is an appropriate method for reflective inquiry, such as this current one, as 'it attends especially to individuals, particular contexts and the circumstances of individuals in contexts' (Lyons, 2010, p. 20). A typical narrative study consists of three to five participants to allow in-depth exploration of life stories (Creswell, 2006). The goal of a narrative study is not to derive theories and generalize to the large population, but to deepen our understanding of people's lived experiences. The following questions are used to guide the narrative inquiry process:

1. Intercultural learning has been seen as an important goal in education abroad experiences. With COVID-19, many education abroad programs have been offered online. To what extent do you think virtual programing can replace or replicate in-person experiences when it comes to intercultural learning?
2. To answer the above questions, could you please share your personal experiences and stories in intercultural learning while you were physically in another country and reflect on what elements of those in-person experiences might or might not be achievable through virtual programs?

Inspired by van Manen's (1990) phenomenological approach to educational research in which the researcher seeks the meaning of life through writing and rewriting about the lived experiences of self and others, the three participants were invited to write down their stories. More importantly, they were invited to reflect on their stories as well. The three participants all had over 10 years of intercultural education experiences abroad, and they all had rich experiences working as international educators to support students' intercultural learning. During COVID lockdown, they were all mandated to design and implement virtual intercultural programs as part of their work. The three participants were selected through convenience sampling at the Canadian university. We recognize that stories are constructive entities, as they are our interpretations of life experiences as well as life experiences themselves (Bruner, 2004). Thus, story writing is an inquisitive process. Through story writing, they revisit and construct the meanings of their intercultural learning experiences. It took the three participants more than a week to finish writing their stories in response to the two guiding questions. The end results are three reflective narratives with rich descriptive details and critical phenomenological reflections. We keep the integrity of the three personal narratives with phenomenological reflections as findings of this study, leaving a cross-section analysis at the discussion section. The goal is to achieve reliability by giving readers the opportunity to read the original narratives before reading our analysis.

FINDINGS

The following are the three independent reflective narratives presented as findings of this study. In consultation with three participants, they were brought to similar lengths and a title was given to each story to highlight the key messages.

The Curated Keyhole

My most obvious intercultural experience has been with Japan, a culture different enough from my Canadian culture that active intercultural learning was required. My first visit to

Japan was with my high school rugby team for two weeks. Before the trip, I started learning about Japan "virtually": I read some books, rented a movie or two, took an introductory Japanese conversation class, went to a local Japanese restaurant, and started peppering my friends' Japanese grandmother with questions. I learned a bit about bowing, a few greetings, and saw photos of Japanese gardens and castles. Even so, I remember being overwhelmed when we got there. The pulsating neon-billboards penetrated my eyeballs unlike any photo or video I'd seen. The streets were full of strange smells I could never have imagined. And even if I'd seen a photo of a squat toilet and had experienced campground and back-country "toilets" in Canada, nothing had prepared me for how to position myself with a Japanese squat toilet - and none of the conversational phrases I'd learned were up to the task of asking how.

I wonder if I could have learned as much about Japan or have developed my life-long relationship with Japan if I had never physically gone there and learned only "virtually" instead? Even writing the question sounds odd - of course not! What made my physical, in-person experience in Japan so much more meaningful, without a doubt, was the randomness, the smells, the skin sensations, the on-the-spot uncertainty with no easy escape to the familiar, and that it was largely my own individually-directed experience versus an experience totally created, controlled, and curated by someone else à la virtual world. Being fully human in the world means utilizing all our senses in a complex, three-dimensional space with trillions of simultaneous potential stimuli. Authentic intercultural experiences require randomness and immersion to allow self-constructivist learning. Immersed in another culture, we can experiment with the pieces of knowledge we discover on our own or what someone else has decided we should know, and then we discover variation and nuance covered in real contexts (e.g. subtleties in voice, gesture, situation, and even time).

My interest in Japan continued after that high school trip. At university, I took a few Japan/Asia courses. I found more opportunities to visit Japan: a student conference, a summer job, an internship, and four years on the Japan English Teaching (JET) program. Each trip to Japan brought more questions, questions that did not have definite answers. So many things were different, if not 180 degrees opposite. Verbs came at the end of sentences and pronouns weren't even necessary. Wood saws and planes were pulled rather than pushed. People mostly talked with their own groups, and had a more strict hierarchy of relationships. Rice and grilled fish were eaten at breakfast. Tiny kitchens resulted in multi-dish meals rather than large kitchens and one-plate meals. Workers seemed to work "long" rather than "hard." Years were counted from the ascension of a new emperor and had no built-in continuity to the past. ATM bank machines were only open during business hours.

It is important to recognize that physical in-person experience does not preclude virtual supplements but virtual learning often excludes physical learning. I put quotes around "virtual" above because I believe virtual learning is nothing new. It goes back to the development of writing and then through every media development allowing us to experience a time or place other than where we are right now: painting, books, photography, telephones, fax, magnetic tape, optical discs, and now digitalization. As mentioned above, I learned about Japan remotely (i.e. virtually) by reading books, watching movies, and talking to people. Thus, "virtual" learning can be a good preparation for, or supplement to, or reflection on our real-life experiences. In recent years, there has been a seismic shift in the availability of the "virtual", but these second-hand experiences are still only limited representations of reality. People still want to travel, live, and socialize in unfamiliar places. Experiencing these virtual surrogates is like scratching an itch through your clothing - it kind of works but not completely.

The virtual world limits the overlap we share with other people: we are not sharing smells, we hear different background noises, and we exist in different temperatures. The virtual world gives us a very limited view on another culture. We see that culture through a keyhole, on a flat-screen with no depth, with some sounds but no smells or touch. Virtual learning compresses

meaning into efficient packets. Virtual world communication is a different discourse of communication. For intercultural learning, the virtual experience is too curated. The virtual world is too filtered and made too neat. Also, the virtual may be unrealistically kind: in real-life Japan I experienced disdain, insults, illness, and even unusual physical pain like burning my toes on live charcoal under the kotatsu table inside a freezing cold house.

These days, I am thankful for the virtual world to keep in touch with Japanese friends and deepen my knowledge about the culture but it is only meaningful because I have the physical memories and experiences. When I watch a video on Japanese cooking, I remember the counter-top propane stove and the smell of the fish market. When I look at photos of Japanese gardens, I remember sweating in the hot sun wearing soft-fabric, split-toe gardener boots and cotton gloves digging in the earth around a massive tree I was helping move from one garden to another. The physical is where humans have existed for millennia - our bodies are built to respond to the physical even as our minds are developed to think about it. They are a perfect combination.

But I wasn't just learning about Japan; I was learning about culture and the inter-cultural. Japan was a catalyst forcing me to see more variety everywhere. If there was variety in even a supposedly homogenous Japan where it's not uncommon for people to say "ware ware nihonjin..." meaning "we Japanese... do x, or think y, or believe z", what kind of variety is there in Canada that I'd been missing? My parents and I live in different cities in Canada. These days, we do share many things virtually (telephone, text, video calls) but only, I think, because we can imagine many aspects of a shared physical world. When I talk to my parents about their morning walk or they send a photo - I can imagine the smells of cedar and fir, the sound of river ripples, the cars along the road, and the scratch of the black berry bushes. But, as time passes without sharing physical space, the interactions become more vague and less immediate.

Similarly, when we see back-country camping blogs, photos, or videos, we can imagine the silence of sitting beside a glacier fed lake broken by a swarm of annoying mosquitoes or even verbal disagreements over which path to take or whose turn it is to get water. However, when we try to share advice and suggestions with friends who want to try camping in Canada, all the photos and videos and words in the world cannot convey why it is important to take toques and mitts and heavy sweaters when the temperature forecast is 20c during the day. And nothing can prepare people for the fatigue that an extra one kg of gear in a pack can cause over five days of hiking up and down steep trails. Communication, including intercultural communication, is about empathy. It is about being able to imagine yourself in the physical environment of sounds, touch, smells, and tastes of the other. It is also about imagining the discomfort of others in your own familiar spaces so you might help make their lives better, i.e. compassion. It is hard to conjure some of these feelings virtually if your body has not physically experienced them before - and those sensations need constant recharging to remain relevant.

A few years ago, a Japanese friend in a small town where I lived said that the first three Canadian JET program teachers in the 1990s (me included) were generally remembered fondly and kept in touch with people in the town but connections with later teachers petered out quickly after they left, if they were even strong during their tenure. We hypothesized many reasons but settled on the internet and virtual world as a major culprit. We early ones lived there in pre-internet times when even telephone calls were prohibitively expensive so we had no bubble of familiarity to retreat to and isolate from the local (e.g. email, streaming media, social media). We didn't have endless videos or websites explaining someone else's view of Japanese culture or what we should learn and see, and do, and cook. We therefore spent more time interacting with people in awkward and unusual situations because our choices were to participate in something with someone or not at all. As long as the virtual world is a source for conversations, or an inspiration for exploring, or an aid to understanding, it is fine. But it is dangerous as a replacement for those.

The Bite-sized Chunks

I grew up on the Canadian prairies with the idea of Sunday roasts, with potatoes and gravy. It was shortly into my stay in Japan when I started to crave a roast and all the fixings. A British friend and I built out a plan to subject our Japanese friends to one of our culinary norms. I went to a large supermarket chain to buy the meat, only to discover that they did not sell a piece of meat larger than a very small steak, by Canadian standards. At that time, I did not know much Japanese, but I knew the word for meat, and my numbers, so after catching the attention of the butcher, I started stacking the mini steaks together, saying, “meat - one”, with some obviously failing gesture work. A kind Filipino woman with very good Japanese came to my rescue. She made the description to the butcher for me. The butcher came out with a full quarter of beef, and had me draw a line with my finger to say how much of it I wanted, then through translation, asked how I would like it cut. When I responded I did not want it cut, the look of quizzical astonishment was accompanied by the single word “Why?”

My ten years living and working abroad, mostly in Asia, taught me as much, or even more about my Canadian background than it did about the host cultures I was living in. Through a multitude of different little stories I found myself constantly contrasting my expectations with my lived reality abroad. Why can I not buy any form of cheese at the large supermarket? Why is it socially acceptable for people to let their children defecate in the garbage can in a busy shopping center, or on the curb outside a restaurant? Why, upon meeting a best friend in an airport, after a long absence, with the excitement positively infectious, is physical contact still avoided? Why is a fast-food chain wedding even desirable? Why is there no paper currency larger than a $10 bill? As Edward T. Hall (1959) suggested, culture hides much more than it reveals, and it hides most effectively from its own participants. It was through small moments of dissonance in every-day events overseas that I was able to identify glimpses of my own perspectives, and how I prioritized the world around me. This to me is the essence of intercultural learning.

There are clear benefits to using digital media for intercultural learning: it can introduce a higher-level overview of theories and challenges; it definitely has cost benefits; and it can offer access to a wider audience, in bite-sized manageable chunks, like the size of meat cooked in Asia. But the virtual means will never be able to recreate the nuance and depth of an in-person immersive experience. The learning connected to emotionally charged stories feels more poignant when you are the central character in an event, enveloped by the full range of the sensory experience, rather than separated by a two-dimensional screen, that can be turned off quickly, causing you to disengage and return to your own comfortable normal. There is great benefit in immersive contemplation within a space that is not entirely comfortable nor reflective of your created expectations.

Some “Why?” questions can be explored by experiencing the space, place, and environment a culture thrives in. This builds appreciation for both positive and negative factors that underpin and inspire many cultural patterns. Coming from a country where a line-up is used, there is a simple order – next up gets service. On the face of it, a queue at an outdoor market in Shanghai looks like a mad rush, with everyone waving money at the vendor’s face, expecting service, but within that press of people there are dozens of smaller social dynamics at work, such as how much space one person takes up, how to fill the spaces that open in front of you, social graces for those that you let move in front of you – including much unspoken communication to indicate that. The skills to catch the eye of the vendor, who is somewhat keeping track of the mass of people, offering a more equitable level of service, than my Canadian eye picked out within my initially perceived chaos. A similar experience of finding order in a perceived chaos might be using the Tokyo train system during rush hour. In either case, the press of humanity was something that hit a more primal chord, and I remember clearly going through stages of fear, frustration, and anger, but once the patterns became more evident, eventually I moved through to

acceptance and normalcy. Repeated exposure to certain elements helps things to set in better. Cultural awareness then turns into cultural adaptation.

First-hand knowledge builds empathy, and wonder, and allows for a more fulfilling understanding of many cultural queries, as you draw from your own holistic sensory and emotional experiences. I think it is a fairly common rhetoric that Japan has good service. Tipping is not part of the system, and still I felt I had more attentive and positive service than most of my North American examples. But it is the smaller nuances of the services in action that made it hit home for me. The details of action can be explained, such as the warm damp face cloth offered with tongs (like you see through the first-class curtain on an international flight). This is offered at most sit-down restaurants. One is even offered to wipe your dash when you are filling up with petrol. Of course, this is something that you can easily offer through a digital space, but it is considerably harder to describe the pleasantness and the emotional state of those offering the service. There is a pride in the job that is seen through the interactions, the politeness, and the patience. Authentic intercultural experience is emotionally charged. Poignant cultural connection has an attached emotional connection.

At some point, as your intercultural exposure and awareness grows within another culture set, everyone has a need for an intercultural broker, someone to help you to make sense of your perceptions and experiences, and help to add some underlying meaning to the way things are in a cultural space. For many, the best form of this is a friend providing real time feedback to culturally bound communication practice within a given shared context. In most cultural settings, shared experiences are an effective way to build and maintain strong lasting friendships. With the addition of barriers like distance, time zones, and digital interactions, the quality and depth of that friendship can start to suffer. The distance means that we are not fluent in the daily experiences of each other, nor within the social influence, such as local news, TV, and music tropes. I believe that within my own friendships, the depth of the relationship built while living in the same space has created the longevity of our friendship. Notably, they are still considerably better than my relationships that have solely been built through online platforms.

Intercultural competency is a process, not a product. As it is a process, there is more efficacy in having a personal connection to the stories and dissonance that is being worked through. What is offered in an online platform is a predetermined version of how the presenter views their own cultural space. In my experience, both being a traveler through another cultural space, and working with those wandering my local cultural space, what we choose to focus on and discuss rarely align. It is within the cultural clashes and surprised or frustrated questions of "Why!" that both sides of the local and interloper relationship have the most to learn. If the digital traveler is limited to just what I want to show them, the opportunities for intercultural growth is limited. Without the chance to personalize my own intercultural experiences, build my own relationships, collect my own stories of dissonance and environmental influences, I do not feel I would be nearly as invested in my own intercultural advancement, nor would I be the person I am today.

