Developing Guidelines for the Internationalisation of Education Programmes from Sojourners' Experience using Merriam's Two-level Analysis.

Membangunkan Garis Panduan untuk Program Pengantarabangsaan Pendidikan melalui Pengalaman Pelajar Pelawat menggunakan Analisis 2 Peringkat Merriam

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Abstract: This study was an impetus from the experiences of two Malaysian students who embarked on a credit transfer programme to Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, Indonesia. The programme was to uphold the Internationalisation of Education (ILe) as proposed by a public university in Malaysia. The aim of the study was to explicate the successes and challenges that the students had endeavoured during the programme for 6 months. The methods employed were document analysis and interview. The data were collected via learning journal entries which the students submitted through emails to be compiled by the researchers as well as their final report which was submitted at the end of the programme. In order to triangulate the data, they were then interviewed once they came back to Malaysia. The data from both methods were analysed thematically following Merriam's two-level analysis. Four themes emerged from the data – experiences, public relations, independence and communication skills. Each of the theme details both successes and challenges. These findings provide input for a draft of guidelines for any faculty or university to conduct a credit transfer programme in the future.

Keywords: Credit Transfer Programme; Internationalisation of Education (ILe); Merriam's two-level Analysis; Learning Journal Entries

Abstrak: *Kajian ini dicetuskan daripada pengalaman dua pelajar Malaysia yang mengikuti program pemindahan kredit ke Universiti Islam Negeri Walisongo, Indonesia. Program ini merupakan satu program Pengantarabangsaan Pendidikan (Ile) seperti yang dicadangkan oleh sebuah universiti awam di Malaysia. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mendalami kejayaan dan cabaran yang mereka lalui selama 6 bulan program ini. Kaedah yang digunakan adalah analisis dokumen dan temu bual. Data dikumpulkan melalui entri jurnal pembelajaran yang diserahkan oleh pelajar melalui e-mel, yang dikompilasi oleh penyelidik serta laporan akhir mereka yang diserahkan pada akhir program. Untuk tujuan triangulasi data, mereka kemudian ditemu ramah setelah mereka kembali ke Malaysia. Data dari kedua kaedah tersebut telah dianalisis secara tematik mengikuti analisis dua peringkat Merriam. Empat tema muncul dari data - pengalaman, hubungan masyarakat, kebebasan dan kemahiran komunikasi. Setiap tema memperincikan kejayaan dan cabaran. Penemuan ini memberikan input kepada draf garis panduan bagi mana-mana fakulti atau universiti untuk menjalankan program pemindahan kredit pada masa akan datang.*

Kata kunci: *Program Pemindahan Kredit; Pengantarabangsaan Pendidikan (ILe); Analisis dua peringkat Merriam; Entri Jurnal Pembelajaran.*

Introduction

One of the seventeen main objectives of UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) is to ensure people from all walks of life have "access to quality education on sustainable development at all levels and in all social contexts" (https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development). With much emphasis on all social contexts and the importance of respecting any cultural diversity, this has driven universities to strengthen its Internationalisation programmes.

The internationalisation of higher education can be attained through various strategies such as encouraging students to study abroad, recruiting foreign students, strengthening cooperation with overseas universities, establishing international education centres, integrating international knowledge into the curriculum and promoting the publication of articles in international journals (Ho, Lin & Yang, 2015). Being Malaysia's 12th public university, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) strives to realize the 8th shift of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025, by becoming a regional and global reference centre for the integration of *Naqli* and *Aqli* knowledge (USIM'16 & USIM'25) (Faizal Kasmani, 2015). In 2016, academic collaborations between USIM and its regional counterpart had seen the fruitful outcome from the credit transfer programme (CTP) between two students of Faculty of Major Language Studies (FPBU, USIM) and Walisongo National Islamic University, Indonesia (UIN). Such move can be termed as the concept of Internationalisation of Education (ILe), and very much in line with the 1st shift in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025, where universities are expected to produce holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced graduates. The collaboration between the two regional Universities provides engaging learning platforms for the students to be dynamic in seeking meaningful purposes in life through connections (hands on/real world) with the local/regional community at large. This paper will highlight the experiences (the successes and challenges) of USIM through its students' involvement in the ILe and Credit Transfer programme (CTP).

Internationalisation of Education (ILe)

Globalisation triggers the concept of bringing education to the international level (Knight, 1999). It also affects higher education as it has intensified the mobility of ideas and people in this sector. Universities around the world respond to challenges presented by globalisation in various ways and one of it is the internationalisation of the university campuses. The ILe concept is flexibly defined, fluid and quite dynamic. However, Knight's definition (Knight, 1999, p. 16) is the most commonly used in describing education in relation to internationalisation, where she states that it is the process of "integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service of the institution". Interestingly, the emphasis is more on student learning outcomes which includes "international and intercultural knowledge, skills, and values" resulting from the Academic mobility of the students to the CTP Programme (Knight, 2012, p. 20).

