

Aiming for non-essentialised intercultural adjustment among international postgraduate students in the UK

In 2007 over 2.8 million students were enrolled in institutions of higher education outside their country of origin, an increase of 53% since 1999 (UNESCO 2009). The UK was one of the major destinations for many of these international students and, in 2008-9, the number of international students stood at 17 % of the total student body in the UK.

Consequently, how international students adjust to a new environment and can 'succeed' in their studies has rightly become a topic of burgeoning (worldwide) interest to policy makers, institutions of higher education and to intercultural researchers.

This talk considers factors that appear associated with 'successful' adjustment to U.K. higher education among samples of international students undertaking postgraduate degrees in the humanities or social sciences. Adjustment, here, refers to the fit between students and their academic environment, the interrelationship between a broad number of outcomes of adaptation – degree of success in assessed academic work, psychological wellbeing, and satisfaction with life in the new environment – and contributory factors such as intercultural competence, social contact and support, language ability, as well as how students themselves say they feel they are adjusting. The presentation also refers to attempts to develop 'intercultural effectiveness' (providing a working notion of what this can include), reporting how it has been found that students who are encouraged to reflect on this (i.e. intercultural effectiveness) tend to appear more successful during their sojourn than comparable students who have not.

Reference

UNESCO (2009). *Global Education Digest 2009*. Paris: UNESCO.