The Lebowski Shock

At the end of July 2011, after I received my Doctoral degree from Beijing, I arrived in a western Canadian city to pursue a postdoc opportunity. It was a different experience to open a bank account in Canada. You do it at the window in China, while in Canada I was invited into a room. It was confusing to see all the different items in the grocery store. I asked a lady working in a grocery store what "canola oil" was, and she said "canola oil is oil from canola". I did not think it was polite to ask "what is canola?" There was a small theatre close to the university. I walked by it one day, and saw the poster for a free movie. It said free admission after the donation of a "non-perishable food item for the Food Bank". I understood the word "non-perishable" from "Publish or Perish". As for "Food Bank", I did not know what that was. I assumed it was an ATM machine for food. Wasn't that called a vending machine? I found everything expensive in

Canada, so a free movie sounded very good to me. I got the cheapest non-perishable item in the store, something called "Craft Dinner". It was on sale for about a dollar. It looked like noodles with a bag of sauce. But why white sauce? It was not appetizing to me. Anyway it worked and it got me into the theatre.

But something was very strange that night. All the people showed up in bathrobes and sandals. And they all wore sunglasses. Many had long hair and long beards, either real or fake. I learned about Halloween as a Western holiday when people dress up to go "Trick or treating". But it was early August, far away from Halloween. I did not understand what was going on until the movie started. They all dressed up to look like the main character, someone called "The Big Lebowski"! But was this guy really important here? How come I never heard about this person, nor this movie, while I was in China? He was a slacker who did not take life seriously. He did not have a job. He went bowling all the time. He drank all the time. He swore all the time. The most expensive item in his rented apartment was a rug and he seemed to care a lot about it. But somehow people here admired him and they could even memorize and echo the lines he said in the movie. Was this an important part of Canadian culture, or North American culture, or the Western culture that I never learned? I did learn before that North American culture was a more relaxed culture. But I thought "relaxed" meant wearing jeans and T-shirts. I did not realize it could be this relaxed. I guessed there were so many things that I did not know about and I did not learn in my English classes in China. Everyone else enjoyed the movie, but I did a lot of thinking while watching the movie.

To really think of it, my Lebowski shock is different from the Culture Shock that most people know and talk about. The Culture Shock seems to be more concerned with the large culture, the ethnic and national culture in broad and more generalizable patterns. A good example of the large culture is Hofstede's (2021) cultural dimensions, such as individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance versus ambiguity tolerance, strong social hierarchy versus weak social hierarchy, task orientation versus people orientation, and indulgence and restraint. The Culture Shock can be seen as bigger shocks, experienced by people totally alien to a culture with little previous experience with it. The Lebowski shock that I experienced is rather the shock with more nuanced small cultures that a culture 101 course would not mention. I did not have much of a language barrier in the traditional sense. I had my honeymoon with the English culture long before I came to Canada. I watched English movies, English TV shows, read English books, and took courses to learn the culture behind the English language. But I was still shocked in some small but significant ways after many years' language and cultural orientation before I came. The Lebowski shock is the shock that makes me see the complexity of culture, as it may be counterintuitive or even deconstructive to the broad stereotypical understanding of a culture.

September came and the new school year started. The teacher education research center that had me as a postdoc had a routine activity. All graduate students and some faculty members gathered every week to talk about the progress of their research projects and the issues that they had come across in their research. It was like a learning community where we were supposed to give and get professional help in a group. One day, a Master's student from Iran shared her idea for her research project. She wanted to study Iranian women and how their freedom and human rights were deprived of by the Iranian government. Weren't there too many Western critiques on Iran, on China, on Russia, from Western perspectives? Was she trying to live up to a dominant Postcolonial Western discourse on the rest of the world? Should I say something about this?

While in China, I heard many times from many sources that the Chinese are more indirect than Westerners in our communication styles. We were often self-critical about it, believing that our practice in beating around the bush is a waste of energy and is inferior to the more direct Western way where black is black and white is white, and things are kept simple. The Chinese indirectness is a way to protect people's face and feelings, and the need to protect people's face and feelings makes the Chinese unable to become critical. I thought to myself, "I am in Canada. I

should cut out my Chinese crap, be direct and be critical." I said to the Iranian girl that her idea for her research was a racist, imperialist, structuralist, modernist idea, and a very boring idea too. I received an email from my Canadian professor after the meeting, suggesting that I crossed a line and what I said was not consistent with the supportive and constructive culture at the center. Given time, I learned that Canadians are the most polite people on earth. It is very hard for Canadians to be direct in giving negative opinions. The most negative thing they can possibly say is "This is interesting"! I was a complete jerk at the meeting.

If I had not come to Canada, and I only learned about Canada in my English classes or through online virtual programing in China, my experiences with Canada might have stayed more at the Hofstede level, not down to the Lebowski level. I might never have the opportunity to experience the Lebowski shock, to experience the complex and nuanced cultures in Canada which served to shake my stereotypical thinking about the two different cultures. I might still think that the Canadians are direct and the Chinese are indirect. What if I had a super critical cross-cultural educator who could point me to the complexity of cultures and help me move beyond the large culture stereotypes? But it would still not give me the same sensations when I was in the Canadian movie theater, the Canadian grocery store, and the Canadian seminar room. I may be quick in agreeing with the professors about cultural nuance and complexity as a concept, an idea, but what that really feels like, I may never know.

DISCUSSION

What are the major themes underlying the three reflective narratives? Is virtual programing a viable alternative to in-person study abroad experiences? All three international educators point to the embodied dimension of physical education abroad experiences as the most essential basis for intercultural learning. The embodied immersive experiences allow people to use all their bodily senses in perceiving the target culture, with the smell, the skin sensation, and the noise, thus achieving a perfect combination of body and mind in learning. Successful intercultural learning is seen as best achieved through a self-constructive learning process, an emotionally charged process with the learner as the central character in a cultural event. It is more impactful on the learners and it tends to result in more transformative change in the individuals. The discomfort felt helps the learners challenge their assumptions derived from home experiences. Successful intercultural communication is seen as empathetic understanding between people, and empathy between people is mostly based on common physical memories. Shared experiences while living in the same space is a foundation for lasting intercultural relations. Virtual experiences, on the contrary, are experiences "on a flat-screen with no depth." They are not three-dimensional, with no smell and no skin sensation, with no rich cultural contexts. And to experience another culture virtually is like scratching an itch through the clothes.

All three international educators recognize the complexity of culture beyond stereotypical categories, and the complexity of culture is best perceived, understood and appreciated through physical experiences in the culture. The randomness that comes with individually-directed experiences allows learners to see the contextual nuances of place, people, time, and many other factors at play in a cultural event. Such complexity perceived will serve to deconstruct the conveniently packed cultural stereotypes that we hear around us all the time about others' cultures. Immersive experiences, coupled with critical reflections, give learners the Lebowski Shocks which enable them to see the complexity and nuances of each large culture and to experience the numerous small cultures within it. In addition, repeated immersive exposure helps the new culture set in better, turning cultural awareness and understanding into cultural appreciation and adaptation. Virtual international educational programs, on the contrary, cannot avoid the limitation of compressing cultures into efficient packets, in small bite-sized chunks, only allowing students to see a culture through a "keyhole." Table 1 summarizes the major

attributes of physical study abroad experiences for intercultural learning and to what extent they can be replicated by virtual programing:

Table 1: Major Attributes of Physical Study Abroad Experiences and Their Replicability by Virtual Programing

Major attributes of physical study abroad experiences	**Replicability by virtual programing**
1. Physical study abroad provides three-dimensional, immersive, self-constructive learning of other and self's cultures;	No.
2. There is randomness, uncertainty in physical study abroad with no easy escape back to comfort zone;	No.
3. Intercultural learning during physical study abroad is sensory-based, emotionally charged, and more poignant;	No.
4. Common physical experiences give rise to stronger cultural awareness, cultural empathy and intercultural relations;	To some extent
5. Space, place and environment provide clues for nuanced, deeper and unbiased cultural understanding;	To some extent
6. Physical immersion is more conducive to the learning of small cultures, the discovery of cultural complexity, and the deconstruction of cultural stereotypes.	To some extent

The pandemic lockdown has given us the opportunities to see the advantages of virtual programs. Zoom meetings are a valuable addition to our repertoire of tools for intercultural learning. The real-time, interactive, and "face to face" dimension of video conferencing technology makes it a better tool than the asynchronous, passive, and faceless tools we had in the past. It allows us to learn about another culture, to interact with people from another culture, and to hear what an expert in intercultural studies has to say much better than any time in history, at a much lower cost and a much higher level of accessibility. Virtual intercultural learning shall continue, just like the reading of books about other countries, the watching of movies about other cultures, and the interactions with people from other cultures in our home country shall continue. Virtual education abroad should be promoted as it can help improve the general intercultural awareness and general intercultural competence of the student population. It can, to some extent, improve accessibility of intercultural learning.

However, the physical program and the virtual program are qualitatively different when it comes to intercultural learning (not online gaming or online shopping), something international educators must acknowledge and accept. Getting students to share experiences and observations through COIL is valuable learning, but it is still second-hand learning that is filtered by others,

not first-hand experiences through personal immersion. Virtual programs cannot replicate the embodied learning of small cultures in physical in-person cultural immersion. There might be opportunities to blend the two in one program to enrich the learning experiences, but we would be fooling ourselves if we believe that we have solved the equity issue by providing all students with opportunities to participate in education abroad virtually. Virtual programing is not an alternative to in-person education abroad, and it is not the answer to the embedded ethical issue of international education. Inequity will continue to exist and the solution would not be a technological one. It would be the most unethical thing to do for international educators if we believe that virtual conferencing technology has solved the ethical challenge of international education.

CONCLUSION

Motivated by the uneasiness we have felt upon hearing the discussion about virtual education abroad as a solution to the equity issue in international education after COVID-19, this study aimed to explore the qualitative differences between traditional and virtual study abroad experiences. Cultural immersion through embodied in-person experiences is a key dimension of traditional education abroad programs that promise students' in-depth, contextual, and comprehensive intercultural learning. Despite the many advantages of virtual online programing, such as low cost, flexibility and accessibility, it is still qualitatively inferior to physical in-person programing and thus is not a solution to the long-standing equity issue with international education. Though teleconferencing technology can be fruitfully used in intercultural learning as a new addition to existing tools, it cannot replace physical programs, nor can it fully address the equity issue.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp.126-137
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3927| https://ojed.org/jcihe

Critical Pedagogy for Health Professions and International Learning Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Experiential and community-based learning is common in health sciences education as a transition from conceptual level coursework to application of learning at the practical and practice levels. Programs typically focus on knowledge acquisition and obtaining a conceptual level understanding of the material for the initial curriculum, followed by experiential learning and application of that conceptual knowledge in a clinical setting. To address the nuances of health sciences education in the international, community-based context, this study proposes a pathway to facilitating the adoption of a new critical pedagogy accounting for an increasingly globalized and connected world and the need for mediation of the relationship between learning theory and global health education. Bierema's (2018) models are commonly utilized in health education during the initial curricular stages and are discussed, while Kolb's (1984) interpretation of Kurt Lewin's experiential learning theory is offered as the appropriate conceptualization to support the development of a critical pedagogy for international, community-based health education learning experiences. As part of this pedagogy, relevant, foundational theoretical approach to students` experiential learning should support critical observation and reflection. We recommend that educators provide practice-based education that focuses on improved outcomes of experiential learning so that learners do not just recreate their own lived experiences of order, structure and power, instead to use a critical pedagogical approach which allows learners to examine their own social conditioning and biases so that they are empowered to engage, work and live across cultures.

Keywords: health education, international experiences, experiential learning, community-based education

Received June 7, 2021; revised November 2, 2021; accepted November 15, 2021

INTRODUCTION

With educational experiences becoming more and more globally connected and students increasingly traveling the world in preparation for leadership in this global context, a form of "critical pedagogy" is examined in this manuscript exploring potential theoretical foundations for international, community-based health education learning experiences. Twenty-first century higher education intends, at its core, to be experiential and transformational (Moore, 2013). Experts in education have maintained that the learning environment and context should contribute directly to learning outcomes, especially in the context of global health education. Given the expectation that the instructor is responsible for the successful introduction of theory and its critical application, employing critical pedagogy offers a useful paradigm for elucidating such interaction between experiential learning in global health education contexts. With the ultimate goals of promoting critical observation and reflection in the students, theories such as critical pedagogy and experiential learning serve as the foundational 'crutches' for the creation of global health care professionals.

Between 2019 and 2020 nearly 350,000 U.S. students traveled abroad for educational opportunities and academic credit with 20.7% focusing on business and 17% on social science (IIE Open Doors, 2020). To put this into a more global context, according to IIE Project Atlas "over 5.6 million higher education students studied abroad" (IIE Project Atlas, 2020), leaving their home countries to pursue an education abroad. As these data sources indicate, U.S. students are seeking relevant global, intercultural educational experiences that matter for, not only how they proceed professionally, but most importantly, to support the acquisition of intercultural competence that is valued when they return home and apply them in the community, classroom, or professionally. U.S. students pursuing education abroad in the health professions made up 7% of the 350,000 students in 2019-2020, or approximately 24,500 students, while NCES reports that 12.5% of the total baccalaureate students in the U.S., 15.8% master's students, and 44.2% doctoral students in the U.S. graduated in health professions and related programs in 2018-2019 (NCES, 2021). The underrepresentation of health care professions (HCP) graduates in international study experiences indicates a need for improving access to global learning experience for health care professionals. It has been noted in research that:

> health professionals' education has not kept pace with the new emerging challenges, such as rapid demographic and epidemiological transitions, fresh emerging and re-emerging health challenges, new environmental and behavioral risks, and increasing appreciation of the social determinants of health (Zodpey et al., 2018, p. 364).

Health care professionals entering the workforce are lacking the competencies to handle the impact of international migration, which creates the need for this profession to be empowered with requisite competence and knowledge that are responsive to global mobility. With increasing globalization, international and domestic health issues also have a direct impact on the need for more students to be cross-trained in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), social sciences and health professions in order to respond to the demand for globally competent health care professionals. Further, HCPs are a growing area in higher education (NCES, 2021; United States Department of State, 2018). By examining health issues in a global context, the

growing population of HCP students can be provided the opportunity to experience cross-cultural issues such as health, wellness, comparative health systems, and the social determinants of health. Students may study in various contexts, while growing an understanding about the role of language, culture, and community in global public health. Importantly, global health is not an independent, but rather a highly interdependent field that requires an education that is equally interdependently rooted in global, content and instructional mobility (Frenk et al., 2009). Both the resulting risks and opportunities of health care education are shared by global populations that are dependent on sharing global health resources (Doobay-Persaud et al., 2018).

