

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM



ASHESI UNIVERSITY

ASSESSING THE INTER-RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ACADEMIC MOBILITY
AND INTERCULTURALISM FOR AFRICAN OUTBOUND MOBILITY.

DISSERTATION

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Business Administration, Ashesi University.

The thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration.

B.Sc. Business Administration

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APRIL 23, 2019

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original study and that none of its parts has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's signature.....

Candidate's name: Brenes Nakhone Ombere

Date: April 2019

I hereby declare that the submitted dissertation and presentation of it were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by Ashesi University College.

Supervisor's signature:

Supervisor's name: Dr. Joseph Oduro-Frimpong

Date: April 23, 2019

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

ABSTRACT

The research study assesses the inter-relationship between academic mobility and interculturality of African students in higher education institutions in Africa. My interest is skewed to academically mobile students in Africa because a large focus is on the Global North. A significant amount of research has been majorly focused on African mobility to the Global North specifically in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, etc. with little research on the mobility in the African Continent.

The study seeks to address concerns on whether there is an interrelationship between the academic movement between Africa students and how an individual acquires intercultural competence in an internationalized institution. This is because there are concerns about whether studying in a multicultural environment guarantees that the individual will learn the necessary skills that will help them within and outside their environment.

Keywords: academic mobility, intercultural, internationalization, student mobility, Global North, Global South, multicultural environment.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis project to my family for their tremendous support and encouragement in this academic journey. My gratitude goes to my beloved mother, Ms. Beatrice Atieno Owino for her undying love, care and most especially for believing in my potential.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Joseph Oduro-Frimpong for his dedicated guidance and support in ensuring the completion of this research study. The Business Administration department at Ashesi University provided a conducive atmosphere through the various seminars to enable the fruition of this study. At the inception of this study, Dr. Kajsa Hallberg-Odu and Mr. Kobina Ankomah Graham helped provide guidance and resources for effective implementation of the research.

I had a great support system from my friends and colleagues who participated in giving constructive feedback and criticism of the project: Angella Nantambi, Elona Boateng, and Atarebono Amwelmoo.

My most profound appreciation to Mary Okango, Hilda Origi, Leah Kamala, Juliet Okeyo, and Mcclous Otundo for burning the midnight oil while listening to me rehearse for the various capstone presentations throughout the study.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

List of Acronyms

AMI	Academically Mobile Individual
Ashesi	Ashesi University
HEI	Higher Education Institution
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SAT	Standardized Assessment Test
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Prelude

Upon breaking the news to my mother about an opportunity to pursue my undergraduate degree at Ashesi University in Ghana, she loosely stated that there was no difference between Kenya (my home country) and Ghana. By saying this, she meant that the education system in Ashesi University was not going to give me a competitive advantage as compared to liberal arts institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom. Although she gave her approval, for her, this was yet another private institution in Africa “rebranding” itself in a niche market.

Determined, to explore a new academic adventure I justified the fact that Ashesi is offering liberal arts which is similar to universities such as Swarthmore, Hamilton, Harvard, and Meredith to mention but a few. Did I believe in the pitch that I was trying to shove down my mother’s throat to get the approval? In all honesty, the information I had on how academic mobility leads to internationalization and intercultural competence was based on online research and from friends who were studying in liberal arts institutions abroad. Hence, I believed that and wanted to explore the same for myself.

Three years later into this discovery journey and having experienced the impacts of academic mobility, I was probed to reevaluate on how academic mobility and intercultural competence come to play. This was greatly influenced by colleagues who arguably believe that academic mobility may not necessarily impact intercultural competence as internationalization is only but a lucrative trade for institutions.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
List of Acronyms	vi
Prelude	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background.....	1
1.1 Problem Statement.....	2
1.2 Objectives of the research.....	3
1.3 Research Questions.....	4
1.4 Expected Findings.....	4
1.5 Limitations of the study	5
1.6 The significance of the study	6
1.7 Methodology.....	6
1.8.0 Organization of the study.....	7
1.8.1 Literature Review.....	7
1.8.2 Methodology	7
1.8.3 Analysis and Findings.....	7
1.8.4 Conclusion and Recommendations	7
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.0 Introduction.....	8
2.1 Theoretical Framework.....	8
2.1.1 Communication Adaptation Theory (CAT)	8
2.1.2 The Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation.....	8
2.1.3 The Theory of Reasoned Action	9
2.2.0 Understanding the nature of academic migration and interculturalism	9
2.2.1 Reasons for academic mobility	10
2.2.2 Learning Style	10
2.2.3 Internationalization.....	11
2.3.0 Conclusion and critique	12
METHODOLOGY	13

