

# The Life of international students and their relationship with the local students.

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# 1. Executive Summary

This research is part of a large project named Intercultural Learning at Home conducted by Professor Loretta Baldassar. As a part of this research project postgraduate students were given a chance to conduct an interview with focus group in order to collect information or data about the experiences of international students with host country and their relationships with the local students.

The focus group on which this whole report is based was conducted on 8 September 2017 at the campus of UWA. There were three participants in this focus group. Two of them were enrolled in masters of professional accounting and one was enrolled in masters of logistic management at University of Western Australia. They all were from India and living here for more than six months.

There were some most of the similar viewpoints and suggestion given by all the participants. The main findings from the focus group discussion are as follows:

- Main reason for coming to host country is further studies.
- Problems in adjustments in a different culture.
- Less interaction with local students.

- Language gap is the main barrier in relationship between international and domestic students.
- Institutional practicalities also the other main problem in forming good relationships with the local students.
- Solutions to the problem are introduction of different events in which both local and international student take part, more focus on group work in the class.

## 2. Introduction

The internationalization at home project was set at UWA which aimed to develop the research skills of Anthropology postgraduate students'. It also facilitate contact between international and domestic students when the joint group of domestic and international students share their view in a group on different topics and questions asked by the moderators. And this improvement in

contact will also promote intercultural learning which is really very important worldwide in current time of competition (Kehli& Morris2007). However, while going to overseas students have to face lots of difficulties in the host country and it sometimes affect the relationship of international and local students. For putting a light on the problems to international students and their relations with locals this research was done.

Masters of public policy student Gurmeet kaur conducted the whole research and analysis for this report. It was also a team project and we did share data and discuss issues as a team.

The participants were two female students and one male student doing master degree at the University of Western Australia. They are living in Perth from last three or six months. They all are come from India for their study purposes.

### 3. Background literature

#### 3.1 Internationalisation

According to the literature on internationalization in universities it is Revealed that there is a huge difference between the promotion of international education and the actual student experiences who are on exchange. The main aim of international education institutes is to impart high level of education as well as internationalization is a source

of revenue for them. Education has become an import export product(Amit,Vered 2010). But no strong proofs in its favour are available. Students are not generating revenue for the universities(Amit,2010).

Student experiences of studying overseas also shows that the international students also learn different skills like intercultural understanding, different ways of doing things, language skills, learn to work in team and also the skill of looking at innovative ways of addressing an issues or problems( included in Amit, Vered 2010).

Mckenzie and Baldassar's study also suggest that friendships are formed in clusters. The relationshipbetween international and local students are affected by local bubbles, cross-cultural differences and language differences. Moreover, localstudent also not want to engage with the international student due tothis no one try to make some efforts for making friends.

Student on exchange have different aims or motivation of coming to host country. According to the Barnick study of Canadian students in

Australia, most of the students take internationalization or exchange as a break without losing quality time(Barnik). They not come to learn culture of the host country but it automatically comes to them.

#### 4. Methodology

This research process was consisted of a semi structured interview. A focus group schedule was designed prior to conduct the whole discussion which is attached with this research report in( appendix1). Questions were designed by keeping in mind the surroundings like problems in adjustment, educational adjustments, relationship with locals, barriers, possible solutions etc.

Four participants were selected for the focus group. All the participants were recruited through consulting with a friend who is the classmate of the participants. She consulted with the participants and they become agree to support me and join the focus group.

The interview was took place on Friday 8 September 2017 at 5 o'clock in the evening in the social science building at the University of Western Australia. Three out of four participants came on time the fourth was not become able to join due to some reason. Initially, refreshment was offered by the moderator to the focus group as a welcoming treat.

After that participants were asked to fill the participation form and it was also assured by the interview conductor that the information given by them will be remained confidential. It was also told to them that their participation is voluntary they can leave whenever they want and there is nothing right wrong answer they are free to give answers.

The interview was recorded with the permission of focus group members for the purpose of transcription which is also attached with this report (appendix 2).

The interview moved continuously for twenty seven minutes in a very good flow according to my preplan schedule. Except from the schedule questions I also put some other questions to

get more information from the focus group. After conducting the interview I prepared the transcription on the bases of recording(Appendix2). There were some unusual pauses in the conversation which can create some hurdles in the flow of reading so I decided to edited few parts of the collected information.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1 Participants Demographics:**

The focus group was included two female and one male member. On the bases of personal detail given by them the female participants B and S were 25 and 23 years old and the male participant R was 26 years old. S and R both are students of masters of professional accounting and B is a student in masters of logistic management.