Increased access to international education, from the perspective of HCP students, graduate and medical schools, and employers, means that more learners have greater experience and likelihood of success with diverse populations as colleagues or patients in a globalized world that requires a specific set of knowledge and competence to thrive. Educational trends point toward increased student interest in and awareness of global interconnectedness a high demand for an education that satisfies this interest. In addition, there is a general "heightened public awareness of the global health agenda" (Jogerst, 2015, p. 240) that brings along more opportunities for private and public funding for the study of international health care issues.

Immersive global learning is essential for students to acquire experiences, cross-cultural knowledge and competence, language fluency, and with that, tools for critical analysis, problem-solving, and a tolerance for ambiguity (NAFSA, n.d.). Learning objectives for any learning program should focus on student identity development, cross-cultural understanding, academic growth, professional considerations, and language acquisition and development (IIES, n.d.). As contributors to the global community, the experience abroad has the potential to transform the lives of participants so that they are challenged to become more self-aware, engaged in experiences to re-examine their values, priorities, and constructions, and value these in others. Participating students are encouraged to recognize differences between histories and identities, cultures, beliefs and practices, with the hope that those experiences in unfamiliar communities translate to a greater, more sensitive perspectives employed in students' home cultures. These student learning outcomes were championed more than twenty years ago when the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2007, p. 2) posited that the "kinds of learning Americans need from college" clearly involve preparation for a globally interdependent world shaped by cross-cultural encounters.

However, too often educators in higher education rely on the tools of transmission of knowledge and perspectives when students are asked to engage with communities or when developing global health education programs. Consequently, "notions of best practice and effective teaching are influential at the expense of teaching based on research" (Nilsson, 2017, p. 29). While relying on previously acquired perspectives based on professional experience and collegial exchange certainly does have value in educational practice, the beneficial potential of theoretical contributions should not be ignored. There is a distinction between learned perspectives, experience, practical knowledge, science, and scholarly work that, when studied and applied holistically, might contribute to the development of educational programs. Importantly, the "tacit knowledge" of the community must be understood and engaged in the learning experience (Fitzgerald et al., 2012).

As educators, our responsibility lies in ensuring that international communities, the academic community at home, and the community of engagement are respected. In addition to that, maintaining a "centrality of engagement" while critical for advancing knowledge, also recognizes and values knowledge generation that can occur in non-academic settings as well. This

renewed commitment to the community serves to strengthen partnerships and to better represent the diverse set of experiences which deserve representation in learning environments (Fitzgerald, et. al, 2012). With this approach, learners can fulfill their learning outcomes and experience transformation that equips them to promote a heightened sense of awareness, and a greater understanding of the historical, political, economic, and social forces that actively shape their engagement with communities. Reciprocally, the community that invested its tacit knowledge into students' learning experiences is also strengthened. While different learning models rely on the experience itself to be inherently educational, other approaches intentionally address experiential learning with the expectation of transformation (Loh et al., 2015).

Health education is generally understood as an interdisciplinary field, merging "different understandings of the world, the human being and society" (Vila & Vila, 2007, p. 1179). Therefore, global health education, in particular, allows learners to broaden their horizons, perspectives as well as their world views, while simultaneously developing ideas and acquiring competence to transform and improve human society on a global level. Vila and Vila (2007) emphasize in their analysis of health education in the Brazilian context that educational practices within this field provide a space for the production and application of knowledge that is aimed at a critical reflection within the learners. Given this reflective core component in global health education, new pedagogies should be founded in critical perception and involve reflective analysis, open dialogue, and continual engagement with respect and awareness.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

A pathway to facilitating the adoption of a new critical pedagogy is the mediation of the sometimes-strained relationship between theory and practice. Experiential and community-based learning is common in health sciences education as a transition from conceptual level coursework to application of learning at the practical and practice level. Programs typically focus on knowledge acquisition and obtaining a conceptual level understanding of the discipline for the initial curriculum and in a pre-departure setting, followed by experiential learning and application of conceptual knowledge in a practice or community setting. To address the nuances of health sciences education in the international, community-based context, Bierema's (2018) models that are commonly utilized in health education during the initial curricular stages are discussed. However, for a more comprehensive approach that addresses the entire experiential learning cycle, Kolb's (1984) interpretation of Kurt Lewin's experiential learning theory is offered as the appropriate conceptualization to support critical pedagogy for international, community-based health education learning experiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this paper we analyzed multiple pedagogies used in the delivery of international, community-based health education learning experiences and global health education. In particular, we examined a form of "critical pedagogy" and explored potential theoretical foundations for international, community-based health education learning experiences. We discuss the models and offer practical steps for theoretical integration of experiential learning into the models.

FINDINGS

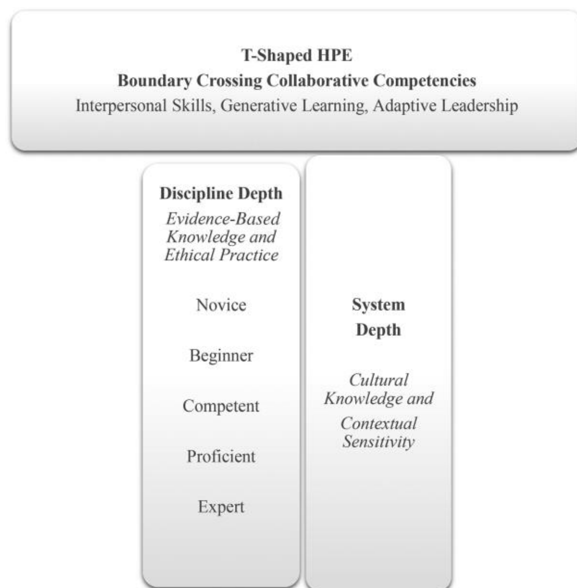
Models for Experiential Learning in International Health Education

The ever-changing contexts of the health professions in an increasingly globalized world demand educational practices that consider transformative and interdependent aspects of the field. Bierema (2018) describes two models of adult learning in health professions education that are

based on these developments within health professional education (HPE): T-Shaped HPE and the "Impact on Business" (IOB) model. While not specifically created for learning within international programs, both models present a solid base for the re-imagination of the international learning experience.

The transformational-oriented HPE model (Bierema, 2018) focuses on a shift from merely memorizing facts to a more active and integrated analysis and synthesis that ultimately leads to informed decision making. A "transitioning from seeking professional credentials to developing core competencies for effective teamwork" (p. 23) is accompanied by an adaptive approach to the use of learning models that supports globality to be employed in local and/or global contexts. Interdependent HPE is based on the idea of health care as an interprofessional field with networks and collaborations connecting often isolated specializations of health professionals. The main idea in this type of adult learning is that "education needs to take a more global, outward perspective on the education and learning process" (p. 30). The resulting model, T-Shaped HPE, combines the three aspects of collaboration, specialized competencies and contextual awareness and knowledge (Fig. 1) and merges the ideas of transformative and interdependent educational approaches. Lastly, and importantly, Bierema (2018) acknowledges the global reach and importance of a strong health care education where "gaps in health advances and persistent inequities in quality of health care exist" (p. 28).

Figure. 1. T-SHAPED HPE



Source: Bierema (2018), p. 31.

The Impact on Business (IOB) model (Fig. 2), originally created by Corbett and Ho (2012) and modified by Bierema (2018), merges the idea of teaching health care competence with desired outcomes such as adaptive leadership and effective communication.

Figure. 2: IOB MODEL

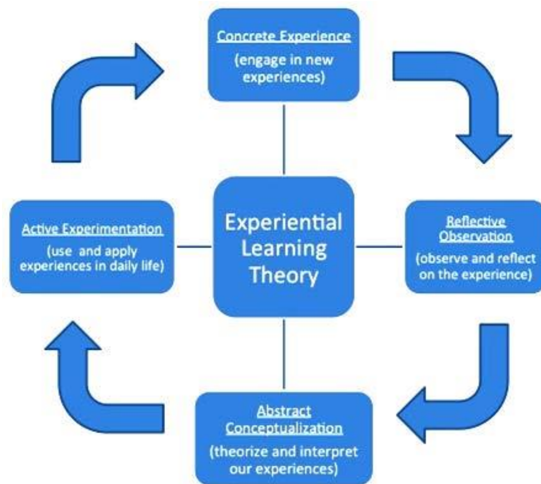
Source: Corbett & Ho (2012) with modifications by Bierema (2018)

The models above are useful for pedagogy in face-to-face classroom settings. However, international, community-based learning environments require a critical examination of pedagogy. When students leave the home institution, face-to-face classroom setting and enter the space of international communities for practice-based experiences in health education, different learning models are needed to support student learning. While health education curricula have historically included theoretical knowledge at the beginning of the program and clinical practice in the latter part, it is now argued that early practical experience are beneficial to immerse the student in "the social context of practice and strengthen students' affective and cognitive learning" (p. 287). Practical experience in a globalized context entails knowledge on how to successfully operate in different cultural environments and social interactions (Dyjack et al., 2001). International health education programs are ideal tools to deliver those exact competencies. These learning experiences not only add to the value of global health education, and they are an essential component for any international health profession learning experience.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory (ELT) is often used to inform practice-based learning experiences and is appropriate for application to the international, community-based health professions education experience. The goals articulated in ELT are to achieve increased knowledge acquisition, skill development, clarification of values and enable the learners to contribute to the overall benefit of their communities (Hedin, 2010). This still incorporates the central element of an active and integrative learning experience of the T-Shaped HPE model. Kolb (1984) adapted Lewin's scholarship of a testable model for action research and training, "The Lewinian Experiential Learning Model" into a practical, four stage method by which to engage an experiential learner in a meaning-making process from a direct experience. Figure 3 shows this model:

Figure 3. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY



Source: Kolb (1984), p. 5

The first stage of the cycle is the concrete experience itself, and in this case, the international study or practice-based experience. This experience is the foundation for the opportunity to learn. The second stage, reflective observation, describes students' immersion experience in a different cultural setting, which requires engagement of observation and reflection behaviors. The third stage, abstract conceptualization, requires the learner to start to explain that experience and to continue the process of knowledge generation. The goal of this stage is to create concepts to be developed and applied in the application or active experimentation stage. This stage requires the incorporation of other sources of knowledge such as other sources of data or scholarship, then to engage active analytical competence by which to process the new experiences with a new context. Finally, the fourth stage describes students' full application and integration of the experience.

Kolb's (1984) adaptation of Lewin's work on experiential learning is useful as it explicates students' assimilation in the international learning context: knowledge is continually generated through personal, then contextual environments, then the process of conceptualization to facilitate the meaning, then through the utilization of other sources of knowledge to create new solutions to problems. This integrative approach to learning and application of knowledge draws on the competencies and behaviors suggested in both the T-Shaped HPE and IOB models that address pedagogy and student learning outcomes. Viewing adult education as an integrative process is an important tool to directly enhance global health profession education. Central to the development of reflection in the ELT model is the integration of theory with practice, and to give the learner the opportunity to put emotions, thoughts, and ideas into action. However, with this transformation of experience into knowledge (Kolb & Fry, 1975) and by reflecting on the experience, learners can gain a general understanding of a new situation, then can actively generate new understandings, perspectives, and knowledge. Transitioning learners in the field from experience to thinking with intentionality requires systematic planning to take the original

data generated by the observation, then develop those experiences into concepts, theories and explanations. The process of integrating ideas, since we typically integrate an experience through our own ideas or do so through a collaborative process, takes place with others, as a part of a group.

Kolb's Stage 3, abstract conceptualization, speaks to the integration of foundational theories and interpretation of experiences. Students as well as faculty have experiences that shape their "lenses" or worldview. With careful attention to a critical pedagogical approach to international learning experiences, these perspectives or "lenses" can be acknowledged during the learning process. Rather than something that needs to be overcome, our lenses are phenomena that need to be consciously recognized and integrated into the learning experience because they will dominate learning experiences. Intentional strategies to identify student perspectives and experiences in the early stages of experiential learning support their abilities to move through Kolb's Stage 2 of observation and their capacity to actively creator conceptualize proper meaning to an experience.

As part of this pedagogy, relevant, foundational theoretical approach to students experiential learning should support critical observation and reflection. Without this critical pedagogical approach, students learning may be inhibited because they do not have the opportunity to examine their own social conditioning, biases, stereotypes and mores and, without deliberate thought may impose them on other cultures, contexts and histories. In order to support the development of students and practitioners in expanding their practical experiences and cultural lens, the foundational theories of global health education must also be deployed during this stage of experiential learning. It is particularly in the context of study abroad experiences that Kolb's (1984) model can be used to guide experiential learning reflections (Erdem Mete, 2019).

Practical Steps for Theoretical Integration into the Learning Model

Like any knowledge creation, learners in Kolb's Stage 4 are required to assemble meaning from multiple sources, including the experience, observations, data or other empirical work, and scholarship. Activities for the field include exercises to take this first step in explication and to engage in the intellectual process and careful analysis of those initial perceptions of experience. This exercise is intended to move beyond journaling and adopt a more scholarly perspective of conceptualizing experience as knowledge generation, especially when encountering and making sense of new experiences.

Kolb's Stage 4 symbolizes the learner's transition to active experimentation with the knowledge acquired in the international learning setting. Knowledge generation requires the active conceptualization of an idea from experience. Thinking with concepts requires the integration of a different types of experiences and observations. It is during the conceptualization phase that it is time to integrate yet another type of data to the experience and initial observation of events that is recognizable or knowable. For further knowledge generation, it is necessary to take an encounter with the physical world and turn it into an idea by creating a concept or grasping a concept. This step does not require planning, implementation, or achievement, but extracting the experience, and converting it into a meaningful discovery. This conversion happens under a set of extenuating circumstances that require mindful facilitation due to the student being immersed in a learning environment that is outside of her typical frame of reference, or set of circumstances, histories, events, personal biographies. A practical facilitation of this theory integration process must be rooted in the curriculum, and could include setting up guided dialogues, involving community partnerships, listening exercises as well as other exercises actively deconstructing stereotypes.

These activities require the learner to take from experience, something otherwise seemingly ambiguous or vague, to an actual construct that is more concrete. Especially in practice-based experiences, it is essentially that one could start to see or develop measures useful for the field. To formulate a construct from an experience and to give it meaning, one must then supplement that idea with another type of scholarly production such as literature, then also propose it to the group to test it for reliability and validity. It is then, through discussion, that the initial experience and conceptualization are made more-narrow or defined to become concrete. During this step of discussion, one must look for consistency, agreement, and disagreement and this stage is preparation for formulation of the problem. Transforming the oral discussion into a written documentation can additionally increase the impact, since “reflective writing as a process and practice can be used to engage deeper experiential learning” (Dressler et al., 2018, p. 491).