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

3.0 Introduction.....	13
3.1 Research Design.....	13
3.2 Sample Design	13
3.3 Institutional Ethics Approval	14
3.4.0 Data Collection	15
3.4.1 Focus Group Interview	15
3.4.2 Interviews.....	15
3.4.3 Validity and Reliability	15
3.4.4 Ethical Considerations.....	16
3.4.5 Sampling Technique	17
3.4.6 Content Analysis	17
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS.....	18
4.0 Introduction.....	18
4.1 Interviews.....	18
4.1.1 Participant Selection.....	18
4.2 Focus Groups	19
4.4 Case Stories.....	23
4.5 Themes Derived from the Interviews.....	24
4.5.1 The buoyancy and vulnerability of AMIs perceptions.....	24
4.5.2 Cultural Background	25
4.5.3 Socio-Economical Challenges	25
4.5.4 Westernization.....	26
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	27
5.0 Introduction.....	27
5.1 Summary of the findings.....	27
5.2 Problematizing the current interculturality in Africa	27
5.3 Recommendation	28
Bibliography	30
APPENDICES	32
Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form	32
Appendix 2: Interview Guide.....	35
Appendix 3: Focus Group Guide	36

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

With the continually evolving international mobility, the need to acquire game-changing skills and knowledge is necessary for effective interaction and survival. As such, self-initiated individuals relocate to other countries for academic purposes to acquire intercultural competence that will give them a competitive edge in the global world. However, definitions of intercultural competence are not monolithic but dependent on some demographic and experiential features of the individual and are highly context-specific (Gierke et al., 2018). Since there is no uniform definition of what intercultural competence is, it becomes a challenge for students in higher education to maximize the available internationalization opportunities availed to them.

In 2013, the number of international students that study in universities and colleges in the United States of America was 764,495 with a 6% increase whereas that of United States students on study abroad programs recorded a 1% increase (Mceiver, 2013). African countries with the highest student mobility include Morocco, Cameroon, Algeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria, Angola, Ghana, and Sudan (Schulmann, 2017). Ghana has been noted to be among the top destinations for Africa's outbound students. Academic mobility comes with a variety of opportunities and benefits to the various stakeholders. A majority of the stakeholders that benefit from international education are institutions of higher education. Furthermore, a self-initiated graduate with global competence is found to have a competitive edge in the corporate world due to the experience and knowledge acquired.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Empirical findings from Bond's study of American exchange and local Chinese students in Hong Kong showed comparatively positive inter-group perceptions. The argument was that significant differences in behavioral traits of the two groups were majorly influenced by stereotypes; in-group and out-group perceptions, and how the in-group is viewed to be perceived by out-group. From the study, Chinese students were regarded as conservative and obedient, while American students were seen as questioning and independent (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). As such the issue of cultural assimilation becomes a challenge as host nationals, and foreign nationals have different cultural backgrounds and beliefs which may take time to adjust if they are conflicting with each other. As a result, instead of creating culture synergy students end up not maximizing on the interactions with the fear of losing their identity in the process of trying to assimilate cultures. With the existence of cultural misunderstanding both between host national students and teachers and foreign national students, the problem of mismatched expectations arises during intercultural lectures. This reveals that mutual understanding in intercultural classrooms is not a substantial factor for intercultural understanding.

1.1 Problem Statement

As of 2014, the number of African students' enrolled in the U.S. was mostly stable while the U.K. had a marginal drop and South Africa dropped by a staggering 39%, from just over 57,000 to under 35,000 (Schulmann, 2017). Due to academic mobility, there existed the issue of both parties interacting with each other without necessarily knowing or sharing a similar culture and beliefs. For individuals with low intercultural skills, it created a barrier for them to maximize the benefits that come as a result of intercultural interactions.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

It is difficult to measure the knowledge, skills, and competencies gained during the individuals' time in their study abroad program due to discrepancies between the academically mobile individual's actual and perceived learning. This is because intercultural competence consists of behavior, knowledge, and attitude. There is no clear definition of what these skills entail as such the definitions are dependent on what future employer's geographical location and area of work interest. This makes it further challenging to fathom if at all internationalization of institutions results in an intercultural gain for the individuals in a culturally diverse environment.

Using African students studying abroad or in a different country other than the home country, this research will explore the issue of intercultural competences and find sustainable strategies that will ensure to enhance long-term cultural exposure. By reviewing approaches to intercultural interactions, individuals in the diversified community can harness lasting relationships through cross-cultural exposure.

1.2 Objectives of the research

The study seeks to contribute towards the understanding of academic mobility of African students in Ghana, where World Education Services report it as one of the top educational destinations for internationally mobile students and staffs in Africa (Schulmann, 2017). This study aims at exploring the current state of interculturality in academic institutions and how people perceive, accept and respect diversity for mediating social relations such as language, religion, and clothing. The research will further probe on whether individuals who seek academic mobility consider interculturalism as a significant factor in their quest for academics. Also, the study aims to enhance the efficiency of intercultural relations. The research will be primarily guided by the

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

individual's beliefs, views, and perceptions. The research will be a contribution to the intercultural literature because of the insights from people.

1.3 Research Questions

The research aims at answering the following questions:

- Do academically mobile individuals perceive interculturalism as a significant factor in the quest for academics?
- In what way, does a culturally diverse student body enhance the student experience on campus?
- How do academically mobile individuals acquire and develop intercultural skills on a culturally diverse campus?
- How do intercultural skills acquired in a diverse campus help alumni to have a competitive edge in the corporate world?

The research hypotheses include:

- Cultural identity sources such as social environment, school, media, and family influence a student's intercultural competences.
- Individuals who actively interact in a culturally diverse environment will acquire more experiences and skills.
- Individuals who spend more time on pre-departure preparations will have positive change and experiences.