### **5.2 Dominant individual:**

Mr. R even as a sole male remained the dominant member of the focus group. He was tailor made in giving answers to all the questions.

Sometimes he even add his answers with the answers of other participants. There was no need to the interviewer to ask him individually. In the whole focus group discussion he had opposite view from the females. He was answering to all the questions related to the relationships of international and local students. He had formed good relations with the local students due to his ability to adapt new environment.

### 5.3. Key themes:

Engagements:

**There** are 3 participants in my group including 2 females and one male. I have given them different letters of alphabets to indicate their names. The male is engaged with the local students but females are not.

In the following script both females B and S deal

with theme of language barrier while interacting with the local students.

S: No doubt locals are very good here but still I have no any good relation with them .I think communication gap language gap. Language is very different they are very perfect in English as it is their mother language. We can express our self but we find some difficulties we are not perfect in this language as this is our second language. In our country we just use our mother language this is the main thing and culture is also different from us and they are very casual and more straight forward that's why I think that I not have good relations with them. Still I don't have an Australian friend.

Institutional practicalities:

The students had faced lot of difficulties related to the education at the university. Everything was new for them. They had explained this theme as follows.

B: Yeah, and I also when I have any problem related to my academic then first that teacher to mail them and after that we can meet them. It's very difficult because at a time we can't meet

any teacher.

S: Well I am also one of them I also facing very difficulty like academic difficulties here because system is very different here. In my country everything is theory basis here everything is online basis .We have to send mails and we have to study on LMS like it's quite different. I had never experience to do on-line study that sometime I feel stressed due to the overload of studies. Most of the time I spend on studies but still when I saw that the results are not very good I feel very depressed .

#### 5.4. **Summary of key findings:**

##### **Problems to international students**

Through this focus group research many problems faced by overseas students were come in light. All the three members of focus group had faced problems related to adjustment in a new culture which is totally different from their own culture. They had also faced problem in accommodation and specially dealing with food problem. They all were missing their home food. Moreover,

both the girls were home sick.

The most common problem they are facing in the host country is the problem of language. English is their second language. They said that they are not quite perfect in English. This language gap is creating many problems in being at university and also outside.

Other than this, they are also dealing with the educational adjustments. The study environment is totally different from their own country. Online study system was totally new for them and they are facing problems with practical based study because in their country study was on theory bases. And also they were unhappy with the procedure to approach the unit coordinators.

### **5.5. Relations of international students with the local.**

The other most important finding of this research was relationship

between local and international students. Only the male member of the focus group said that he has good relationships with the local students. He has some Australian good friends. But the female participants have not so good interaction with the host students.

### **Possible solution to improve relations between international and local students:**

Lots of solutions were given by the focus group for the improvement of overseas and local students relationship. Like R: I would like to certainly highlight some points because there is some good initiatives which university you know has been organize .One of them I would like to emphasize group presentations and group workshops and the other thing I would like to emphasize or highlight is volunteering .It's something which helps students... to make some good domestic friends .it's not like while doing volunteering you always lend up some good friendship. Ya..Volunteering I would like to highlight that because I feel there is good scope to make some good friends.

And also I have heard about the guild village. So... I spoken to them they have some good opportunities volunteering in the sense .There are some events which university keeps organizing every week or once in a month or twice in a month.

Like last week there was a program... of planting the trees where students who were interested in can come up and participate in the events. So you can meet light minded people .You know... I think matching of point is very important for successful friendship yeap. That's one of the reason.

S: . Hmm..Teachers can help in a better way because when they making groups for assignment, or some projects, and presentations they should make group like international students and domestic students must be in one group. So.. they can talk with each other and they can build good relations with each other.

Inter relation of key findings:

The key findings have relationship with each other. The problem of language gap is becoming a major obstacle for the international students in developing good relations with the local

students. Secondly, due to the burden of university studies they get very less chance to interact with the host students. Moreover, the cultural gap both the communities is also creating problems in the establishment of good interaction between domestic and international students.

## **6. Future Directions:**

For the future research it is good to recruit a large number of focus group members. From a large focus group we can collect more information related to the research topic (Ims, data share 2014). Which is not achieved from the current research because of very small number of members. Apart from this the time limit for the focus group discussion should also be increased because in a very short time period like the current research it is not possible to manage all the questions and to gather more knowledge or information from the focus group. As mostly the focus group described that the educational adjustment problems prohibited them in mixing with locals so this can be the area for future research.