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Integrating theoretical models such as Kolb’s (1984) model for experiential learning with existing models such as Bierema’s (2018) T-Shaped HPE and the Impact on Business (IOB) models are proposed to generate a more reflexive, genuine and ethical learning experience for students. This critical pedagogy approach to international community-based learning experiences not only supports student development and practice, but also articulates the tacit knowledge and value of the community where the learning occurs. Thus, the experience is reciprocal and mutually beneficial for all collaborators (Fitzgerald et al., 2012). Global health education, in particular, must be supported by learning experiences that move students from their limited experiences and “lens” and affirms the tacit knowledge of new communities and cultures. This learning experience is reciprocal in the exchange of knowledge, with faculty and students emerging with new “lens” to approach their leadership roles in community and global health as such international, community-based health education experiences provide students the opportunities to acquire and exercise the tools necessary to constructively reflect upon new and unfamiliar international contexts (Mitchell & Poutiatine, 2001).

Increased access to international, community-based educational experiences is a priority for HCPs to support global health access and education so that HCPs are prepared to practice in a context of increasing diversity and interdependency. Combining Bierema’s (2018) T-Shaped HPE and the Impact on Business (IOB) models with Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory in course design, learners and practitioners in global health will be better prepared with the tools of their own knowledge production before producing knowledge about others and for others. It is the responsibility of educators to provide practice-based education that focuses on improved outcomes of experiential learning so that learners do not just recreate their own lived experiences of order, structure and power, but engage in knowledge generation with the tools for seeing, working and living across cultures.

CONCLUSION

Application of this critical pedagogy in global health education requires theory-based course design, which includes an enhanced pre-departure orientation (PDO) so that students and faculty have the space and opportunity to become more familiar with the environmental context where the study experience will occur. Suggested activities for the PDO are ones to include in-depth introductions with each other and with in-country hosts. Courses of study ideal for a PDO include orientations to people, culture, history, and languages that will help students be more successful in their new immersive experiences. Without pre-departure preparation and a rigorous course design specifically intended to not just reflect and process through the same lens used at

home, but to create the opportunity for students to actively deconstruct, synthesize and integrate new knowledge and perspectives, the success of the international learning experience is inhibited.

Further, students need to be given the opportunity to build a new set of tools so that they may adequately, and responsibly, construct their experiences with the new set of histories, circumstances, cultures, and contexts, relieved of the burden of their own context and rather than be limited to their own experiences. By following Kolb's four stage theory of experiential learning theory (1984), course design can actively structure learning at each of the four stages, then can be applied to the learning context and content to intentionally shape the learner's experience. Faculty leading these experiences are challenged to transform their curricula to guide students through both the theoretical and experiential learning that occurs in international contexts.

In addition to incorporating a PDO, this can be accomplished by incorporating assessment during pre- and post-departure phases of study, rigorous evaluation of the course itself, then also the use of critical reflection, case studies and simulation so that students have the opportunity to practice their growth. In conclusion, a critical pedagogy for international, community-based health education learning experiences requires that the integration of the theoretical approaches (T-Shaped HPE, IOB and ELT) shape the curricular, co-curricular and non-curricular components of the learning experience. This approach acknowledges the roles of the community, learners, and teachers to enable transformative learning that endures and shapes the HCPs practice.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), 138-151
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i1.3432 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

International Doctoral Students' Sense of Belonging, Mental Toughness, and Psychological Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

This study describes international doctoral students' experiences and examines the relationships between their academic goals and psychological well-being and their sense of belonging and mental toughness. We used a multiple case study design based on three international doctoral students enrolled in education programs in the United States. Findings from six interviews about their experiences with their faculty mentors and peers showed that their sense of belonging and mental toughness related to academic goals and psychological well-being. Their sense of belonging impacted their academic goals or psychological well-being based on communication and relationships with their mentors and support from their peers. Also, their mental toughness impacted their academic goals or psychological well-being based on cognition, behavior, and affection. This study calls for faculty mentors and students to communicate early namely at the on-set of their programs and to establish a positive relationship that caters to cultural acculturation, academic success, and sense of belonging.

Keywords: international doctoral students, mental toughness, psychological well-being, sense of belonging

Received January 17, 2021; revised March 11, 2021; accepted April 20, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Open Doors report recorded 374,435 international graduate students in the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2020). International graduate students, particularly those

from Asian countries, face challenges in seeking financial support, learning institutional cultures, American cultures, understanding program requirements, and learning about survival strategies (Li et al., 2011; LoCastro & Tapper, 2006; Myles & Cheng, 2003). Although international doctoral students share many of the same challenges as international students in undergraduate and masters programs, international doctoral students often face more challenges than international undergraduate students because many are assigned to teach courses or conduct research as graduate assistants and are required to complete their programs with an average of 4-6 years (Li et al., 2011; LoCastro & Tapper, 2006).

In U.S. higher education institutions, doctoral students are assigned to work with a faculty mentor. In this paper, we use the term "mentor" to refer to faculty mentors. Mentors provide academic advice and guidance to doctoral students from the beginning of the program. As such, the relationships international doctoral students have with their mentors may influence both their academic goals and their psychological well-being. Recent research has focused on whether international undergraduate students' sense of belonging was influenced by the relationships with their faculty and peers (Glass et al., 2015; Yao, 2016). In comparison, because doctoral programs require students to work with their mentors over several years, their sense of belonging may change over time to influence their academic goals and psychological well-being (Marijanovic et al., 2021). Thus far research on mental toughness (MT) has focused mainly on athletes. However, the core concepts of MT may help to better understand international doctoral students (Coulter et al., 2010; Jin & Wang, 2018). In our study, we used theory on sense of belonging together with MT to describe international doctoral students' experiences during their doctoral programs. The following research question guided our research: How do international doctoral students' sense of belonging and mental toughness relate to their academic goals and well-being?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sense of Belonging

Belongingness is a basic human motivation. For Marlow (1968), human beings share a strong need to belong and this is sufficient to influence affection and/or behavior (Strayhorn, 2019). A person's perceived belongingness can give the person the confidence to ask for help, take advantage of opportunities, feel stability in their work, and follow a successful path. In the college setting, sense of belonging is defined as "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers" (Strayhorn, 2019, p. 4).

International students are uniquely impacted by the need to belong. They often experience feelings of isolation from peers and mentors and this can yield negative consequences (Yao, 2016). The absence of a sense of belonging is described as "sense of alienation," social isolation, loneliness, or marginality (Hagerty et al., 2002). In turn, this can undermine academic

performance (Walton & Cohen, 2007), psychological well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and one's plans to stay in college (Strayhorn, 2019).

Importantly, sense of belonging is characterized by persistent positive personal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Relationships are critical to an individual's sense of belonging. In academic environments, relationships can provide opportunities for success (Walton & Cohen, 2007). For international doctoral students, relationships are particularly important as they are new to both the living and academic environments. In order to survive and succeed, they often rely on their mentors and peers to provide guidance and advice, research opportunities, connectedness with the department, etc. Students who have strong relationships with peers or mentors are better suited to receive critical feedback and leverage new learning opportunities (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Without these relationships, international doctoral students may feel they are unable to receive or even seek the needed guidance to complete milestones such as funding, dissertation completion, or obtain research opportunities.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is characterized by positive emotions such as happiness (Shafaei et al., 2018). It is the intrinsic belief that life is fulfilling, worthwhile, and meaningful (de Souza & Halafoff, 2018). Psychological well-being can be volatile in international students due to heightened risk, uncertainty, and insecurity with cultural and financial issues (Eckersley, 2011). International doctoral students often rely on their mentors to secure funding and other important milestones in their doctoral program. For example, for international doctoral students, funding is critical to their success and persistence in program completion. Often this can be a source of stress or hardship. Without funding, participation in their program is at risk, and international doctoral students can lose their legal status in the country. If a student feels they can work with their mentor to secure important funding opportunities, they will feel less stressed about the longevity of their scholarship; but international students may develop negative emotions if their relationship with their mentor is poor.

Psychological well-being is also important for international students due to its critical role in the acculturation process (Shafaei et al., 2018). International students must adjust to new norms and behaviors, which make their academic journey more difficult than domestic students. When an international student arrives in the country of study, they are faced with significant cultural differences, including new customs, social norms, academic expectations, relationship dynamics, and experiences. Additional stressors, such as pressure to complete their program within the time of authorized stay, can lead to additional hardship and negative emotions. Psychological well-being can affect the acculturation of international students, which in turn impacts student success (Shafaei et al., 2018).

Mental Toughness

Mental Toughness (MT) refers to the multidimensional and psychological attribute that involves cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions allowing one to cope better with adversity in stressful situations (Harmison, 2011; Jones et al., 2007). Sheard et al. (2009) identified three aspects of MT: confidence, constancy, and control. Confidence refers to an individual`s belief in their ability and the resources they possess to overcome difficulties (Jin & Wang, 2018; Sheard et al., 2009). Constancy refers to the notion that individuals are determined

to succeed and make more efforts to realize their goals even with higher pressure (Jin & Wang, 2018; Sheard et al., 2009). MT is associated with an internal locus of control and self-efficacy (Gibson, 1998); thus, control refers to the individual`s sense of being in control of adverse situations and being able to self-regulate their negative emotions rather than stay helpless (Clough et al., 2002; Jin & Wang, 2018; Sheard et al., 2009). Since sense of belonging sufficiently influences affection and/or behavior (Strayhorn, 2019), sense of belonging may relate to MT.

Research in MT has investigated performance-based outcomes in sport psychology, where athletes experience anxiety while participating in demanding processes (Jin & Wang, 2018). Athletes with higher MT tend to deal effectively with their pain and are less likely to regard it as threatening (Levy et al., 2006). Similarly, athletes with lower MT are more inclined to skip training under conditions of higher pressure (Levy et al., 2006; Petrie et al., 2014). Since there is a paucity of research on MT with non-athlete populations, we explore the application of MT to non-athlete individuals who need to cope with adverse situations (Crust, 2008).

In recent literature, MT has been conceptualized from the perspective of a coping strategy (Coulter et al., 2010) and also has been studied for non-athlete populations in terms of mental health and psychological well-being (Jin & Wang, 2018). Gerber et al. (2012) found that MT functions as a buffer to alleviate college and high school students' stress on depressive symptoms. Similarly, a longitudinal study found that a higher level of MT predicts adolescents' fewer depressive symptoms and a higher level of life satisfaction over time (Gerber et al., 2013). In addition, Jin and Wang (2018) found that MT mediated the relationship between attachment anxiety and to well-being variables of psychological distress and life satisfaction.

In this study, MT was used as part of our theoretical framework to explore international doctoral students' academic goals and psychological well-being. Based on existing literature and theories, we argue that higher MT enables international doctoral students to strive for academic goals and positive psychological well-being by concentrating on their demanding tasks, self-regulating their emotions, and changing cognitions to deal with stressful situations. We also argue that although stressors such as cultural differences, language barriers, and financial issues can be challenging, international doctoral students with greater MT may perceive the challenges as opportunities for growth and remain determined to take actions to handle the adversity positively; thus, they may receive professional development, achieve academic goals, and experience more satisfaction and less distress in life.

RESEARCH METHODS

Using a multiple case study approach, we explored international doctoral students' sense of belonging and MT. Compared with a single-case design, a multiple-case design is considered to yield more convincing evidence and conclusions (Yin, 2018). It ensured the researchers delve into international doctoral students' profound personal, sociocultural, and professional experiences as evidence for the sense of belonging and MT.

Participants and the Context of the Study

Four criteria were followed when selecting participants in this study. First, participants had to be international doctoral students. Second, participants had to be non-native English speaking although they all passed admission requirements such as TOFLE and GRE. Third, their

majors related to education in the same program in a southwest university where one researcher was able to observe the participants' lives during their stay in the program. Last, the participants did not complete the program with their first mentor and switched their mentor in their second or third year; this standard allowed us to see their common experiences.

Participants included one male, Jay, and two females, Lily and Cristal. Jay's academic goal was to seek opportunities to do research and to find a job at a university in the U.S. After he had difficulties communicating with his mentor, he left the program in his third year and moved to another program. Jay's mentor was a professor who worked in the university for many years. Although she shared her American culture with Jay by inviting him to her home for the holidays, she did not work well with Jay on research; language was also a barrier which prevented them from communicating well. Lily was in her twenties when she entered her program. She held a master's degree from the U.S. and her parents supported her doctoral studies. She was unsure what she would do in the future. Lily chose a different mentor and program in her third year as her initial mentor left the program. Lily's mentor shared the home culture and language with her mentor. He believed that he knew Lily's culture and how to mentor her. However, this caused conflict because their expectations did not align. Cristal's mentor was a professor who allowed her to work on her own. Although he was a successful scholar, he was not approachable to Cristal.

Like many international students, Jay, Lily, and Cristal left their cultural norms, rules, and expectations behind to participate in a new cultural and academic experience that would provide valuable skills and knowledge. As international students, Jay, Lily, and Cristal experienced unique challenges. Faced with new and difficult learning environments, they had to adapt to new academic expectations that differed from their past experiences, reconcile their own expectations of faculty, peer, and community support, and were required to secure financial resources and housing in an unknown place.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Case study uses observations, interviews, documents, or other materials to develop a holistic description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data for this study included two rounds of in-depth interviews with the three international doctoral students (i.e., six individual interviews in total) to obtain a broader and deeper understanding of their experiences, feelings, and the process of developing their sense of belonging and MT. Each interview was individual and semi-structured and lasted between 30-40 minutes.

During the first-round of interviews, we focused on participants' personal struggles with survival as international doctoral student (e.g., incomes, families, and living environment), language and cultural issues (e.g., teaching and communication with peers or professors), and professional issues (e.g., course completion, presentations, publication, and teaching assignments). The first author of this article moderated the interview while a graduate assistant took notes and asked follow-up questions as needed. After the first round of interviews, we immediately discussed the three individual semi-structured interviews and developed specific follow-up questions for each participant for the second round of interviews to clarify or further explore certain questions. All the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by temi.com (https://www.temi.com/), and was checked by the graduate assistant to ensure the accuracy of the transcription.

Data analysis

Within-case analysis of individual interviews was used to provide a detailed description of each participant's experiences of their doctoral programs and identify themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A cross-case analysis of the six interviews was used to conduct a thematic analysis across each of the cases to identify patterns, similarities, or dissimilarities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the within-case analysis, three researchers reviewed all the transcripts line-by-line. When meaningful segments of the text (e.g., keywords, phrases, and sentences) emerged to answer the research question, codes were assigned (Saldaña, 2016). Coding was also informed by MT and sense of belonging theory (Yin, 2018).

One of the researchers shared similar experiences to the international doctoral students in this study, and has rich research knowledge and experience of international students. Therefore, he interpreted the findings and coded the transcriptions based on his personal and research knowledge and experience of international doctoral students. Codes were clustered together to form categories, which were constructed to develop themes (Miles et al., 2020). For example, code patterns were assigned the categories of cognition (e.g., “Independence”), behavior (e.g., “Determination”), and affection (e.g., “Regulating negative emotions”). These categories then weaved into the theme of mental toughness.