1.4 Expected Findings

From the research objectives and the expected findings from the literature include:

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

- Anxiety and stress will be experienced during the initial period of the mobility due to lack of proper knowledge and understanding between the host nationals and the internationals.
- Students will highly pursue both academic and career opportunities that will enhance their intercultural competence which will mostly involve cross-border movements.
- As a result of cultural synergy, there will be refined perceptions of identity and culture that results from intercultural interactions and classrooms. This will lead to mutual benefits among both parties as they unlearn the various stereotypes.
- There will be the need to fit in to meet specific educational and cultural expectations by the internationals as the pressure to assimilate arise.
- Compare the perception of intercultural competence of African students studying in abroad and internationals in Ghana.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The first foreseeable limitations include the need for participants to give politically correct responses because beliefs, perceptions and individual opinions will significantly influence the area of study.

Secondly, the results of this study will not be considered as representative because the use of purposive sampling will be put into place. Hence, the sample will be drawn from a higher education institution in Ghana and other universities in the United Kingdom and the US depending on convenience.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Thirdly, although the questions will be open-ended, it may not offer adequate space for the individuals partaking in the survey to fully exhaust their views. This is because of the use of short spaces for a response during data collection.

1.6 The significance of the study

With the rapid growth in globalization, the research will be of great relevance to a higher level of educational institutions that seek to embrace diversity in their institutions. The insights will enable institutions to make decisions that will enhance the experience of the individuals of their institution.

Business organizations, institutions, and even communities will also benefit from the research because the insights drawn from this research will influence cultural policies when dealing with and managing people.

The research will be of benefit to prospective individuals who seek to further their academic endeavors outside of their home country or even regional boundaries. It will further help the potential individuals to appreciate diversity and stop perceiving only the differences in other people and culture.

The research also seeks to fill the gap in the already existing literature. Most of the existing research on the topic has been centered on countries outside Africa. The study seeks to fill the gaps in the current literature and be a point of reference for future studies on the issue by using several self-initiated Africans as the basis of the study.

1.7 Methodology

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

The research will employ a qualitative method of collecting primary data. The data will be analyzed using the mixed method approach that consists of qualitative and quantitative methods. The participants will be sampled from an internationalized institution that has international students. Questionnaires will be issued, and in-depth interviews will be conducted to obtain information from participants.

1.8.0 Organization of the study

The section showcases a summary of how the rest of the study is organized and an overview of the chapters ahead.

1.8.1 Literature Review

The chapter consists of brief reviews of the topic definition and critical analysis of existing literature on the impacts of academic mobility on intercultural competence. The section will also include theoretical framework used as the basis of the paper.

1.8.2 Methodology

The section explains the type of study, the data collection procedure, selection of samples, sampling techniques and data analysis tools.

1.8.3 Analysis and Findings

The chapter contains an in-depth analysis of the collected data and a detailed interpretation of the results obtained from the study.

1.8.4 Conclusion and Recommendations

The chapter discusses a summary of findings from the research and provides suggestions to academia and culturists for future research.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The chapter reviews the topic definition and critical analysis of existing literature on the impacts of academic mobility on intercultural competence. The section will also introduce and discuss the theoretical framework that guides the paper.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Communication Adaptation Theory (CAT)

Communication accommodation theory refers to the human tendency to adjust their behavior when interacting to control social differences between interactants. Although there are two types of adaptation methods, this study will focus on the convergence process because most of the students tend to adapt to best fit in the host environment (Communication, Psychology, Behavioral, & Science, n.d.). Although Howard Giles theory is complex and slightly complicated, it shades light of the adaptation of international students. Hence, giving more insights for this study.

2.1.2 The Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The theory is a process of psychic evolution towards increased functional fitness for the host environment, psychological health, and intercultural identity. The argument considers the fact that “strangers” have had primary socialization in one culture and moved to an unfamiliar culture, are dependent on the host environment for personal and social needs, and there is engagement between the host and foreign environment (Kim, 2001). With this in mind, this study will be able to establish and investigate intrapersonal responses towards the situation and to learn the culture.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

2.1.3 The Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action is referred to as the most proximal cause of the behavior is behavior intention which is determined by one's evaluation of the behavior and what essential others think one should do (Trafimow, 2009). This theory will be of significance to this research because it will help with assessing the behaviors of international students and also understand the factors that may hinder their behavioral intentions.

2.2.0 Understanding the nature of academic migration and interculturalism

There are various existing definitions of what academic mobility constitutes of as it has been defined differently by authors over time. Academic mobility is described as a period of study, teaching and research in a country other than a student's state of residence ("UNESCO - Studying Abroad," n.d.). However, migration and academic mobility are often used interchangeably where educational immigration is relatively long-term (more than a year) whereas mobility is short-term (less than a year). For this study, the UN's definition is what will be used. International Student Migration involves where students either study abroad for a shorter period or for the entirety of a degree program (as cited in Hallberg Adu, 2015).