## **7. Conclusion.**

Due to the fact that they all were Indian students . They handled the whole situation very confidently. The way in which they present and argument the questions was very good. The male participant was of dominant nature and he described the things in a very narrative style. Mainly the problems of language gap and educational adjustments are come to light .The wider conversations point about problems in educational adjustment is needed to be deal with first for bringing the local and international student together. And this need university attention.

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## *9. Appendix 1.Focus Group Schedule:*

### Pre-Focus Group Schedule

- Position chairs in a comfortable way that everyone can see each other and no one will be blocked.
- Brief the participants again the aim of the research and remind them the data will be recorded and collect the consent forms.
- Provide everyone with refreshments and make sure that they are comfortable.
- During refreshments ,round of introductions and backgrounds can be shared.
- After the refreshments ask them to go for the focus group session.

### During Focus Group schedule

- Discuss the aim and scope of the research.
- Tell the participants there is no right and no wrong in answers.
- Tell them that their participation is totally voluntary, they can leave the group whenever they want.
- Let the focus group leave free to make a flow of the conversation.

### Focus group questions

- What are the names and age group of the members of focus group?
- Why they came to Australia?
- Why they not choose their own country for further studies?
- Did they adjust easily into the new environment?
- How are their relations with the local students?
- Is they adjusted easily in the new environment?
- What can be done to improve their relations with domestic students?
- What problems they have faced related to academic adjustments?
- What problems have they faced related to personal emotional adjustments?

### Post-Focus Group Schedule

- Offer refreshments at the end of the session and say thanks.

### 10.Appendix 2 Focus Group Transcription:

Gurmeet kaur

Project title:The life of international students and their relationship with the local students.

Focus group details : Three Indian international students.

[Welcoming talks]

Gurmeet : Okay, Thanks guys for coming here. Firstly I would like to start with by asking your names and what is your age group and in which course you came here?

B : My name is B, my course is logistic management and I am 25 years old .

S : Hello, my name is S I am 23 years old. I am studying in Uwa in masters of professional accounting.

Gurmeet : And what about you ?

R :Ya my name is R. So I am enrolled in masters of professional accounting... .I am from India from south of India .

Gurmeet : Okay, guys tell me why did you come to Australia.?What is the purpose of coming here?

B : Hmm Main purpose of here is doing my further study here I doing logistic management which is based on the IT . This is the main purpose because I want to make my carrier here.

Gurmeet : And what about you R?

R : I am very passionate about accounting . So I aspire to be the chartered accountant. I have studied accounting first quite sometimes in India .My major was commerce in my bachelor degree. So... Basically there was no specialized course for accounting so that's the reason. When I researched about when I had an option for going abroad for my further studies. I done preety much good research and found that Australia is one of the best destination which has got lot of scope for in the accounting profession. So that's one of the main criteria as I choosed Australia as my destination for my further studies.

Gurmeet: I think it is a beautiful country also.

R : yes it has got lot of natural features there are lot of places here you know for example I like the place near Goldcoast I do not know exactly what is the technical name. There is a beach near gold coast. It is very famous for different breeds of fishes. I could not tell the exact name. The great rif barrier to be exact. I

like the culture over here mainly. So people are very casual you know so I like to be you know that to live my life. You know they.. do not want to things complicate much .

Gurmeet : And what about you S why you came here ?

S : Well the main reason of coming here is the studies and the career because here accounting has a very good scope and Australian accountant are very preferable all over the countries we can say all over the world .And.. Moreover when I consult in my country with my educated friend circle and my elders they suggest me to come here if I want to be an accountant and I want to go in this profession . Here accounting has a very good scope and there are very good career opportunities. Here we can get a very good job and well.. The second thing life style is very good here .The standard of living is very good. The culture is quiet different but it is nice and the beauty of the country attracts me.

R : Moreover I would like to add one more point the accounting system which Australia is adopting is almost in line with the international standards when I compared it with India they were quite backdated so are not yet updated .So there are principles almost in line with international standards. So this was also the main reason

Gurmeet : Why you choose only the Australia ? I mean why you not choose your own country for further studies? Is the education system in your country not according to you? Please tell me something about this one also.