In the cross-case analysis, replication was used as a method of triangulation that aims to examine the relationship among the findings within a case and compares the patterns and similarities across the cases, looking for similarities and patterns. This process was achieved by reviewing data multiple times to better understand the collected data and identify the themes that arose from the transcriptions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Theoretical replication was attained after similarities were found among cases only for anticipated causes. Reliability of the data analysis was enhanced by comparing coding across the three researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When disagreements occurred, the researchers discussed to come to an agreement.

FINDINGS

We described international doctoral students’ experiences of their doctoral programs with sense of belonging and mental toughness to examine their academic goals and psychological well-being. Two categories were identified under the theme of sense of belonging, which impacted academic goals or psychological well-being: community and relationships, and peer supper and psychological well-being. We also explored evidence concerning three areas, where mental toughness may impact academic goals or psychological well-being: cognition, behavior, and affection.

Sense of Belonging

Expectation, communication, and relationships. In early doctoral program, support from academic mentors was critical to international doctoral students. As international students, Jay, Lily, and Cristal relied on their mentors for valuable information such as scholarship opportunities, graduate assistantships, research support, and other academic advising. Communication between the students and their mentors affected the students’ sense of belonging. Lily, Jay, and Cristal often relied on their mentors to help them make important decisions about

their programs. When they could not communicate effectively, they were less able to complete critical tasks.

Jay expected his mentor to provide important guidance and direction at the onset of his doctoral program. Jay discussed that his mentor was very proud to work with international students, and that he loved to hear her stories about China and compared their cultural differences. He also felt that his mentor was enthusiastic about sharing American cultures, even inviting them to holiday celebrations. Unfortunately, his mentor did not communicate with him about his academic needs. Jay`s mentor knew that financial needs such as a graduate assistantship was critical to international students. However, she did not know Jay's academic goals of conducting research, publishing, and finding a job in academia. Jay did not perceive the relationship with his mentor met his expectations. Discussing his early relationship with his mentor, he noted:

> At the very beginning, we didn't have good communication with each other's expectations. So later on, I never told her my expectations of her. For example, what kind of support for the scholarship [the mentor] should give me. She didn't say anything about her expectation of me, either.

Lacking a strong relationship with his mentor, Jay did not feel he was a valued part of his program community and shared that his scholarship was affected by the limited relationship with his mentor.

Cristal arrived in her new program with an expectation of how her assigned mentor would support her academic experience. Cristal expected rigid and regular communication from her mentor, but she found herself facing hurdles when trying to communicate. Early on, she expected that important communications regarding her program needs would be initiated by her mentor. Yet, she noted that "he [Cristal's mentor] has rarely approached me and emailed me and tried communicating with me first, but I will always make a move first." This meant that Cristal had to navigate the requirements of her program, plan for significant events, and build an understanding of her position in the program without the help of her mentor whom she presumed would guide her. Cristal's mentor was not available for meetings with his students, particularly for Cristal who badly needed support in research. Although this mentor was known as a good researcher in his field, his success did not mean anything to Cristal; she could not connect with him. Cristal felt isolated, deserted, and helpless.

Lily shared a similar experience with Jay and Cristal. She felt that her mentor's expectations of her work and ability did not match her actual progress and performance. A mismatch between Lily's initial mentor's expectations and her own perception of her ability led her to feel emotionally separated from the program. Lily's mentor came from the same country as her and pursued his doctoral program at a research-intensive university. Years ago, her mentor went through very tough financial problems and other adversities but survived and completed the doctoral program. Lily reported that there was a mismatch between her and her mentor's expectations. She felt that her cultural perspectives did not align with his due to generational and differences in U.S. culture although both of them shared the same cultural background.

Lily was a strong girl from China and had completed her master's degree in a very prestigious program. However, she felt frustrated that she could not satisfy her mentor's

expectation of her work although she believed she was a hard-working student. Trying her best and utilizing the knowledge she brought with her did not help her meet her mentor's research expectations. Lily shared an example of how her mentor expected her to be able to complete a research task, but she felt unprepared:

> My mentor gave me some data, say 'Let's analyze it, and let's try to write a paper.' You know, if he gave it to me right now, I can definitely handle it. But at that time, I have no idea what to do. Like, I need a hand-by-hand guide.

Lily also shared her own expectations of her initial mentor, "I feel like if a professor can sit beside me and show me how he did it step by step and then I just mock[copy] him that will be perfect." Lily summarized her relationship with her initial mentor, and commented about how their expectations differed:

> I did not know he had such a high expectation of me. I didn't know that he thought I knew ABCDEFG. But actually, I only knew ABC at the beginning of my program. So that's the big difference. I didn't know that he expected so much already from me. That's different from what I thought.

Peer support and psychological well-being. As international doctoral students, Lily, Jay, and Cristal faced unique challenges that they would have to overcome to succeed. Peers provided support which helped them adjust to new cultural rules, norms, and expectations.

As a graduate assistant, Lily was assigned to be a site supervisor for student teachers in her second year, and she was not only required to learn how to complete the duties of her job, but also had to learn to drive and navigate in a new system of roads and traffic laws. Unsure how to prepare, a peer provided her with a vehicle and guidance to fulfill her need to drive:

> She[Lily's peer] helped me a lot. She taught me how to drive. So, I still remember one day we went to a parking lot and she taught me how to drive her Mercedes. That's a real risk for her, but I really appreciate it a lot.

Describing another peer relationship, Lily noted the support from one of her friends, a senior in the program and also from the same country. She "helped me a lot, you know. Yes. She's like Wikipedia to me then. Everything I had a question, I went to ask her, she always helped to answer." Similarly, she went to other classmates for any possible resources to help her survive.

Lily survived with her peers' support. However, Jay and Cristal were not that lucky. Jay discussed his belongingness in the community early on, noting that it negatively impacted his experience:

> There is no team or there's no community that I belong to. It's just like, you know, whenever others did anything, nobody mentioned me or nobody came over to me to ask me to join them. But I just have that kind of impression that nobody cares about me.

Mental Toughness

Cognition. Two interviewees in this study believed that they had the ability to find resources to cope with the difficulties related to academic goals or psychological well-being. They connected with peers and mentors by asking questions. When she encountered a problem, Lily said that:

> At first you always feel like you lost yourself, but later, you know how
> to solve the problem. You just ask people, right? Ask your mentor, ask

> your peers, ask S, my peer mentor. So, ask around and then you'll figure it out.

Cristal also relied on people around her as resources to overcome difficulties. She said, "I think you need to talk to someone, especially when you struggled. Either your mentor or the departure chair, or all the time get help from your classmates." Lily discussed the importance of being independent and trying to resolve her problems when in difficult situations rather than seeking help from others:

> I try to get as much help as possible, but I don't want to be an annoying person who always depends on others, right? Everybody was busy. Nobody could help me all the time when I needed them. I cannot ask for help with everything. I am aware that the first one or two years probably are very difficult. And also, I was hoping to get more practice by myself. So, I just need to hang on there, keep practicing.

When facing challenging situations, Lily also took advantage of the challenges as new academic opportunities grew:

> My initial mentor, actually he had a very high expectation of me…I think I did not reach what he expected…I have to work even harder and that really gave me a hard time, a lot of pressure. But I know it's good for me to grow up, you know, academically. If you just do what you are good at, then you will not grow. So, I was doing something I was not good at and I learned from everybody. I got pressure, but I grew up."

Behavior. Interviewees also shared how they were determined to succeed although they were in adverse situations. Lily expressed her strong determination and said: "You choose [to come to the U.S.] and you just go ahead and cannot go back [to your home country] … I never think about giving up." Jay also shared his determination to succeed through more efforts. He said:

> I knew clearly that I couldn't let the burden and the pressure destroy me … whatever situation you are in, good situation, bad situation, personal efforts, personal agency, that is very important. Willing to work hard, that's one thing.

Cristal described how she relied on self- motivation and personal desire to achieve academic goals:

> Try not to avoid difficulties, and all the time I can come to difficulties. So, I cannot just avoid them and ask myself, 'Well, just forget about it, leave it alone? No, I will not!' Instead, I think as a becoming professional researcher or educator, you have to know how to solve the problem when you're facing the problems.

International doctoral students went beyond basic requirements to be successful. For example, by working hard to better her understanding of English, Lily made extra efforts to achieve her academic goals:

> Well, you still need to get a good grade, so what I must do is to just work hard, read, and write. Other people may need to take half an hour, I may need three hours. So, I just have to do it this way.

Affection. Interviewees also took control in difficult situations, regulated their negative emotions, and took initiatives to solve problems. Lily managed her frustration when she did not match her mentor's expectation of her, and she told herself that it was an opportunity to learn and grow:

> Dr. X had such a high expectation of me, but I did not really match that
> much … It [is] just more frustrating because I always think it's so hard.
> But you got trained so that you grew up.

Cristal also showed how she managed her negative emotions when facing problems:

> I think because I'm a positive person. So, whenever I am facing any challenges, well, you know, it is normal that people will think negatively. But, you know, I will just always look on the brighter side. Like, okay, it's not worse. So, the issues here are in front of you. Solve the problem first!

Jay was very concerned about his graduate assistantship as it was his only source of finance. Cristal noted that she "was even thinking if [she] cannot get graduate assistantship anymore, [she] would just go back home." Cristal did not get her assistantship at the beginning of her program and she had to balance and control her schoolwork and jobs. She said:

> So financial issues, I would say, are really important and it is the second factor that influences my resilience. So, I just have to always find a balance between my job outside the campus and between my school work. So yeah, I have to survive and pay my bills. I have to spend a lot of time working on my schoolwork.

Lily had financial issues during summer; she took control by managing her budget to survive. All along, she remained committed to the academic plan in spite of the financial issues:

> So, in the summer, for the whole three months, I have no money. But the good thing is I was a good planner, so I saved every month. That's how I survived the first few years.

DISCUSSION

Expectation and Communication with Mentors and Peers

Each interviewee met their challenges in unique ways, building a sense of belonging in their academic programs and leveraging their mental toughness to build a repertoire of support from their peers, faculty mentors, and community resources.

A person's sense of belonging may generate the confidence to ask for help, take advantage of opportunities, feel confident in achieving goals, and cherish hope for success. Previous research found that undergraduate international students' sense of belonging relates to their experiences (Glass et al., 2015; Yao, 2016). Student-faculty relationships include students' mentors, instructors, university mentors, and other faculty who play a pivotal role in student success. Student-faculty relationships are affected by students' expectations of their mentors, and by the quality of communication between students and mentors. For international doctoral students, guidance from mentors is critical. It helps with adapting to new social and academic culture, learning about the requirements of their programs, and connecting to valuable academic and financial resources (Marijanovic et al., 2021).

In our study of three students, we found cultural factors influenced their sense of belonging. Perceiving the relationship with their mentors as insufficient, interviewees reported they lacked the sense that they belonged as important participants in their programs. Similar to Jay, Lily, and Cristal, international doctoral students may hesitate to express their different perspectives or let their mentors know their perspectives that mismatch their mentors'

expectations because of the individual character, cultural differences, or even out of fear of losing their graduate assistantship. These factors affected international doctoral students' ability to reach out to their mentors and prevented them from discussing important individual needs. As their expectations of mentors differed from reality, they felt anxious, frustrated, and confused although they tried to meet their mentors' expectations of them.

Inclusion in academic communities related to students' experience with their programs. Through their relationships with peers, faculty, and community, the international students were able to overcome obstacles. Their sense that they could ask questions, seek help and resources, and their awareness of the resources available to them were all experiences that relate to their sense of belonging. In the present study, students showed their efforts and outcomes of building community relationships with their peers, to develop their sense of belonging. Using these resources to solve problems plays a role in the students' psychological well-being and helped reduce stress and setbacks.

Psychological Well-Being

International doctoral students with higher MT believed that they had the ability to overcome difficulties, were determined to succeed, and self-regulated the negative emotions (Sheard et al., 2009). The findings of this study affirmed that a higher level of MT predicts a higher level of psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction) (Gerber et al., 2013; Jin & Wang, 2018). For example, Lily relied on her ability to take initiatives to solve problems; she managed her money for survival over the summer, made extra efforts on her coursework to get higher grades. Lily's MT made her cope positively with the adverse situation allowing her to achieve her academic goals. She did not feel too distressed and did not give up. From the product-oriented perspective, Lily was satisfied with her academic performance. However, from the process-oriented perspective, Lily may internalize her difficulties because her MT enabled her to overcome difficulties. In other words, Lily's symptoms of distress during the process may be salient to her but not to her mentors or others because she could bear it. Her mental toughness led Lily to internalize her stresses, which prevented her mentor from seeing the necessity to respond to her stresses. Although international students showed their efforts in handling their problems, the findings of the study indicate the importance of mentors' expectation and communication to the international students' well-being.

Students regarded their friends and peers as key resources to support their academic development and psychological well-being. This finding showed how international doctoral students have strived for success in their doctoral studies. This may be influenced by their home culture and values of hard-work which allowed them to challenge themselves, and overcome difficulties with sacrifices for success in the future. We commend international students' determination and efforts when they may keep their psychological issues among themselves such as stresses and anxieties that come from their personal life, financial situations, etc.; however, if those internalized psychological issues were always ignored by students themselves, mentors, or programs, it may negatively affect their academic goals or psychological well-being in the long run (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hagerty et al., 2002; Yao, 2016) and the completion of their programs (Strayhorn, 2019; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Some psychological well-being issues were caused by cultural factors (Eckersley, 2011). The change of culture from China to the U.S. had

intangible and pervasive effects on the three international doctoral students' psychological well-being, such as heightened risk, uncertainty, and insecurity (Eckersley, 2011).

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of our study suggest that in mentoring international doctoral students, it is imperative that international students should know the program requirements and learn to communicate with their mentors in a way that helps mentors know their cultures and difficulties. International students need to adjust to new norms and behaviors (Shafaei et al., 2018). Passing the university-required language proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL and GRE) does not guarantee their success in doctoral programs. More work for the programs should be done to prepare international students for their first-year experience. For undergraduate students, the first-year experience courses are created to enhance their retention and completion, so it is an imperative with international doctoral students too.

Meanwhile, mentors need to treat each student with respect regarding their cultural background and capability at the beginning of the program and establish a positive relationship that enhances the sense of belonging. Mentors must learn about students' cultures that play into communication with students related to new customs, social norms, academic expectations, relationships, etc. (Shafaei et al., 2018) to ensure their smooth cultural acculturation and academic success. Even though Lily was from the same home country as her mentor, it did not ensure that the mentor and the student could communicate well.