The nature of intercultural as well as cross-cultural experience and the interaction between home and host cultures in student adaptation has increased over recent decades with student mobility (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010). Although not mutually exclusive, it is arguable that cross-culture and intercultural can be used interchangeably. Cross-cultural understanding and communication involve comparisons of communication and understanding across different cultures while intercultural understanding and

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

communication involve interaction between people from different cultures (Gudykunst, 2003). This study will take into consideration the use of cross-cultural experiences because the adaption or immersion into a different culture may be intentional or even subconscious.

2.2.1 Reasons for academic mobility

In a recent survey done by World Education Services, 38 percent of African students suggested that the availability of financial aid was why they enrolled in institutions abroad (Schulmann, 2017). This is because of the cost burden that comes with the competitive tuition fees of study programs for outbound students. Base on the Institute of International Education (IIE) Open Doors report, another key motivator for international students in the U.S who were from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to pursue their studies abroad is the perceived lack of high-quality educational opportunities at home (Roy & Luo, 2017).

2.2.2 Learning Style

Understanding of intercultural interactions is essential because factors such as cultural backgrounds, and past experiences may affect the learning behavior of an individual. Inter-cultural communication and interactions among students are part of the learning process as communication is a critical factor of a product. Exposure to a multicultural study environment in itself might not be enough to significantly enable a student to acquire intercultural competence (Alina Schartner, 2015). Van de Berg et al. 's (2009), the study echoed on the fact that different cultural environment is not sufficient evidence for increased intercultural learning. The reason for this argument is because some

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

students end up showing adverse or slightly less interest in cross-cultural development and interactions.

Intercultural Adaptation is the process through which persons in cross-cultural interactions change their communicative behavior to facilitate understanding (Cai & Rodríguez, 1996). Howard Giles echoes this argument in his accommodation theory where individuals change their communication behavior to facilitate secure communication and understanding among each other. Other factors that enhance learning and cultural adaptation include intercultural competence and self-identity.

2.2.3 Internationalization

With globalization on the rise, universities across the world react to the challenges brought by it through internationalizing the education syllabi and even the campuses. Internationalization of higher education has intensified the mobility of people and ideas in society today. This improves the quality of education offered in higher levels of education and produces internationally oriented students and staff especially from developing countries. It also facilitates the engendering intercultural competence fostered in students that make them desirable for the global economy (Jibeen & Khan, 2015).

Similar to globalization, international academic mobility tends to benefit well-developed education systems and institutions which leads to the compounding of the already existing inequalities. Although internationalization has its positive aspects, we cannot overlook the challenges that have resulted from it. Cross-border movement of students has created a niche for universities through commercialization of international higher

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

education mostly hiding behind the tag of the not-for-profit education sector (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

2.3.0 Conclusion and critique

Research on issues about academic mobility and interculturalism has vastly been carried out with existing literature that can be dated back to 1930s. Over the decades, diverse aspects of academic mobility and most especially multiculturalism have been explored, and even provided solutions and recommendations on the various issues — most of the research that has been done on the learning styles of sojourners and international students. Areas in learning techniques that have been explored include intercultural adaptation, intercultural competence, stress, and coping, and self-identity. Also, most of the existing literature significantly focus on the Global North and little focus on the Global South. This research aims at contributing to the current literature by concentrating on Ghanaian institutions, most importantly focusing on international students from African countries. This research will further focus on the relationship between academic mobility and intercultural understanding, and if and how they impact each other. Most of the existing literature also involve quantitative research method which does not fully capture the voice of the individuals.

Although significant research on the issue has been done, there is a need for further study with a focus on the African Continent and its outbound students. With the stereotypes that Africa is a country, many times, Africans are perceived to have the same culture. Thus, the need to investigate cultural differences and how outbound students cope and integrate as international students. In 2014, Ghana was ranked among the top 10 destination list at number seven, with 15,354 students. Compare to 2010, the shifting

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

patterns in academic mobility for African students signify that demographics with African countries is improving by the day (Schulmann, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss choices made around methodology and data collection.

3.1 Research Design

Defining and explaining the concept of intercultural competence is complicated as the understanding differs from one individual to the next. Due to the contradictory of the concept and to avoid raising more confusion but rather provide suitable answers to the contradiction, I will study the same phenomenon using one of the data. The use of one set of data will enable the research to focus on the in-depth perceptions and attitudes of students toward interculturalizing.

3.2 Sample Design

The unit of analysis involves students pursuing their higher level of education in an internationalized university thus having the ability to gain intercultural competence because of the cross-border and cross-cultural interactions. The research will follow a case structure on reasons to how students understand and perceive intercultural competence and whether or not academic mobility plays a role in it. This will further enrich the data on student academic mobility aspirations with regards to the contextualization of social culture. Hence, the research design will be exploratory.

This research will use the qualitative method in the research design to give the grand narrative of the concept of intercultural competence. The mode of gathering data for this

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

research will be based on visuals, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews. I chose a qualitative method because it provides interesting perspectives of the individuals. The target population is the overall population of African academic mobile students in Africa. However, this may not be possible to target for practicality reason. Hence, I chose students at Ashesi University as a model for this research. As a young and relatively small private university, Ashesi University will offer enriched data as it has students from over 20 different countries and thus ethnic diverse. I will also include alumni who have gone through a culturally diverse campus and are working either in the global north or global south but are nationals of the global south. This in mind, participants are more likely to have diverse travel experience, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural beliefs.