B : Ya, in India there is totally on the theoretical courses. There is no pressure on the practical. But in Australia there is all over the practical and moreover in India I think education system is not good like as... Australia and career opportunities are also less compare than other countries.. that's why.

Gurmeet :And what about you S why you choose to study here?

S : Well in India as she said that all the things are based on theoretical knowledge.And the... teaching system and studying system is quite backward. They have technology but they don't still use in study. Here are more

opportunities we are studying online we are doing practical things.. it will be very supportive if I'm going to do some job make a good career and...

R : Ya... As I said earlier, I am very passionate about accounting profession so my major was commerce in the bachelor degree. The major reason I took commerce is that there is no specialized course for accounting back in India. That frustrates you because you end up studying different subjects which you may not like because that was not what I wanted to do. So that's one of the reasons. Moreover when I researched about different courses worldwide every country every developed country has specialized courses for every profession but in India that's not the case moreover when if you take the university study which is different from professional studies the accounting standards and style of study are not updated. They are quite back dated when a student is graduated when he goes outside almost is going in a new world he can't correlate with the bachelor degree. So that's also one of the reasons because I found a lot of my friends struggling in the practical world when they are qualified because that is not in line with what you have studied in India. So that is the reason.

Gurmeet : Guys what about the local students?,... I mean how is your relationship with the locals?

B : My relationship with the local is not good. Because till now I have no friend. Main reason of this is the communication gap I have not too much good communication skills in comparison of host students. This is the reason... In future I hope I will make good friends.

Gurmeet : Where do you meet the local students mostly?

B: A... Mostly I meet local students in our university like in class and library and we also discuss our group discussions about our units. Mostly I meet them.

Gurmeet : And how is your relationship with locals?

S: No doubt locals are very good here but still I have no any good relationships with them. Because I think communication gap language gap. Language is very different they are very perfect in English as it is their mother language. We can

express our self but we find some difficulties we are not perfect in this language as this is our second language. In our country we just use our mother language this is the main thinks... and culture is also different from us and they are very casual and more straight forward that's why I think that I not have good relations with them. Still I don't have an Australian friend.

Gurmeet : And do you meet them outside the campus also?

S : No.... I usually meet them in the campus for the purpose of studies sometimes for group discussions and for class test in the class outside the campus I never met them.

Gurmeet : And what about you R what will you tell us about this?

R : Well, I feel I have been very lucky in this matter because.. I was able to make some good friends in first few weeks .So I almost end up meeting new person everyday in campus which is good because it helps you build your friend circle .Yeah I have been able to makes good friends .They are preety much helpful in finding your things. Because you know when you are doing in your place getting in touch with domestic people or in the sense local people is really important. You get to know things and how system works over here .So fortunately I have a good friend whom I can speak any time.

Gurmeet : And did you face any difficulty in the initial time when you came here?

R : Yeah for the first week it was little different I could not face difficult it just a matter of time I getting use to slang because in India we usually speak differently moreover I feel Australian they speak very fast .It just a matter of time you getting adopting to that I am feeling it very easy now.

Gurmeet: And what can you suggest me, how can we improve this relationship between local and international students, I mean how can they come together? Could universities can help?

B: I know university can help like through group discussions and other activities we can attach with the host students but I think.. university can also organize some events and competetions there some host students and international

students can get more chance to come close and they can communicate with each other and discuss their all the things and they can.. gossip with each other maybe it is a good way to.. attract them and to... bring a change.

Gurmeet : What you will suggest us S?

S : She is right that university can make some efforts by holding events and social activities but sometimes international students do not feel comfortable with local students because they have cultural gap and education gap and.. Sometimes the local students don't want to talk with the international students and they ignore them it makes the international students de-motivated .They feel de-motivated and... but we can't force someone to make friendship. And socialization is a very good idea

Gurmeet : Okay and what about you R ?

R : Ya well I would say in my opinion you cannot force someone you know just randomly go and speak to some other person .So all about you feeling.. to speak you know to other person willing to make good friendship and all but university all I

Gurmeet : And what do you mean by volunteering?

R

Gurmeet : Guys , some students sometime face academic adjustment problems do you also face... any problem like this ?

B : Yeah, I also face so many problems there because education system is totally different from my own country .And firstly.. I am very shy and I am always hesitate to speak to any host student and when I have any problem I am very hesitate to discuss that problem with host students .Secondly.., there is everything online and in my country there is off line and there is also I face problem to understand the system of here. This is my main problem and moreover... culture is also different from my own country I also face some problems.