While this study helped understand students' experiences in working with mentors, we have yet to know how their experiences influenced their academic performance without more cases, especially using a quantitative research design. While we aimed to understand how a sense of belonging involves more relationships and mental toughness; it also involve more individual efforts to work together. Further research may create a new theoretical lens that includes both inter-relational and individual characteristics of international doctoral students when looking at sense of belonging of international doctoral students.

Our study has its limitations. It focused on international doctoral students in the fields of education. A larger study on the experiences of international students across multiple fields, programs, or institutions would provide a more comprehensive picture of international doctoral students' experiences. Also, students in the study shared Asian backgrounds and cultures, which mean that the participants may only represent a small section of international students.

Future studies may discuss the experiences of students from diverse international origins. Additionally, future research may collect data from both mentors and international doctoral students. Adding experiences of mentors will provide researchers with different perspectives to examine the process, interaction, and actions of both mentors and students. Also it is important to compare international doctoral students to domestic doctoral students to assess the similarities and differences in their sense of belonging and mental toughness. Such research, will help us understand the support needed for both mentors and students. Lastly, although this research explained some relationships between the sense of belonging and mental toughness, more research is needed to know the impact of the relationships on students' academic goals and psychological well-being.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp.152-165
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.3792 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Neo-colonialism in Distance Learning in Barbados and Canada

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the literature on the evolution of distance learning in Barbados and Canada's higher education systems in the context of their unique geographies and colonialism. First, postmodern concerns about what is "good" in education (Slaughter, 2001) are considered, followed by a brief discussion of the role of distance learning in neo-colonialism. Next, the evolution of Barbados and Canada's higher education systems within the colonial context is described, setting the stage for the development of distance learning. Both countries' roles within the Commonwealth of Learning organization are compared and used to locate neo-colonial patterns. This analysis highlights risks and benefits of working with external organizations to meet higher education needs in Barbados and Canada, the neo-colonial complexity of a Commonwealth educational organization, and opportunities for strengthening the local while embracing the global in both of these regions.

Keywords: Barbados, Canada, commonwealth of learning, distance education, higher education, neo-colonialism

Received April 25, 2021; revised October 26, 2021; accepted October 30, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Distance learning has expanded over the past two decades in many parts of the world as growing student-age populations increasingly seek tertiary education (Klimova & Poulova, 2016; Qayyum & Zawacki-Richter, 2019). Online education provided by brick-and-mortar institutions, open university offerings at a distance, and other mobile learning arrangements help educate large numbers of people by removing physical barriers to access and broadening participation, and is utilized in geographically isolated locations to alleviate the need for relocation or long commutes to campus (Boiselle, 2014; Gordon et al., 2014; Simon et al., 2014; Stewart, 2016).

However, many smaller nations and isolated regions that use distance learning have histories of colonialism and already struggle to promote local knowledge in their curriculum, leaving open the possibility that neo-colonial notions about what can and should be taught will predominate over local needs (Facey, 2001; Louisy, 2001). Widespread importation of online learning technologies have raised concerns that these regions may become a "dumping ground for sub-standard services" (Boiselle, 2014, p. 9), which negates the benefits of distance learning in bringing educational opportunities to remote students. While concerns about externally sourced educational programming may exist in any setting, populations that have previously been subjugated or marginalized by colonization sit at a multifaceted crossroads of local knowledge systems, interactions with and dependence upon non-local educational providers, and postcolonial relationships with development-oriented organizations.

The relationship between distance learning curriculum providers and recipients, and the way in which post-colonial status intersects these roles is not clear-cut. Untangling the complexity of these arrangements can reveal how distance learning may serve as a conduit for neo-colonialism by shaping and supplying externally-sourced ideas about what is 'good' in education, as this case study of two intertwined countries and the commonwealth organization within which they exist demonstrates.

This study explores the way Barbados and Canada utilize distance learning to meet higher education demands, and the challenges that arise for local populations when implementing materials produced elsewhere. Exploring these two countries shows differences between two highly developed former British colonies with geographically isolated populations, and also illustrates the importance of spatial location and context in access to higher education (Valimaa, 2009). This case study is bounded by the presence of the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), a postcolonial organization to which both countries belong, and which is geared towards increasing development throughout commonwealth countries (Commonwealth Governments, 2014). In exporting curriculum, CoL is also exporting their vision of what is 'good' in higher education. The objective of this study is to unravel how postcolonial efforts at development via distance learning intertwine with neo-colonialism and global notions of what is 'good' in education, potentially at the expense of what is 'good' locally.

Barbados' relative isolation as a small island and the isolated Canadian North (in this study, my usage of the "Canadian North" or "Northern Canada" refers to the Canadian territories of Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, and my usage of "Canada" refers to the country as a whole) present added challenges for providing traditional higher education opportunities, making these regions particularly salient for this study (Lipatov, 2014; Louisy, 2001; Marshall & Marrett, 2008; Philpott, Sharpe and Neville 2009). The number of students enrolling in universities has increased worldwide, and these two countries are no exception (Boiselle, 2014; Marginson, 2016). In addition, institutions in both countries, like most in the world, have limited (or dwindling) financial resources to support education, requiring novel approaches for meeting resource demands (Jones, 2012; Zephyrine, 2019).

Supranational organizations like the CoL have emerged as providers of distance learning technology but bring with them the omnipresent threat of eroding the local by embracing the

global (Facey, 2001; Louisy, 2001). Yet supranational distance learning organizations like this may be in a unique position to incorporate more collaborative higher education initiatives. Adapting the local to the global (or vice versa) via hybridity of forms could open up a third-space, partway between the local and the global, providing a generative response to these postcolonial tensions (George & Lewis, 2011).

This study first describes and situates postmodern concerns about what is 'good' in education (Slaughter, 2001). Next, earmarks of neo-colonialism are identified, and used to direct a line of postmodern inquiry into higher education and distance learning. Then, the colonial origins of higher education in Barbados and Canada are reviewed to provide a backdrop against which to examine their distance learning trajectories and struggles for self-determination. The CoL is then highlighted to provide an example of how Barbados and Canada differently experience external distance learning support. Because the CoL is rooted in the British Commonwealth, this organization represents a thread connecting these countries with their colonial past. Exploring the ways that Barbados and Canada interact with the CoL reveal neo-colonial patterns impacting their higher education systems, and the unique conditions that distance learning adds.

Disrupting Narratives of What is 'Good' in Higher Education

What is considered 'good' in higher education in Barbados and Canada has been shaped by each country's colonial roots, their postcolonial developments and efforts at self-determination, and the current globalized, market-oriented educational context (Louisy, 2004). Slaughter's postmodern approach argues that higher education reforms like massification are generally considered 'good,' unproblematically situated as a way to increase access to Western-style higher education systems that produce graduates suitable for entry into the global marketplace (2001, p.391). This perspective, she notes, fails to question whether or not the changes occurring in institutions to broaden access are actually having the intended effect of equalizing opportunities for diverse student groups, and how evolving power dynamics might actually reify existing inequalities (Slaughter, 2001). It is from this postmodern approach that I am interrogating distance learning systems in Barbados and Canada.

Applying a postmodern approach can involve posing critical questions designed to destabilize and critique, unraveling embedded power structures and, heretofore, unquestioned assumptions (Aylesworth, 2015). Revealing underlying power structures can make stark imbalances between groups like those emanating from a colonizer/colonized relationship, even after that relationship has seemingly faded from prominence. In combination with questioning assumptions, educational actors taking a postmodern approach might ask why things are done the way they are, and who really benefits. An underlying assumption in higher education is that distance learning is good and that learners benefit. In interrogating this assumption, I retrace the colonial roots of Barbados and Canada's higher education systems to help lay bare the colonial influence from its origin to the present. This involves identifying explicit colonial controls, more subtle colonial influences, efforts at postcolonial self-determination, and the ever-evolving global education system in which neo-colonial powers operate.

Neo-colonialism may be exhibited in former colonies through the military outposts of and economic dependency on former colonial powers, and the importation of educational standards and policy (Ali, 2010; George & Lewis, 2011; Girvan, 2012). Also falling under the auspices of neo-colonialism is "ideological co-optation," when one group exhibits control over another such that the subjugated population begins to internalise this imbalanced world view, seeing themselves as inferior and even failing to question this hierarchical arrangement (Girvan, 2012, p. 9-10). Asking questions about the norms of higher education and distance learning can reveal who benefits from these norms, and what problems persist or arise. In both Barbados and Canada, neo-colonialism can be observed in the way that higher education systems have followed Western

(namely British and American) norms, even in places where some of these norms clash with those of the dominant local population, as we will see below.

EVOLUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN BARBADOS AND CANADA

Barbados has a population of around 290,000 and, at 431 square kilometers in size, is small enough to fit within Canada's largest city, Toronto (World Bank, 2020). In comparison, Canada has a population of 37.6 million, and over 9.9 million square kilometers of land, though most of the population resides along the southern border with the United States (World Bank, 2020). While Barbados lacks space and suffers from brain drain (Rudder, 2012), Canada has no lack of space and its southern cities currently have brain gain, attracting skilled immigrants from around the world (Ng & Metz, 2015). Barbados is one of the most developed countries in the Caribbean, with a GDP of $5 million USD in 2018, the highest in the Caribbean, and a Human Development Index of 58, which ranks in the 'Very High Development' category (UN Development Programme, 2019; World Bank, 2020). Canada's GDP was $1.7 trillion (USD) in 2018 and ranks 12th in the Human Development Index; however, the development level of small, isolated far northern communities is considered much lower (UN Development Programme, 2019; World Bank, 2020).

Evolution of Higher Education and Distance Learning in Barbados

Widespread higher education did not take hold in the Caribbean until the 20th century, partly because of the expense, but also because of a sense that educating the Black population would be 'dangerous' for the small White elite (Cobley, 2000, p. 3). Miller proposed that colonizers were not interested in establishing infrastructure beyond what was needed to make money in the short-term (2000). As the number of imperial officials dwindled, rather than find a way to educate locals to take control, it behooved the empire to continue sending expatriates to maintain control, obviating the need for a locally trained populace, and maintaining an educated colonial elite (Miller, 2000). This racially divided educational system left a lasting imprint on Caribbean nations, where 'there remain remnants of a colonial gaze towards the "centre"' indicative of neo-colonial ideological co-optation (Lam, 2011).

Beginning in 1876, the 'best' students from Barbados were granted scholarships to attend Cambridge and Oxford in England, contributing to a lack of higher education development in the Caribbean, and making local attempts to educate the population look paltry in comparison (Cobley, 2000; Coggins, 2018). Growing nationalist uprisings in the colonies inspired England to designate the University of London as a degree provider in the Caribbean through local colleges; educating colonial subjects through an English-affiliated institution met the needs of the British Empire, keeping subjects "intellectually and ideologically tied to England" (Cobley, 2000, p. 10). These early higher education initiatives were shaped by events in the British Empire, and cast local efforts at developing higher education within the shadow of colonial institutions and control.

Barbadian students sent abroad were initially mostly male and White, however by the Interwar Period; Black and Brown students from the Caribbean were also studying abroad (Coggins, 2018). These students eventually began to complain to the British Colonial Office about racism they experienced in the UK. At the same time, African students studying abroad were being radicalized against colonialism (Coggins, 2018). These factors contributed to British colonial authorities' decision to give their Caribbean colonies a university (Cobley, 2000).

The University College of the West Indies (UCWI) opened its Jamaica campus in 1948 with an inherently conflicted identity. The university was both a British stronghold over its increasingly nationalizing colonies, as well as a way to unite and stabilize the Caribbean and foster political and economic independence (Coggins, 2018; Cobley, 2000). The UCWI adhered to British standards, with degrees continuing to be granted via the University of London. However, punitive expatriate leadership and entry requirements that did not correlate with local

secondary school standards kept enrollment and graduation rates low in the university's early years, though rejected or failing students often found success at schools in North America and the UK (Cobley, 2000). That these standards were adhered to even when students left and succeeded elsewhere raises the question of who this educational institution was really for, and for what purpose. Even those succeeding in UCWI programs obtained degrees not necessarily locally useful, perpetuating "a narrow neocolonial elite" (Cobley, 2000, p. 17).

In 1962, the UCWI gained independent status and was renamed University of the West Indies (UWI). An agricultural college in Trinidad had been incorporated in 1960, and the Barbados campus at Cave Hill was added in 1963. Nettleford (as cited in Cobley, 2000, p. 19) described a process of 'piecemeal institutional engineering' over the ensuing decades to reorient the university system locally rather than as a colonial structure, which was increasingly important as Barbados gained independence from the British in 1966. That the process was referred to as "piecemeal" and requiring "engineering" demonstrate the depth to which colonial ideas about education had already been engrained, requiring dismantling and redesign. Island-specific professional and vocational colleges opened throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and community colleges and other regional institutions were developed in the 1970s and 1980s, all providing local supplements to the UWI and more locally focussed professional training (Miller, 2000; Thomas, 2008). These efforts toward localizing would soon be situated alongside improving technology and an increasingly interconnected world.

Distance education programs were developed in the late 1970s, including correspondence study and audio conferencing technology (Howe, 2000). In 1992, the UWI began a new push for distance education utilizing modern technology and with a more robust, student-centered approach, and the UWI Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) was established, enabling dual-mode delivery (both face-to-face and online) of postsecondary education (Harvey, 2000; Kuboni, 2017). Not only were ministers of education in the region concerned with broadening participation in higher education, but also with 'the economic advantage it would bring to small countries in a period of expansion of knowledge industries, globalization and trade liberalization' (Harvey, 2000, p. 326). Of note is the fact that this dual-mode delivery push was influenced by a 26-page report compiled during CoL consultant William Renwick's site visit in 1991; the CoL was present as the gaze of distance learning leaders in the Caribbean was shifted increasingly toward the global marketplace (Howe, 2000). This shift did not progress without local apprehensions.

By the early 2000s, concerns about the quality of, and competition from a massive influx of external online higher education providers, as well as the appropriateness of education designed outside of the local environment, were voiced in the Caribbean (Marshall & Marrett, 2008). Concerns included the quality of instruction, where degrees would be recognized, and how relevant the programs were to local needs, particularly when institutions operated outside of local collaborative agreements. Indeed, 'twinning partnerships' involving external institutions collaborating with local institutions to deliver programs formed the majority of external higher education provision (Thomas, 2008, p. 30). Many of these twinning arrangements were department-specific, subverting the application of broad policies to structure and guide the process (Marrett, 2008). Distance learning could occur without local control or authority, potentially undermining Barbadian efforts to define the conditions of higher education in the region.

The next section traces a similar history in Canada, focusing on the less developed northern reaches of the country, where postsecondary education and distance education have, like Barbados, evolved largely within the context of external actors.