The research questions guiding this case study will include semi-structured individual and group interviews. This will provide a platform for recovering of student voices. The questions will be designed to offer more insights on international student identity, cultural spaces and the learning styles in the defined community. For this study, this research will assume that international students are the narrators of the culture. Hence, they will inform the research on their influence in the construction of cultural citizenship and identities in the defined community which consist of ethnical diversity. This research will probe the meanings students ascribed to being in an internationalized community and how that influences their identities.

3.3 Institutional Ethics Approval

Ashesi University's Human Subjects Review Committee will review the stated research tools in 2018.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

3.4.0 Data Collection

3.4.1 Focus Group Interview

I intend on having one to two group interviews consisting of six student participants. The groups will be mixed and not classified base on year group or nationality to enable a constructive interaction and discussion among the respondents. Since the research aims at capturing the voices of the students, the size of the group is appropriate to allow respondents ample time to air out their opinions. As a token of gratitude for the time and input, I intend on giving participants a light brunch and updating them on the findings via email once the results are out. See appendix 3 for the focus group guide.

3.4.2 Interviews

The qualitative data for this study will be collected by interviewing academically mobile students at Ashesi University who have been in the institution in the entirety of the undergraduate program. The application of one on one interview sessions with the respondents allows the participant to express themselves in their tone and voice freely. The use of interviews in data collection allows for the feelings, perception and personal opinions of the respondents to be captured in a particular way. The respondents will be less self-conscious during the interviews provide an ample opportunity in providing in-depth responses and thus result in high-response rate. See appendix 2 for the interview guide.

3.4.3 Validity and Reliability

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

In qualitative research, validity is the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data while reliability is the consistency within the employed analytical procedures (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Assessing the validity and reliability of study findings requires researchers to make judgements about the ‘soundness’ of the research. This is because there is frequent criticism on Qualitative research lacking scientific rigor with the weak justification of the methods adopted, and lack of transparency in the analytical procedures (Noble & Smith, 2015). To avoid the researcher bias that is arguable as a result of lack of transparency, respondents will be informed about the details of the research before partaking in the activity to create awareness and also the option of leaving contact details for a follow-up interview will be made available to them. To ensure that I have captured the actual views and information from the respondent, I will run down the summary with the respondent after the interview.

3.4.4 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations that will be made in carrying out the research include:

- It will be made clear to the participants that their involvement in partaking the study is voluntarily and they reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any given point during the research process.
- The participants of this research will be informed of the purpose of the study, possible discomforts and outcomes, and the methods that will be used. There will be a written consent that will be attached to the interview questions and will be signed before partaking in the activity. Refer to Appendix 1 for the consent form.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

- To protect the identity of the participant in the event the participant does not wish to be disclosed, any visible identifiers will not be used, and pseudo names will be used for anonymity purpose.
- All the information gathered from the participants will be treated with confidentiality.

3.4.5 Sampling Technique

For this study, the use of purposive sampling when choosing who qualifies as an academically mobile student will be deployed. The participants for this research will be selected by the period they stayed in the country other than their country of residence, and how culturally diverse the environment was. A 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of 5 is assumed, will be used in coming up with the number of observations to be used in this research. This will be done by the use of online software that will automatically generate the number.

3.4.6 Content Analysis

For this research, the application of qualitative content analysis will be deployed in analyzing the text data collected. Although there are other methods such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and historical research, the qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Since the data collected will include open-ended questions, content analysis will be useful for identifying themes and coding of the received data. Hence, this research will use directed content analysis as the codes will be derived from both theory and relevant research findings after which themes

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

will be formed by drawing together the codes to create a coherent meaning from the results.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the results from the data collection and highlight the topics and themes that arose from the findings. Through the use of qualitative data, I can explain the various factors that impact the effectiveness and efficiency of internationalization of HEI.

4.1 Interviews

Seven participants were interviewed who enabled the collection of qualitative data for the research. The individuals were interviewed based on their availability and willingness to partake in the research. The use of open-ended and semi-structured questions was used to enable the individuals to provide detailed information and insights on their truth.

4.1.1 Participant Selection

The criterion used in selecting the interviewee was based on the theoretical framework that constitutes internationally mobile individuals who have stayed in a foreign country for more than a year and are pursuing their degree for four years period. The selection started with fifteen university students who had agreed to partake in the research. This was further narrowed down with eight having a low level of intercultural interests and the other seven having a significantly high level of intercultural affairs. In February 2019 the respective interviewees were contacted for the interview with some being done face-to-face and others via mobile phone. The reason for the variations was profoundly influenced by availability as the alumni were situated in different countries and even

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

continent. The interviews were carried out on different days and time as the schedule of the interviewees could not allow them to do it in one day.

4.2 Focus Groups

The focus group conversations were transcribed, and later I looked out for recurring themes and topics that were in line with my research. One of the recurring themes was the fact the participants strongly felt that inclusion in a multicultural environment is subjective and objective; the motivation for mobility was influenced by opportunity rather than culture; evading doing SATs; proximity to home; and for the spirit of adventure. For analysis purpose, I have arranged the result based on the set research questions.

