A study on Management of cultural diversity through understanding the problems of foreign Students

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Abstract

We are today witnessing globalization in education on a scale never seen before. As a consequence cultural diversity has increased which has paved way for strong and effective diversity management skills. Diversity Management activities includes educating the group and providing support for the acceptance of and respect for various racial, cultural, societal, economic and political background. Cultural diversity leads to Cultural Dissonance. Foreign students constitute an important cluster in any University. Cultural differences faced by the foreign students become challenging job, as academicians are not trained to handle such students along with the host country students.
In the present scenario higher education gaining importance and with the increase of foreign students it has become curial to manage cultural diversity of different countries it is more imperative to welcome the foreign students to encourage a global relationship which helps in fostering and ensuring that globalization and to take it to a higher level in education sector and also aim at enhancing the level of employability to integrate them along with the corporate culture.

This paper attempts to understand the problems faced by foreign students and manage effectively the cultural diversity and also gives a scope for educational sector to foster global education

Keywords: Cultural dissonance, Cultural adjustment, managing diversity

INTRODUCTION

Managing diverse culture is a huge challenge in the present scenario of Globalisation. Globalisation has not only set the economy open for trade and commerce but also it has opened its entry even in education sector. Government earns a lot of revenue in terms of foreign exchange not only through export and import of visible goods but also in rendering services and more so in education sector by the intake of foreign students into their universities . It is difficult to manage diverse culture of the foreign students coming from different countries who have diverse orientation and world views. When people think of diversity, they may think first of ethnicity and race, and then gender; however, diversity is much broader than that. Diversity is more than just tolerating difference. It is respecting, appreciating and understanding the varying characteristics of individual. Foreign students finds it difficult in understanding the culture and accepting the culture leading to cultural dissonance As a consequence, foreign students are increasingly facing challenges with cultural barriers making their learning difficult.
Thus, globalization and cultural diversity turn societal fields, organisations and education sector into a very dynamic place and render every individual experiences that are very exciting but perhaps also intimidating to some extent. Societal fields, organizations and individual people are challenged by different people speaking different languages, having different norms and values and adhering to

different religions, which lead to new encounters and exchanges but also to confrontations and tensions.

Cultural diversity entails both risks and opportunities. The Risks encountered by cultural diversity could be miscommunication, conflict due to different ways of greeting, different body language meaning different things and perceptions of people about different things and situations and exclusion. Opportunities: could be greater creativity and innovation, stimulationof discourses and exchange of ideas and to compete more effectively in the global market place. Consequently, there is need for organisations and academician's intervention to balance the risks and opportunities, and to neutralize the risks and take advantage of the opportunities presented by cultural diversity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Varhegyi(2008) Cross-cultural or intercultural transition refers to a set of very concrete phenomena: how we feel, behave, and change when we find ourselves in a new cultural environment.The mere fact of being "abroad" in a new cultural space implies that we have to decode signs we are not used to, continuously fine-tune our expected scenarios, our representations of the new place as we find our old expectations falsified. The notion of "culture shock" as cited by Oberg(1955) summarizes the often dramatic effect of the experience. As a consequence, we automatically set in motion a series of psychological mechanisms to help us regain comfort, a feeling of security and good thoughts about ourselves. The main objective of the research was to explore what happens in such adjustment processes, what makes it difficult, and why some people have it easier than others. As cited by Aneas and Sandin(2009) in their article attempts to offer a response, from a general perspective, to the question of how culture reveals itself in the application of qualitative research methods in intercultural communication. When we use the term "culture" it is important to bear in mind that culturally attributed social interaction processes are themselves the result of socially constructed processes. They are part of an individual-collective dialectic with multiple potential meanings, which are emergent and in constant reformulation from a wide variety of social and cultural perspectives. According to Davidson(2009) their paper outlines the thinking of several anthropologists, business consultants and educators all concerned with the effects of individuals interacting with others in learning contexts, within cultures perceived to be foreign, over a sustained period of time. Culture shock concerns not only 'off shore', but also 'on shore' international students and staff. The literature discerns several stages of culture shock, and its converse, reverse or re-entry culture shock. The paper considers how acculturation is likely to proceed, depending on the extent to which links with the originating culture are maintained, and how important links with new groups are perceived to be. The role of 'identity' in the acculturation process is also considered.As cited by Sepehri(2002) Diversity describes "a variety of qualities, or rather everything in which people are different from or similar to each other" Diversity or variety here means a range of features to describe people, e.g. age, gender, sexual orientation, origin, religious denomination, social class etc. Cultural diversity singularises the feature culture, be it with respect to nation, region, ethnic group or religion, as well. Corporate, industry and professional cultures also come under this heading

OBJECTIVES
- To identify the challenges faced by foreign students.
- To identify the strategies to bridge the gap in the learning experience of foreign students
- To understand if age plays a vital role in facing the challenges.