Evolution of Higher Education and Distance Learning in Canada

In Canada, higher education has existed since the 17th century, beginning in the colonial territories of New France, although degrees were not formally offered until the late 18th century

(Jones, 2014). Early colonial educational endeavors under the auspices of the French Roman Catholic church typically involved attempts to 'civilize' aboriginal populations, an approach that would persist for some time (Jones, 2007, p. 629). As British loyalists migrated into Canada from the US following the Revolutionary War, they developed higher education institutions as a way of strengthening their British identity, beginning with colonial colleges and later expanding into religious institutions (Jones, 2014). Strengthening British identity in Canada via higher education seemed to be about defining and developing a nation, whereas British colonial power and establishing higher education in Barbados seemed to be about maintaining control of a local population, as described above.

Despite the impetus to strengthen British identity via the higher education, Canadians looked to their neighbors in the US, rather than the British, when developing their higher education systems (Jones, 2014). The first institutions, King's College in Nova Scotia in 1789 and the University of New Brunswick in 1800, were modeled on New York's King's College (now Columbia University), not the British institutional model (Jones, 2014). This perhaps sowed early seeds for developing a uniquely Canadian higher education system composed as a sort of hybrid, rather than a purely imported British system as was initially installed in Barbados. In any case, the higher education system was still in its infancy even as Canada moved towards self-governance within the British Empire.

When the British colonies of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia federated into the Dominion of Canada in 1867, enrolment in higher education was relatively minuscule; as such, control of higher education institutions fell under the purview of provinces rather than the federal government or colonial offices (Jones, 2014). Unlike in the Caribbean, multiple institutions shaped by the unique interests of each province were free to develop in Canada, unbound by the colonial restrictions like those that established UCWI as a campus of a British university in Barbados. As Canadian universities massified following the Second World War, government funding was increased and satellite colleges and vocational institutions began opening to meet rapidly increasing demand (Jones, 2014). Higher education was seen as a means for the country to develop socially and economically, no longer just the domain of the children of the elite.

Similar ideals were echoed in the Northern reaches of Canada, where hopes for a Northern university were tied to improved well-being, stability, recognition of a distinctly Northern history and identity, and self-reliance (Graham, 1996; Graham, 2015; Poelzer, 2007). However, some rhetoric around higher education in the North took on a hierarchical, Southern serving orientation with ideals and goals that '[reproduce] colonial paradigms in which Indigenous peoples are not producers but recipients of knowledge' (Black, 2015, p. 43). Within Canada, neo-colonialism has had an intra-national element, with the Southern part of the country looking towards the material resources and sparse populations in the Northern part of the country as a lucrative opportunity and a wilderness in need of taming (Graham, 2015). Such attitudes have shaped attempts to establish postsecondary institutions in Northern Canada.

The initial thrust of postsecondary development in Northern Canada appeared to be driven by what was considered good from a Southern perspective. For instance, the University of Canada North (UCN) was proposed but drew criticism for failing to consult aboriginal action groups before incorporating, and for designing an institution that followed traditional Western structural norms (Black, 2015; Graham, 2015). The failed UCN project prompted a survey of local interests in postsecondary education possibilities, which pointed towards community colleges (Graham, 2015). Kelly described this development as a shift in attention from building a university to support research and educate Northerners, to enabling Northerners to participate more fully in the region's economic development (2015). Early distance learning foundations also began with Southern Canadian roots.

Early notions of higher education distance learning in Northern Canada included a University of Western Ontario (UWO) conception in the 1970s, the '"university of the air" based on a microwave communications network' (Graham, 2015, p. 85). Project leaders, however, did worry about the potential negative impact of a Southern Canadian, Westernised teacher training curriculum on Aboriginal people (Graham, 2015). Other early attempts included phone conferencing and correspondence study. Hybrid models combining online study like videoconferencing with short-term face-to-face study delivered by on-site visitors are numerous (Paquette-Frenette, 2009). Like the small, isolated islands of the Caribbean, the remoteness of Northern Canada has presented challenges for establishing local origin higher education systems.

Recent studies of Northern Canadian higher education highlight the importance of a locally designed curriculum to avoid reifying colonial structures, and some lament the impact of having distance learning instructors who were not knowledgeable about the unique cultures of Northern Canada (Simon et al., 2014). A 2014 study on the implementation of an online teacher education program delivered in the remote reaches of northern Ontario revealed disconnects between the remote students and the program administrators based in southern Ontario city centers (Gordon et al., 2014). Not only did administrators overestimate the quality of internet connectivity in this region, they were also surprised when students were not able to secure time off to attend synchronous course meetings during their teaching hours, and were unable to quickly replace broken equipment due to a lack of nearby retail outlets. The researchers attributed this disconnect to the administrators' lack of awareness of what life was like in this remote region, and their assumption that online schooling would operate in much the same way there that it did in the urbanized southern part of Ontario where they were located (Gordon et al., 2014).

Studies also demonstrate increasing efforts to tailor programs to local preferences, relying on Elders and local language speaking adjuncts in teaching, incorporating an instructor with Northern experience and grief counseling expertise, implementing Aboriginal learning and reflection frameworks to situate the program with local culture and language, flexibility in the manner of delivery, and giving students more agency in how courses are delivered (McAuley & Walton, 2011; Simon et al., 2014). Access to higher education via distance education continues to be viable, and shifts in pedagogical design indicate that attention is being paid to who these programs are for.

The next section describes the Commonwealth of Learning, demonstrating how this organization operates differently in Barbados and Canada, and indicating evidence of neo-colonial patterns via the origin and exportation of distance education.

The Commonwealth of Learning

As part of the British Commonwealth, both Canada and Barbados have access to and participate in the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), an organization devoted to improving learning opportunities and supporting development through digital technology (Commonwealth Governments, 2014). The CoL was created by the British Commonwealth in 1987 to support learning across the Commonwealth, particularly utilizing technology. The organization is governed by leaders from Commonwealth countries who contribute funding and have relevant regional expertise (Commonwealth Governments, 2014). Funding is also provided by the World Bank and other global organizations that support development initiatives.

The CoL is headquartered in the Vancouver, Canada metropolitan region, and its Open Educational Resources (OERs), technological expertise, and professional development and training resources are accessed by members around the world. The CoL is staffed largely by individuals schooled in Canada at some point in their academic careers. Documents produced by the organization are written in Canadian English and financial figures are reported in Canadian dollars. The organization also has a regional office in New Delhi, India, referred to as the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia. In this study, the CoL provides an illustrative

through-line; its differing relationships with Barbados and Canada are used to interrogate its role in neo-colonialism.

DIFFERING INTERACTIONS WITH THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

In Barbados, the CoL develops and delivers content related to skills development as well as knowledge in agricultural management, disaster resilience, fisheries, and tourism (CoL, 2018a). The CoL "supports the collaborative development and sharing of OER to promote learning for sustainable development" through the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), of which Barbados is a part (CoL 2020, p. 3). In addition, the CoL provides connections to content developers and experts, and has helped facilitate the development of locally oriented programs through professional development and online resources (CoL, 2018a; CoL, 2020). Much of the description of the CoL's activities in Barbados is encapsulated more generally through their activities in the Caribbean as a whole, making it difficult to parse out how collaborative their interactions are with each country. Though these country profile documents are likely not meant to be highly comprehensive, and other activities might not publicly shared on the website, this perhaps represent a missed opportunity to highlight locally-focussed educational initiatives and collaborations through providing more country-specific details in the profiles.

In Canada, the CoL provides teacher training through Athabasca University's MOOCs, and conducts and publishes research based on their study of the usage of OERs through the CoL (CoL, 2018b). In addition, the CoL provides the University of British Columbia with student interns at no charge. Students serve in communities and inner-city schools, conducting research and participating in meetings, and receive experiential learning credit (CoL, 2018b). The country profile on the CoL's activities in Canada also describe Canadians as serving in consulting roles in distance learning and OER design, and professional development for Ministries of Education and other institutions. If Barbadian students serve as interns or consultants through the CoL, this activity was not included in the most recent CoL country profile (CoL, 2020). I was unable to locate any information within the website that indicated how the CoL is used in the Northern part of Canada, if at all (CoL, 2018b). That the Northern region is not identified as a part of Canada where these distance learning resources may be used has the effect of homogenizing the country, erasing internal differences and spatial distinctions, and therefore rendering the country profile somewhat incomplete. Knowing more about the CoL's activities in Northern Canada might be illustrative in terms of the differing recipient and provider roles within Canada, and how the CoL could help rectify imbalanced access to resources throughout the country.

These contrasting interactions with the CoL demonstrate the ways that Barbados and Canada interact differently with this organization. Barbados appears to primarily be a recipient of the CoL's services, while Canada serves as both a recipient and a provider of services through the CoL. Both countries receive training and digital education access for postsecondary students. In addition, Canadian students may participate in international community service experiences and professional development. Canadian consultants benefit financially from their work with CoL when their services are provided for a fee, and Canada benefits from having the organization housed on their soil, through paid staff positions and international recognition of hosting a globally relevant and developmentally oriented organization.

There is also a benefit derived from the actual development of programs. For example, the Canadian Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP) began in 1998 and involved the CoL, four Canadian universities and students in Jamaica, Dominica, St. Vincent and St. Lucia. Canadian funds supported the students' programs online utilizing the UWI's Distance Education Centre and in visits to Canada. Memorial University reported that developing ten teacher education courses for this program made them competitive global online learning providers (Brandon, 2003). Had the UWI agreed to contribute to the development of these

courses, the degrees would have been joint UWI/Memorial University products. However, because the UWI did not contribute to their development, the degrees are Canadian (Brandon, 2003). Reasons for the UWI's lack of contribution to the development of these courses could not be located, but, it could be that the development of UWI's Open Campus was occurring during the same time period.

While it is likely impossible to say who benefits more from interacting with the CoL, based on their country profile reports and their website, Barbados appears to engage more in importing knowledge and content than in exporting it, while Canada is in the opposite position, exporting more knowledge and content than it imports. This could be indicative of a neo-colonial relationship wherein Western-oriented distance learning is being imported into Barbados, with Canada (by way of the CoL) as a neo-colonial power. However, the directionality of information is more complex because, as a consortium, knowledge exported to Barbados may not come just from Canadian resource developers. Within the organization, national lines may break down, with information produced in multiple parts of the Commonwealth and exported across multiple lines into other parts of the Commonwealth.

Which types of programs are developed for export, and where those programs are most in demand does not appear to be readily available on their website, and is a possible area of examination in future research. Such an investigation could indicate how the collective knowledge of the CoL is (or is not) being shared globally, and what neo-colonial roles might be (un)intentionally perpetuated through its distribution.

Having briefly considered both Barbados and Canada, it appears that both countries' higher education systems have been shaped by perceptions of what is good in education that originated outside of the local context, with a modern version facilitated by the CoL. The following section uses this premise as a basis for returning to Slaughter's (2001) call for disrupting traditional notions of what is good in higher education to echo the utility of interrogating closely what is being imported in Barbados and Northern Canada by way of postsecondary distance learning.

NEO-COLONIAL COMPARISONS

Clearly, the CoL provides useful postsecondary education services through sharing resources, funding professional development, and supporting quality of life initiatives like educating women and enabling vocational skill development that serves local needs (CoL, 2020). It is not the quality of their provisions that are of concern in this analysis, but rather the way in which these services are perceived, and what that indicates, implicitly and explicitly, for local populations.

Boiselle warned of the dangers of adopting any external pedagogical practice or tool without critical thought about how it will impact Aboriginal ways of life (2014). Even when the indigenization of imported materials occurs, globalized systems of knowledge and learning may still form the basis against which local differences are judged (Lam, 2011; Marshall, 2008). If CoL is one of the standards against which local educational efforts are judged, how is the local being affected or shaped by the external, and how might that negatively impact the local? Also important is the potential blurring of boundaries between what is externally initiated and what is locally meaningful, and how what is considered good externally may be internalized locally. Perhaps a hybrid version develops, shaped by the best of both the external and the local. Researchers have raised concerns about this process occurring unexamined.

In Barbados, Louisy described the need to develop '"globally aware but locally relevant"' knowledge systems (2004, p. 287). Throughout the development of their higher education system, Barbados has worked to shape and reshape institutions to better suit local needs, but this is complicated by an increasingly global approach to higher education, which has been exacerbated by externally delivered distance learning. Louisy called upon Caribbean people to make 'a

concerted effort to locate its culture, and its contributions as differentiated elements in the globalised environment' (2001, p. 433) to help combat the looming threat of globalization-driven homogeneity and to harness aspects of their culture for engagement in the global market. Marrett emphasized the importance of interpersonal contact as a benefit of these intercultural interactions with distance learning, and suggested that more Caribbean ownership and authorship of projects would better supply them with tools that will be valuable in local human resource development, as well as potential sources of education that can be packaged for use elsewhere (2008). In the context of CoL, this could mean approaching resources and projects with intentional goals of collaboration and authorship, and embracing CoL's resources while maintaining a steady eye upon actively preserving local identities and culture.

In Northern Canada, the development of the higher education system has been concurrent with Aboriginal self-determination and pushing back against the myth of Northern Canada as an empty, wild wasteland that needs to be tamed or somehow used (Graham, 1996; Black, 2015). The development of distance learning has been about more than access in Northern Canada; it can also be seen as a way for Aboriginal people to exert sovereignty over their land by remaining at home rather than relocating, maintaining and fostering local ties, avoiding being treated as an 'Other' in a non-Aboriginal environment, and continuing to support family and community needs through their local presence (Parquette-Frenette, 2009; Simon et al., 2014). Black has described the development of higher education in the North as 'shaped by national fixation with the North and the nation's political-economic imperatives' and indicates that much motivation to develop higher education in the North is compelled by Southern neo-colonial motives (2015, p. 36). Likewise, Northern Canadian scholarship has criticized the reliance on scholarly attention to Northern studies and Northern problems from external points of view (Graham, 2013). The University of the Arctic Consortium is possibly a partial remedy to this, given that it was wholly developed within the North, though the consortium brings with it the complexity of being part of a bigger circumpolar identity (Graham, 2013).

In light of addressing local needs, Marshall acknowledged that to avoid global, external knowledge can be hazardous to the well-being of the local, and that we should not underestimate the power of the local to redefine, indigenize, and adapt for their own use what they encounter when interacting with imperial ways of being and doing (Marshall, 2008). Importing foreign ideas may lead to 'border pedagogy' that actually facilitates knowledge of multiple cultural perspectives that can better equip learners to exist within and across borders (Marshall, 2008, p. 150). Several online programs in Northern Canada have identified ways of utilizing 'outsider' tools to meet local needs, for instance, in using the Knowledge Building platform (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2014) to build upon and share community knowledge, and utilising videoconferencing to support hybrid programs that value interpersonal interaction and all participants having a voice (Paquette-Frenette, 2009; McAuley & Walton, 2011).