4.3.0 Do academically mobile individuals perceive interculturalism as a significant factor in the quest for academics?

When assessing the significance of interculturalism in the quest for academics, academically mobile students' focus was on whether or not culture was an important determiner in their academic mobility aspirations. From the interviews conducted, the individuals mentioned that initially, their decision to pursue academic mobility was influenced by the scholarship opportunity and the idea of seeking greener pastures away from the status quo in their respective countries.

There was a full scholarship from Mastercard that Ashesi was offering. I wanted a different culture, something different from what I was used to in my country of nationality, new people and experience. I could have gone to Europe or Asia, but Ashesi offers a world-class education that makes SATs unnecessary and you do not have to go to the US to experience such an experience (Haraseb, 2019).

The respondent's feedback echoes Schulman's finding, and argument of financial aid is a crucial motivation for Africa's AMIs seeking education opportunities abroad or in a

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

country outside the home country (Schulmann, 2017). The key influencers in their pursuit for internationalized education came from fellow friends that had applied and were studying in institutions in the Global North. The friends played a key role in the choice of institutions and even the part of the continent. The institution that fellow friends recommended was based on mostly from their experience at the institution and the ease in applying for admission at the institution.

One of the participants, however, stated that he was intentional in his pursuit for education in the Global South because he needed to acquire knowledge that will directly help impact and solve problems in his country that may not be prevalent in the countries in the Global North. The respondent further mentioned that pursuing an internationalized education in the African continent allowed him to gain insights that will help him solve problems faced in the continent because of the common goal and experience of studying with like-minded individuals. The respondent mentioned that Africans do have diverse yet similar cultural practices that make the transition to a foreign country within the continent less difficult compared to the other continents.

4.3.1 In what way, does a culturally diverse student body enhance student experience on campus?

A culturally diverse student body can enhance the student experience on campus through forging bonds with other international and host students, through cultural exchange programs, teamwork activities, and cultural awareness activities. The respondents mentioned that having a culturally diverse student body made student life more interesting because it was a continuous learning process with each other. The respondents also indicated that having a diverse student body influenced the way of life of the general

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

student body through the meals prepared at the cafeteria to enable inclusion. Due to the diversity, students were motivated to explore opportunities in different countries because they identified themselves as global citizens.

The respondents stated that culturally diverse environment made lectures very rich with knowledge sprouting from different angles. The classroom experience was more practical for them because the various students from different countries played as the ambassadors to the regions they came from thus providing a chance to deconstruct certain myths and stereotypes about the regions they were from. Nevertheless, the diverse environment also stirred conflicts among the different nationalities because of their own cultural backgrounds. According to the respondents, in as much as a diverse campus allow for people to identify as global citizens, the same identity drew them apart as it conflicted with their cultural beliefs based on their backgrounds.

4.3.2 How do academically mobile individuals acquire and develop intercultural skills on a culturally diverse campus?

Academically mobile individuals can acquire and develop intercultural skills in a culturally diverse campus through dynamic interactions that will enable the exchange of ideas and opinions. The respondents highlighted that classroom interactions played a key role in gaining intercultural skills especially when the course was related to international affairs. The reason behind it was the fact that faculty members made intentional efforts in structuring the course content to accommodate the input of the various nationalities. The faculty members even went an extra mile to ensure that students performed skits at the beginning of the class which may include different cultures. The respondents also mentioned that they subconsciously have to use the intercultural adaptation method

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

where they compromise on certain beliefs and opinions to accommodate those around them. The students' response supports Howard Giles' argument on how some of the skills acquired in an internationalized and culturally diverse environment is a result of the intentional effort of accommodating each other.

Being present in a culturally diverse environment does not necessarily guarantee an individual will be equipped with intercultural skills. One of the respondents mentioned that his personality had not changed much cultural wise because he was not interested in learning the culture of the host country. The student's sentiments echo Van de Berg et al.'s argument on how the level of interest of the student in a culturally diverse environment greatly influences the cultural learning process of the individual. The respondent further mentioned that the difference in social class experiences he had encountered made it difficult to actively engage with some students because of the feeling of not belonging. From the focus group discussion, a student argued that an individual's personality influences the interactions they decide to engage in. He further stated that although a social class may pose as a barrier for interactions, it boils down to other factors such as self-esteem.

4.3.3 How do intercultural skills acquired in a diverse campus help alumni to have a competitive edge in the corporate world?

Intercultural competences acquired during interactions and involvement in a diverse campus enables the alumni to have a competitive edge through maximizing exchange opportunities and perspective-taking in a global setting. A respondent stated that having studied in a culturally diverse campus made the transition to the workforce smooth for him because he learned how to adapt and interact with people with different personalities

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

and cultural backgrounds. Also, the fact that he had deconstructed some of the stereotypes attached to people from certain cultures and region, he is able to accommodate the colleagues at work with ease. The respondents also highlighted that the diverse environment experiences sharpened their perspective-taking skills and made it relatively easier for them to forge new bonds with the people they met in their daily life post-graduation.

4.4 Case Stories

This section briefly encompasses the biographies of the students and alumni that I interviewed on their experience in a multicultural environment. To protect the personalities of the participants, the names I have used are fictional and just pseudo names.