Hypothesis
H_o= There is no significant difference between age and challenges faced by foreign students
H_a=There is significant difference between age and challenges faced by foreign student

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the study primary data was collected from the foreign students of two universities and two colleges.Questionnaire was administered to identify the problems and to explore the challenges faced by foreign students. The sampling technique applied for the research was snowball sampling and convenience sampling the questionnaire was completed by the data collected from foreign students of Oxford College, Christ university, East point college and Jain university. Close ended questions on a Five-Point Likert Scale questionnaire was employed in this research. The Five-Point Likert's scale having the ratings of "strongly agree" (1) and "strongly disagree" (5) were used. For analysing data, percentages, mean calculation, factor analysis and one way anovawas employed in this study.100 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the foreign students. Each college equal numbers of 25 questionnaires were given to have arepresentative sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 showing percentage of respondent's countries
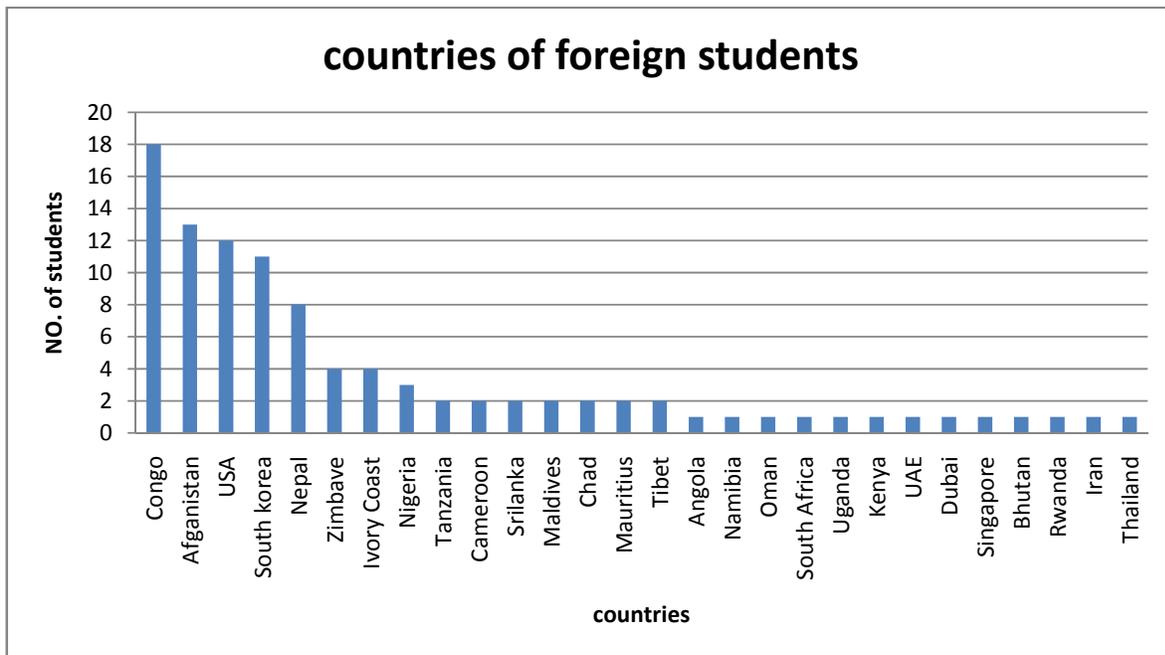
Interpretation: figure 1 indicates that most of the foreign students come from the country Congo followed by Afghanistan. Thisinflow can be due to the unstable political conditions hindering the education system in their country.

Table 1 showing the reliability of Overall Cronbach alpha

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.718	31

FOLLOWING FACTORS WHICH POSE THE CHALLENGES FOR ADJUSTMENT

Table 2 showing KMO test for Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.702
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	113.366
	df	21
	Sig.	.000

Table 3 showing rotated component matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]			
	Component		
	1	2	3
v22	.785	.020	.264
v24	.736	.356	-.155
v23	.723	.068	.107
v25	.125	.817	.157
v26	.134	.816	.136
v21	.177	.025	.837
v20	.013	.317	.749

INTERPRETATION

Factor analysis revealed three underlying dimensions for the challenges faced by foreign students. The KMO measure obtained was 0.702, indicating reasonable sampling adequacy. Overall, the rotated factors explained 67.447% of the overall variance.