S : Well... I am also one of them .I also facing very difficulty like academic difficulties here because system is very different here .In... my country like everything is theory bases here everything is online basis we have to send mails and we have to study on IMS too like it's quite different .I had never experience to do online study that sometimes I feel stressed due to the overload of studies .Most of the time I spend on studies but still when I saw that the results are not very good I feel very dipressed and sometimes I feel angry all . I can't give time to me .Sometimes I missed to call my parents and everything that.. it's too burdensome I am feeling.

B : And I also when I have any problem related to my academic then first that teacher to mail them and after that we can meet them . It's very difficult because at a time we can't meet any teacher.

S : Yeah, we hesitate to contact with teacher and other because we do not have any good communication skills you can say sometimes we not feel comfortable with them .It is a barriers you can say in the education.

Gurmeet : Okay ,and did you face any difficulty R?

R: Yeah off course you know when you come you travel to different country in a totally different system you to face some issues but at the end of the day I am very happy with what I am doing. Because in India... totally the education system and the grading system totally depended on the final examination whereas over here only 50% of the grading which is depended on the final examination .whereas the part of grades are depend on presentation, group discussion, group assignments which in ways you know helps the student in overcoming problems like public speaking ,working in a group and also... . Yeah problems I would like to share till I was in India I was feel that I was not a good public speaker you know I never worked in group so that.... one of the main problem you face when to tend to meet.... with different people with different minds that you have to work accordingly. That's one of the you know I feel... it's a very complicated one working in the group but at the end of the day its positive. You have to take some positive sense and start moving

S : One more thing like sometimes your group mates for presentation and for other work they do not want like they don't want to help you not talk to you. There is a big difficulty which we face every day.

R : And one more thing you know when you work in the group everyone might not be available when you want to meet it's a about balancing the time also .So might be you might be have some other work also you might be in some clash where they are not available and also it's all about balancing and understanding and building a good repo with student .You know with your friends you may be take it as positive or negative it's up to the student with I can take it positive and more forward he might considerate problem. It depend on the group .That is one of the problem you know student face and public speaking Indian. When you come here the Indian student they not do presentation back in India because the system is not like that .So I had a group presentation in first week I was very nervous because I was never involved in any presentation and also that's one of the main problem you know you face but as the time progress we hopefully on the point.

Gurmeet : Ya I think everything comes with time .it takes some time to develop new skills. Ya. And guys what about the emotional adjustments? I mean what problems you had face related to the emotional adjustments as you came from your country and you have to adjust in new environment?

B : Firstly I missing my mother because I am very close to my mother. Secondly I feel homesick. Because it's totally changed here. And also in India there is some event come in every month and we enjoyed lot that event. I miss that also .And food is also missing like as Punjabi food here is not available.

Gurmeet: I think the food is main problem for international students.

B: here I do not like the food and this the main problem .I do not like that food and not tasty.

Gurmeet: And I think the food is mainly non veg.

B: Yeah but I am vegetarian.

Gurmeet: Okay, And what about you S?

S: Like I already told you that I don't have any good relation with locals so I feeling home sick. When I feel homesick then it's very difficult to concentrate on my studies and other things. I have a little daughter and without your children it's very difficult to stay here .Like I call my parents and my child but it's not enough and we have to like with the passage of time things will change it will take some time.

Gurmeet : That's right and what about you R?

R: Yeah personally you know personal emotional problem they are plenty because when you are at home your mother does everything for you . Your mother does cleaning, cooks food for you .You have to do everything here .You have to do cleaning, washing your cloth and you have to cook your food so yeah to balance your life that one thing I hate over here because I have to do everything here by myself .That one a time you miss your family because at the end of the day family matters a lot for everyone. So even though when you speaking to your mother daily you know personally sitting with them and talking matters a lot .you feel different you feel good when to speak your parents .So, yeah at time I feel homesick and fortunately I got good roommates with whom I can spend some quality time but cooking is a thing I hate and I don't think I 'm a good cook. I miss Indian food .I miss Indian spicy food. Yeah I like non vaetarion food. I'm non vaetarion. It's good that you know I can get some good quality meat over here .So it's all about getting adjusted in the country.

Gurmeet: Okay, guys no worries I think everything will be change with the time and now I wants to say thanks to all of you for coming here and for supporting me in my work and again thanks very much.