Organizations like the CoL, composed of Commonwealth countries with a broad spectrum of development and Aboriginal knowledge, as well as postcolonial experience, are uniquely positioned to incorporate more collaborative higher education initiatives. A third-space, partway between the local and the global, could be a way to approach these tensions in the postcolonial world, adapting the local to the global (or vice versa) via hybridity of forms (George & Lewis, 2011). George and Lewis (2011) referred to the development of spaces where knowledge traditions could be shared for the sake of understanding. By its very digital nature, the CoL opens up space for the sharing of traditions and knowledge, and such conversations are already evident in activities like the collaborative development of quality assessment tools and other materials (Daniel et al., 2006). The way in which these spaces are opened up, managed and utilized may come to be understood and acted upon in new ways.

As many distance learning programs fill needs not yet met in Barbados and Northern Canada, planning for the eventual transition from dependence on external providers to locally

delivered programming might also push institutions towards more intentional and timely repurposing of external programming (George, 2008). Marshall noted several calls for governmental policies that protect institutions from external exploitation, increased quality control, intentional program diversification, and tracking of institutions operating in the Caribbean (2008). Permission to operate in these regions might also come with a requirement to contribute to local development (Potter, 2008).

Countries and their institutions might shift to a situation wherein the collaborative work of external providers like the CoL benefits both exporters and importers more equally, with greater attention given explicitly to the complicated nature of these inherently imbalanced interactions. Such work is a major undertaking, but important for valuing Aboriginal knowledge and cultures, and in helping to rectify the legacy of these countries' colonial heritage.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the development of higher education systems and distance learning in Barbados and Canada, highlighting the imprint of colonialism, and exploring the way in which both countries interact with the Commonwealth of Learning. These explorations facilitated an analysis of neo-colonial processes at work in shifting arrangements between the colonized and their former colonizers, and organizations like the CoL who house both. This study also shows ways that Barbados and Canada are embracing distance learning, and how distance learning by its very nature can add an amorphous, non-local dynamic to a country or region's attempt to define itself and its goals for local development and well-being. The study concluded with an overview of the research community's recommendations on how to move forward collaboratively, acknowledging the global while emphasizing the local.

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Book Review

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2022), pp.166-171
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i2.4464 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Book Review

Downing, K., Loock, P.J., & Gravett, S. *The Impact of Higher Education Ranking Systems on Universities*. London: Routledge, 2021. 146 pp. €96. ISBN 9780367433406.

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University ranking is a buzzword that attracts both national and global attention. From the outset of *The Impact of Higher Education Ranking Systems on Universities*, the book's central theme revolves around this buzzword. The author`s concern is not with whether universities should be ranked, but instead the methodology adopted by the Big Three higher education ranking systems (Academic Ranking of World Universities [ARWU], Quacquarelli Symonds [QS], and Times Higher Education [THE]) is the subject of scrutiny. The book affirms that rankings are here to stay. With an emphasis on tangible output, the book portrays ranking as a benchmark of excellence. Downing et al. analyze through a critical lens: the Big Three ranking systems, the fine points of the adopted methodology, the weighing of the different indicators, and recent amendments undertaken, to offer insights into the contemporary globalized higher education arena through the neoliberal reforms, market principles, and forces of internationalization in higher education. In a word, the book contends that some higher education institutions are reshaping their vision and mission in an attempt to acquire the status of world-class universities.

The book is a worthwhile read for research scholars as it contributes to the literature on international comparisons of higher education institutions, including the methodological issues and concerns of university rankings. It comprises nine chapters. The first three chapters (1-3) delve into the backdrop that gave rise to institutional rankings, tracing the history of the Big Three ranking systems. These early chapters detail not only the criticisms of the ranking systems

but also their benefits for the institutions' stakeholders. The following three chapters (4-6) discuss each of the Big Three ranking systems (ARWU, QS, and THE) in detail. The last three chapters (7-9) depict the challenges that developed and developing nations face because of the influence rankings exert on them. The policy briefs, mainly in the context of the US and the UK, form part of the discussion. In essence, the book offers a comprehensive understanding of the global higher education context which has reinforced the rankings debate and led to measuring the performance of institutions. Emphasis on academic performance has shifted the discussion from access and equity, to pursuing academic excellence to achieve a higher ranking. However, the book does warn against over-reliance on rankings.

Chapter 1 is a critique of rankings as a quantitative measurement. Researchers have claimed that universities came into being due to social need based changes in their countries, and rankings based on standard measurement would undermine the purpose behind their establishment. Standardization betrays the idea that different institutions have their own visions, identities, contexts, pedagogical philosophies, and in some cases, unique, national needs. The quality of education should not be homogenized by being subjected to a standard measure; however, there is an inevitable danger of isomorphism. The question of whether ranking leads to homogenization or catalyzes competition remains unattended by the authors.

Chapter 2 contextually informs the transformation[1] in the higher education landscape. With neoliberal forces impacting colleges and universities, there is a shift from input to output based funding. Drawing from the discussion regarding the changes in the global higher education arena, in my own country the recently introduced National Education Policy (Government of India, 2020) in India, calls for implementing performance-and /target-based funding, referred to as the Institutional Development Plan[2] (IDP), which has led to the restructuring of institutional autonomy (Government of India, 2019). In light of the corporatization of higher education, the chapter highlights how before the advent of ranking systems, the quest for knowledge and values like academic freedom of thought were encouraged. The growth of self-financing institutions has led to increased commodification of knowledge. In a market-driven system, the prevalence of treating students as consumers and top-down administration has accentuated "managerialism" in higher education. These changes intensify the debate on quality, competition, efficiency, performance, and accountability.

In Chapter 3, Downing et al. discuss the advent of the ranking systems and their expansion. The chapter details an output-oriented culture wherein rankings are the manifestations of the infusion of audit and corporate-type mechanisms within institutions. These mechanisms are bound to affect the internal functioning as well as the efficiency of universities. However, the Berlin Principles[3] (BP) used in the International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) audit of universities is not without flaws since it fails to ensure the accuracy of the submitted data by the institution or ranking agency.

In Chapters 4-6, wherein the book discusses the Higher Education Ranking Systems (HERS), there is an emphasis on methodological indicators. The selection of different indicators

[1] The transformations in terms of privatization of public funded institutes, increased internationalization and globalization.

[2] To score high in NAAC and compete for funds, faculties are required to set targets under IDP to be realized over a period of time.

[3] A set of rules promoting good practices within the ranking industry.

and the attached weightings are subject to multiple examinations and criticism by the authors. The indicators inviting the most criticism are reputational surveys, teaching quality, and citations. The authors criticize the excessive weight attributed to reputational surveys by Times Higher Education (THE) at 33% and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) at 40%. They claim that reputational surveys are prejudiced towards renowned institutions that have been long established, are located in English speaking countries, and fail to represent current research performance. In this context, Glennerster (1991) argues that in markets for education, the competition is S-based[4] (selection-based). Competition creates a hierarchy amongst institutions. The best ones are well-endowed with funds to attract the best quality faculty and students and remain at the top (Winston, 1999). Only when an institution enters with a large endowment fund[5] is there a possibility of negating the S-competition over time (Nandi and Chattopadhyay, 2012).

The book mentions that Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) conformists argue that the proxy for teaching and learning (student-staff ratio) is incomparable across different countries, and the same used by THE and QS is an inappropriate measure of the quality. These middle chapters indicate instances of manipulation such as universities' indulgence in inflating the number of faculty to reflect inaccurate teaching quality. The use of the Nobel Prize[6] as an indicator of faculty quality by ARWU is problematic. Also, there are citation biases as researchers may have language preferences and tendencies to cite researchers from the same region or country, which may create an artificial boost to the ranking. Compellingly, here Downing et al. have critically analyzed each indicator's biases which is helpful for scholars trying to develop a familiarity with the methodology debate. Nevertheless, the methodology is essential for understanding the discourse on rankings; theoretical implications require more examination.

The book pinpoints the non-linearity[7] issue amongst the different ranks and scores. Qamar (2021) underscores this concern in the context of India's national rankings, particularly for 1st and 10th ranked institutions. Following the global trend of allotting the highest weight to research output, the National Institute of Ranking Framework (NIRF) assigns 30% to the Research Performance and Professional Practices (RPP) category. The analysis revealed that the best universities scored 92.16% in research performance, and this score fell drastically to 60.52% for the 10th ranked and 4.35% for the 100th ranked university, respectively. Due to the non-disclosure of the data on the number of staff employed in a university, Qamar utilizes the data of expenditure on faculty and staff along with the number of students enrolled in a doctoral program to gauge the university size. The analysis illustrates that the more a university spends on its staff, the higher its ranking will be. Indeed, both funding and faculty play a prominent role in university rankings.

Downing et al. also argue that a single indicator cannot measure performance; varied indicators are considered for assessing university performance and ranking. However, including many indicators creates multicollinearity[8] issues, rendering specific indicators redundant and ranking scores unstable. Arguably one-dimensional, rankings fail to give a holistic analysis as

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[4] Both the students and teachers choose an institution and the institution also chooses good quality teachers and students.

[5] This is particularly true for the few new private universities in India.

[6] It represents only a handful of winners and not the performance of the whole university.

[7] There is a significant variation among the differently ranked institutions.

[8] Existence of a linear (highly correlated) relationship between explanatory variables in a model.

universities are not homogeneous, but rather unique in characteristics. The book does plead for a plurality[9] of rankings highlighting different stakeholders representing diverse needs and priorities. Though the authors critique a standardized measurement, they fail to suggest feasible solutions for the concerns raised in the text. In sum, ranking fails to identify areas that need improvement[10] as more attention is devoted to vertical than horizontal differences.

Chapter 7 discusses Western model of domination of international higher education, and the changes in the ecosystem[11] in which the universities were evolved. The book posits that participation in the ranking systems requires changes in how a university functions, which is determined by the institution itself. The New Public Management[12] (NPM) invoked reforms that involve "corporatization" in higher education in light of the fund crunch. Chattopadhyay (2019) argues that a competitive environment within higher education institutions weakens collegiality and undermines trust. Increased accountability not only constrains academic freedom but changes the types of research undertaken at universities. Increased accountability is also an impetus for faculty to publish in those journals which HERS uses to analyze outputs. The changes observed in institutional micro-processes in response to the ranking systems include recruiting managers to work in accord with ranking agencies, reevaluating class size, and adjusting departmental targets in the form of publishing in high focus journals, increasing international alliances etc. Limited term appointments have become a norm in faculty recruitment, which diminishes the culture of discussion and debates and leads to less engagement and involvement in academic environment. Hence, in the NPM, new measures of accountability are strengthened. Output-based funding contingent on rankings and accreditation are new ways of improving the existing deficiencies. These measures are considered a push from the state for institutions to be accountable to the students and the market.

In Chapter 8, Downing et al. continue discussing how changes in government structures impact rankings. They elaborate with particular reference to the Trump administration in the US and Brexit in the UK. The chapter illustrates how stringent policy changes in one country can positively influence other nations due to the rise of the international knowledge network. With internationalization being one of the indicators in the methodology rankings, a trend of recruiting international students from the Middle East and Southeast Asia is noted, along with an increase in research collaborations. Nonetheless, Downing et al. argue that these regulations in the Western nations raise suspicions of academic hegemony facing competition by Asian countries such as Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. Through a discussion of the power hierarchies, the chapter explores how developed and developing nations are subject to the influence of rankings. India, too, is engaged in the discourse on global prominence and policymakers' aims at establishing world-class institutions of higher education (Government of India, 2018). International faculty constitutes one of the parameters in institutional ranking. There is a tendency to hire international faculty to exhibit world-class status, by some private universities. Hence, there is a trade-off between meeting global needs and deviating from national ones to fulfill the ranking criteria.

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[9] HERS should move away from one size fits all approach.

[10] In terms of research output, quality of graduates churned out and other deficiencies.

[11] University governance, quality assurance framework etc.

[12] A worldwide recognized governance reform which involves quantification of output and infusion of audit culture to evaluate university performance.

To this end, the book makes a very timely contribution to the critical discourse on institutional rankings. The authors' criticism concerns the lack of an accurate measure of quality and the concomitant arbitrariness of current evaluating mechanisms; there are also issues concerning reliability, transparency, and data validity. Downing et al. claim that rankings are good, bad, or ugly depending on the prospective stakeholder's perception. They are an indicator against which universities can benchmark their peer institutions; for others, rankings are part of an unhealthy competition for prominence that diverges from a university's mission. Since quality is constructed by prospective stakeholders and thereby fluid, fulfilling institutional vision and mission, rather than compromising it, is critical. With the emphasis on competition, the drive to rise in global rankings sometimes results in neglecting the needs of local and regional stakeholders.

The emergence of ranking systems carries important implications for society, and the book depicts the tensions between and shifting behaviors of the various stakeholders involved. The text explores the impact of university rankings. The transitions in the global education landscape, the milieus which led to the formation of the HERS, and the amplification of rankings in the transnational context, complicated by gaming and distorted information, have completely blurred the boundaries that rankings originally sought to establish. These fundamental concerns and debates have posed pertinent questions that are difficult to reconcile, adding to the pressure of performativity. The tendencies to internationalize entail repercussions in terms of loss of language diversity, cultural heritage, and distinct academic cultures. This corporatization of academia necessitates the overhaul of curricula to cater to different cultures, and consequently, demand for market-oriented courses emerges. Engagement with local communities is also deteriorating because of this process. Moreover, the treatment of students as consumers hampers quality in the teaching-learning process (Teichler, 2011a; Marginson, 2016). The role of teachers is diminishing to that of a service provider whose activities are governed by the university.

In *The Impact of Higher Education Ranking Systems on Universities*, Downing et al. raise an essential question: What problematic implications do the market forces associated with rankings bode for the various types of higher education institutions around the globe? While the ranking debate intensifies competition that may lead to efficiency and increased quality of education for some institutions, it fails to engage with equity concerns. Chattopadhyay (2019) argues that markets fail to achieve efficiency because of the absence of a well-defined production function[13]. If the cost minimization is through substituting inputs (teachers), the quality of education delivery suffers. Curriculum in and of itself does not define quality, but rather, its construction is ongoing through interactions between students, teachers, and peers. Hence, structural deficiencies and target achievements set by institutional administration affect faculty motivation to innovate as it constrains their academic freedom. Downing et al. aptly conclude by reaffirming that ranking systems are defined by what they measure and may not be an accurate barometer of true excellence.

[13] This absence of production function differentiates a factory from a university because an input of a university is not easily replaceable as quality is embedded in individuals.

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