The first factor comprised the items relating toclimate, transportation and clothing representing**Attire and Conveyance problem.**

The second factor comprised the items relating to making friends and communication with people in Bangalore, representing **Transmission problems.**

The third factor comprised of the items relating to food and language, representing**Linguistic and Eatery problems.**

STRATEGIES ADOPTED TO OVER-COME THE DIFFICULTY ON ADJUSTMENT
Table 4 showing KMO test for Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.652
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	335.312
	df	120
	Sig.	.000

Table 5showing rotated component matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
v46	.768	.135	.098	.008	-.197	.095
v47	.723	.014	.112	-.179	.210	-.062
v54	.517	.232	-.218	.385	.213	-.086

v52	.445	-.159	.369	.139	.225	.370
v44	-.038	.860	.156	.045	-.070	.051
v53	.207	.662	.032	-.034	.265	.014
v48	.213	.523	-.148	-.067	.452	.312
v45	-.037	.210	.793	.008	-.075	.009
v51	.123	-.176	.622	.287	.489	.026
v50	.341	.050	.580	-.096	.253	-.102
v55	-.105	-.011	.078	.868	-.041	-.113
v57	.033	-.012	.004	.823	.169	.144
v56	-.089	.062	.103	.145	.717	-.096
v49	.261	.186	.080	-.017	.621	.278
v42	-.011	.079	-.086	-.006	.052	.862
v43	-.030	.455	.425	.026	-.060	.499
INTERPRETATION:						

Factor analysis revealed six underlying dimensions for the challenges faced by foreign students. The KMO measure obtained was 0.652, indicating reasonable sampling adequacy. Overall, the rotated factors explained 65.12% of the overall variance.

The first factor comprised the items relating to finding friends, sharing with friends and self-motivated representing **Self-inspiration and making acquaintance**

The second factor comprised the items relating to advice from counsellor, joining spiritual call and yoga class, representing**Spiritual quotient**

The third factor comprised of the items relating to talking to Indian friends accepting andunderstating the Indian culture, representing.**Discerning more about the culture**

The fourth factor comprised the items relating to watching movies and listening to music representing, **Entertainment**

The fifth factor comprised the items of reading books, advice from teachers representing**Review books and seeking academic aid**

The sixth factor comprised the items relating to calling parents, involved in extracurricular actives representing**Emotional security and Outbound Activities**

Table 6showing Anova for age

ANOVA					
Age					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.446	12	.621	1.014	.444
Within Groups	52.634	86	.612		
Total	60.081	98			

INTERPRETATION:
For the hypothesis tested the research aimed at testing if age played a vital role in facing the challenges emerged as the first factor from factor analysis the result shows there is no significant difference between age and challenges faced by foreign students as we accept the null hypotheses and reject the alternate due to the significance value.

SUGGESTIONS

From the study it can be suggested that depending upon the country and the cultural context the suitable strategies can be adopted.

➢ To open an international office in the universities/colleges to address the needs and problems of foreign students as they feel they are estranged from their home country. This will be like a support which constantly monitors their issues and where they can readdress any kind of challenges faced either personally or academically.

➢ To advice the foreign students to carry out a background study even before enrolling for the course so that it gives them a simulated environment of learning and they are confident to face the challenges posed academically.

➢ To bring in concept of adapting behavior that would motivate inner self to be prepared for any situation like coping behavior and imitating behavior.

➢ Keeping an approach of self-discovery wherein they make an attempt to approach the people of the host country and communicate to them so that they learn and this can help them to overcome any situational and adjustment issues.

➢ To interact with peers of host country and to learn in terms of academics and also the culture of the host country.

➢ It is suggested that the foreign students join the language classes, which they find it difficult to understand that enhances their language proficiency.

➢ Providing cross cultural training which will help in understanding the cultural expectations.

➢ Assignment/internal assessment patterns have to be provided to foreign students in detail so that they meet the university expectations which will help them achieve excellence in their academic pursuit.

➢ Providing opportunity to get the foreign students involved in extracurricular and co-curricular activities which will enhance their confidence level.

CONCLUSION

Foreign students are a special group of students for any host country. Understanding their problem and challenges play a crucial role for the universities of the host country. Whether they are from any country they live in a different country in pursuit of a degree. But the prime part of It is "they exist" in a different country. And this idea may add to or alleviate some of the problems they are going to have, depending on how they use the environment to minimize the difficulties and maximize the chances they have to achieve the degree.

Cross-cultural training for students of foreign and host country that can live and work with them could help increase understanding between students from different cultures, reduce problems that may occur and the stress associated with this, and increase the possibility of foreign students being able to achieve their goals of study, friendship across cultures and increased knowledge of other cultures. Therefore the study concludes that the problems of foreign students need to be identified initially and the suitable strategies have to be adopted since they are learning in the world of difference. Hence the management of cultural diversity which comprises of heterogeneity in Race, Ethnicity, Nationalism, Effect of cohesiveness, communication, conflict ,morale etc. can be handled smoothly and ensure foreign students pursue an uninterrupted studies and extend greater creativity, innovation and create a healthy and competitive environment in the global market place.

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