4.4.1 Kamenye

Kamenye comes from a family of six siblings with him being the third born. He was born and raised in the coastal region of Kenya and currently working at the headquarters of a multinational information and technology company in Africa. In his interview, he started the fact he was intentional with his choice of studying in an internationalized HEI in Africa because he needed a sense of belonging. However, in the interview, he mentioned the fact that he was not able to fully maximize his experience while at the institution due to inclusion barriers. He further states that he regretted not being able to learn the language of the host country because that is something he wanted to learn.

4.4.2 Haraseb

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Haraseb is a senior majoring in Management in Information Systems. He is a vocal and opinionated individual that seeks to pursue entrepreneurial aspirations post-graduation. He is currently on a scholarship in which he credits for his reason to continue an education in a foreign country. Haraseb mentioned that he had no motivation to immerse himself in the culture of the host country.

4.5 Themes Derived from the Interviews

The themes were derived based on the responses of the interviewees.

4.5.1 The buoyancy and vulnerability of AMIs perceptions

The perceptions of academically mobile individuals are buoyant and tend to change base on their emotions and feelings at the time. The interviewees mentioned that the attitude of their host environment are fickle depending on the time and situation at hand in which they are in. At the initial stage of their interaction with the culture of the host environment, the students were thrilled to be in the new environment and learning diverse cultural practices and embracing different viewpoints. However, this changed as time went by. The effects of a cultural shock either united or completed created a great ridge among the foreign and host students. What fueled the cultural shock was the myths and misconceptions between the various nationalities in the diverse campus. One of the alumnae mentioned the fact that pursuing an education in Ghana was a favorable option because he perceived they had similar culture and he, therefore, would not encounter any discrimination compared to if he continued his studies in institutions in the Global North. However, he later realized that although different nationalities at Ashesi significantly consisted of Africans, there were specific distinctive cultural differences.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

4.5.2 Cultural Background

The issue of diverse culture emerged from different interviewees as being a critical factor in their interaction. For some, it brought them together and resulted in stronger bonds while for others it was one of the elements they were unable to have cognitive dissonance with their mates from different nationalities.

The way we were raised directly or indirectly influenced the interactions I had while on a diverse campus. I was raised to air out my opinions and dissatisfaction about certain issues openly. However, that will be considered rude in the Ghanaian culture (Kamenye, 2019).

Fruitful interactions are most of the time based upon having things in common or in the case of different ideologies; they should be in the form of constructive criticism rather not one that causes discomfort between the parties involved. However, the interviewees had different opinions with regards to cultural background posing a social challenge.

4.5.3 Socio-Economical Challenges

An interviewee expressed that the lack of social connectedness between the various students as a result of factors such as accent end up making an international student passive during conversations. English language proficiency may not be considered a major issue, especially in HEIs in Africa as the general assumption is once an individual went through an education system with English as the primary language of communication, they ought to have excellent reading skills. On the contrary, the influence of the mother's tongue can be trace in the pronunciation of certain vowels and word in English. As such, such international students may not necessarily actively engage during lecture activities or even when doing teamwork. English proficiency not only

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

affects their social lives but transcends into their economic lives especially when they are financial aid are required to maintain a particular grade.

4.5.4 Westernization

The effects of westernization in our education system can be felt in both the positive and negative realm. With the curriculum tailored as the one in the Global North, the issue of raised by two interviewees is the fear of erosion the various African cultures and making them less desirable to fit in. To counter the argument, another student highlighted that some aspects of the curriculum might take time to de-westernized because of the various concepts may not be well invested and applicable in the Global South due to reasons such as technology that limits the de-westernization idea.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is based on the summary of the findings found on the research with regards to objectives and research question of the study. The section also consists of possible areas of recommendation that will enable further research and policies in the field of internationalization and interculturalism.

5.1 Summary of the findings

The study aimed at understanding the concept of multiculturalism in the perception of the international students in HEIs as the academically mobile individuals, the various programs put in place to ensure that the students can acquire and develop intercultural skills at the end of their study program, and how the institutions could better maximize on the internationalization experience. From the literature review, it was established that adequate research has not to be done in the field with regards to capturing the voices of international students from African countries in HEIs in the Global South. The literature review further highlighted the fact that there must be active and intentional interaction and conversation between the international students and hosts students for an effective exchange of cultural practices and skills.

The findings from my research showed that international students from the Global South tend to acquire and develop intercultural skills in a diverse environment when there are active interaction and conversations irrespective of language proficiency.

5.2 Problematizing the current interculturality in Africa

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Many international students pursuing their education in HEIs in the Global South seek to embrace academic mobility because they are not satisfied with the standards and equality of education in their various country of nationality base on what they term as a ‘failed education system.’ Hence, from the interviews, students mentioned that acquiring education from abroad legitimizes their knowledge and experience when they are seeking employment opportunities upon their return to their various countries.

5.3 Recommendation

The study shows that there is a need to give proper attention to outbound students from the Global South as most of the research done on the intercultural and African studies and mobility significantly is on quantitative research. Such as the voices of the outbound students in Africa and from African countries are not heard.

