Globalisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education in Malaysia

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First Year Experience of International Students in Malaysia: A Private Higher Education Viewpoint

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Introduction

The private higher education in Malaysia is challenged with a more socially and culturally diverse student population than ever before, especially with the increasing number of international students studying in Malaysia in the recent years. Any foreigner living in another country tends to develop adjustment problems with the host country and international students are not exempt from this process. Understanding of this process is very important to the success of international students in Malaysia. From the time these students arrive in the host country, apart from some of the enjoyable moments they have encountered many would have experienced different and unexpected problems. Students may need to adjust to a new educational system, which differs considerably from the methods of study in their own country. Apart from the academic adjustment, these students may also encounter some difficulties in adjustment due to various cross-cultural variables, such as the amount of contact with locals, accommodation to local climate, new regulatory systems, different food, etc. The increased number of international students may bring along challenges for lecturers and international students alike. Previous studies have suggested that, the adjustment of international students differ according to the country of origin of these students and the degree of difficulty in adjustment varied from student to another student. The factors such as psychosocial and cultural problems that effect students’ adjustment, can impact independently or in conjunction with others and as a result, influence student adjustment in the new environment. In addition, any lecturers are faced with unfamiliar international students' characteristics and needs and that itself is a great challenge in responding to these changes whilst the same time meeting the academic expectations of the students.
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