I recommend:

- Further research to be carried on outbound students from Africa pursuing HEIs in African countries such as Kenya, Botswana, Rwanda, Uganda, and Mauritius to see if the findings will be similar to the one in Ghana.
- Scholars should research more on the various aspects involved in the decisions made by academically mobile individuals with regards to their aspirations of interculturality.
- Further research should be done to enable HEIs and AMIs better define and assess their level of intercultural competence after the period of study in a diverse environment.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

- Adequate attention is given to other influencers such as Internet be considered in the experiences of international students in how it promotes and mitigate the various physical and personal interactions in an internationalized institution.

Academic mobility does involve not only students but also faculty, staff and partner institutions that play a vital role in the experience of students in a diverse campus.

Hence the need to bring the key players in the education realm on board in the policy-making process.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

You are cordially invited to take part in a research study conducted by Brenes Nakhone Ombere on how studying abroad is intertwined with the intercultural competencies, knowledge, and skills gained in an internationalized higher learning institution towards my undergraduate capstone project. Please, read through this form carefully and raise any concerns that you may have before partaking in this research study.

The purpose of this study is:

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

- To explore the current state of interculturality in academic institutions by probing on whether individuals who seek academic mobility consider intercultural learning as a significant factor in their quest for academics.

Your contribution in this study will involve:

- An interview that will include questions that will ask about your experiences, knowledge and opinions on your leisure, well-being, social and education activities while at the higher learning institution.
- An interview or questionnaire that will take about 45 minutes to complete.
- With your approval, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed.

Possible risks from participation include:

- You will be required to be sincere with your experiences and opinion.

Other than the mentioned above reason, I do not anticipate any possible risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Possible benefits from partaking in this study include:

- Improve the study abroad experience for future participants.
- An opportunity for self-reflection on your experiences.

Confidentiality:

All the information gathered from this study will be kept private and safe. The information will also not traced back to you. The recorded interview shall be destroyed once transcribed.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Participation:

Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntarily. You are at will to skip questions that you wish not to respond to or withdraw from the study at any given time without any negative consequences.

If you have any questions: You can contact the researcher, Brenes Ombere, at (brenes.ombere@ashesi.edu.gh)/ +233269279652 or my supervisor, Prof. Joseph Oduro-Frimpong at (joduro-frimpong@ashesi.edu.gh). This study and consent form has been reviewed by Ashesi Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research. For further information contact the committee through the irb@ashesi.edu.gh.

A copy of this form will be made available for your records.

Statement of Consent: I confirm that I have read and understood the information about the project and have had the opportunity for my questions to be answered about the study to my satisfaction.

Participant's Name _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview recorded.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of the person obtaining consent _____ Date _____

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Housekeeping Checklist – Beginning of the interview

- Brief introduction and information on the nature of the study
- Elaborate to the interviewee on the purpose, format, expected amount of time required and the intended methodology of the interview.
- Seek permission to record and use of the data provided.
- Respond to any questions or concerns raised by the interviewee.

The Interview

1. Could you briefly tell me about yourself?
2. What was your motivation for deciding to study in your current institution and host country?
3. Fantini describes Intercultural competence as a complex set of skills that are required to interact effectively and efficiently with people of different language and culture. Did you have any significant intercultural experience outside of your country before your experience in your institution? If yes, where and for how long?
4. How has your experience been interacting with host and international students?
5. In what ways has your institution made it possible for home students and international students to thrive in a multicultural environment?
6. Has been in a multicultural environment help you develop any new intercultural relationships? If yes, mention what made it possible to form the bond.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

7. In what ways do you find any of the intercultural abilities developed useful in your life because of your study abroad experience?
8. Do you feel you have changed based on your experience? Please explain the reason for your opinion.
9. What was your level of interest towards the culture of the host country before and upon visiting? Has this changed over time?
10. Is there any other additional information you that might not have been captured and wished to share?

End of the Interview

- Thank the interviewee for participation
- Remind the interviewee of the confidentiality and consent issue.

Collect consent form from the interviewee.

Appendix 3: Focus Group Guide

Housekeeping Checklist

- Briefly introduce yourself to the group and thank them for their participation
- Distribute the consent form.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

- Explain the purpose of the discussion, criteria for choosing the participants, how data will be handled and how the discussion will be carried out.
- Seek consent to record the discussion and later transcribe it.
- Respond to any questions or concerns raised by the participants.

The Discussion

1. What is the principal motivation for studying in a country other than your country of residence?
2. When pursuing a study program in a country other than your home country, what are your expectations?
3. How has your experience been interacting with host and international students?
4. What are some of the measures put in place in your institution to ensure that both home and international students thrive in a multicultural environment? Are they effective?
5. What are the factors that hinder interaction between host and international students?
6. In what ways have the intercultural abilities developed because of your study abroad experience been useful to you?
7. Do you feel being in a multicultural environment has impacted a change in your personality in any way?
8. Is there any additional information anyone wishes to share that has not been captured but is relevant to this project?

End of discussion

- Thank the participant for their input.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

- Reassure them of the confidentiality of the research.
- Collect the signed consent forms.

¹ Note: A guide provided by Sheffield University was used in modeling this document