After two and a half-decades of dealing with the European programmes, Malaysian Ministry of Education is looking into the need for "regional harmonisation of higher education systems", whereby the Malaysia-based public and private higher education providers are exploring the strengths and weaknesses of ASEAN higher education internationalisation policies, a strong commitment to internationalisation in terms of openness and mobility (Atherton, Crossling, Munir Shuib & Siti Norbaya Azizan, 2019). A few other areas are brought into the fold such as curriculum and other accommodative measures taken by the host institutions. The concept of ILe receives global approval as it not only fosters good relations, but it also brings in revenue to the host institutions. A case in point is the $10.1 billion generated by Internalisation of education into Australia in 2005/2006. (Bishop, as cited in Bell, 2008). Therefore, fiscal consideration has spurred on the Internalisation of education in countries like Canada, United Kingdom and Australia. (Andrade, 2006). On the home turf, Malaysia is aspiring to reach the 600-billion-ringgit mark by the year 2020 (Chi, 2011). This is supported by a robust body of literature on this concept in Malaysia covering various areas like policy and trends, problems of internalisation of education in general and issues with English. However, studies in Malaysia seem to lack information on proactive steps that can facilitate and support a smooth and rewarding experience for the participants of ILe programmes in their new environment. The current study, by investigating the experiences of Malaysian students in an international environment, aims to fill this gap and at the same time provides insights as a guide to prospective ILe participants and their stakeholders.

Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as "socio-cultural adjustment and acquisition of dominant cultural norms by members of a non-dominant group" (Gul & Kolb, 2009, p. 1). It is the process of adapting faced by students undergoing ILe programmes. 'Culture' as an integral concept in the process of acculturation is defined as "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretation of meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations" (House et al., 2004). Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010) claimed that by undergoing ILe programmes, students are able to explore a different culture, learn new ways of thinking, increase self-esteem and confidence, as well as improve cross-cultural knowledge and skills. Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2009) gather that students who undergo ILe programmes have better understanding of global issues, appreciation of other cultures, stronger intercultural communication skills and better positive self-image. With the difference in cultures ILe's experience change when they first come into a foreign country such as the change of weather, food, environment, people surrounding them, traffic, academic conventions, language and other abstract matters like religion, ideology and policy. They might positively accept these changes or they might react negatively, which result in some form of culture shock (Hofstede, 1991). Hence, they need to make adjustment and adaptation to the new culture. The acculturation process varies from one individual to another depending on attitudes and behaviours. Failure to manage culture shock can cause dissatisfaction, sadness, loneliness and the feeling of failure which might overwhelm the participants of ILe programmes.

Guidelines will facilitate the adaptability and performance of credit transfer/exchange students in their international environment. This study has utilized indicators as provided by an Acculturation Model by Smith and Khawaja (2011) which describes the multi-domain Acculturative Stressors encountered by international students. The domains are as follows:

1. Language (language barrier and language anxiety in academic & sociocultural setting)

2. Academic (quality, efficiency)

3. Sociocultural (social network/friendship, cultural norms, loneliness)

4. Discrimination

5. Practical (financial, accommodation)

The guidelines will also incorporate indicators of positive gains from the students' international experience which comprise foreign language proficiency (Pickert, 1992), development of cultural knowledge and cultural sensitivity (McCabe, 1994; Sachdev, 1997), inter-personal maturity (Stitsworth, 1989), and increased international interest and concern (Carlson & Widaman, 1988).

Successes and Challenges of Students' International Experience

In a research conducted by Noor Saazai Mat Saad, Melor Md Yunus & Mohamed Amin Embi (2014), successes can be referred to as any significant development reported by participants concerning their positive development in their English language learning experiences (i.e academic achievement, being optimistic and accomplishments). Besides that, it also has other successes which include diversifying and enhancing the learning environment for the benefit of domestic students, the University, and the nation. It is able to change the lives of international students as it helps in producing graduates who are internationally knowledgeable and cross culturally sensitive. In addition, it also allows them to transfer to a different environment, where they can understand the connections between the local environment in which they live, and the global environment (International Associations of Universities, 2012). Ho, Lin & Yang (2015), in their study, discover that ILe has increased students' international knowledge, enhanced their foreign language abilities, and created a multicultural campus.

As for challenges, they refer to whatever difficulties or misadventures faced by the participants. For instance, problems in communication. Being in a foreign country with different mother tongue may impede communication in certain situation. Differences in language to communicate with the local people might hinder students to socialise and they may need some time to adapt. Another challenge is the difference in culture. Some students may have difficulties in adapting to the culture which is foreign to them. For example, European culture differs from Asian culture in terms of food, tradition, lifestyle and others (Jibeen & Khan, 2015). In relation to this, the current study analyses the ILe participants' experiences and the integration process that comes in the form of the service offered by the host institutions, i.e. UIN and USIM. These experiences may shed some lights in dealing with the problems and issues of acculturation and to ease the journey of the sojourners.

The approach of the study was qualitative in nature and two methods were employed - document analysis and interview. The document analysis was conducted based on the participants' written journal entries and their final report. These participants were then interviewed. The data from the documents and interview were then analysed to reveal themes which would give the answer to the research question set earlier. The two participants, Zarita and Hani (pseudonyms) were USIM third year students who went for a CTP programme to UIN. They were selected as they fulfilled all the criteria – their MUET scores were 3 or above, their CGPA points were 3.0 and above, they were active in co-curricular activities and most importantly, they had their parents' permission as they would be in UIN for approximately 6 months; from 24th August 2016 to 18th February 2017 including during Eidul-Adha celebration. They stayed amongst the local students in a *Maahad* or a big residential block and attended the related classes along with their new classmates in UIN.

Methodology

This study employed document analysis and interview as the methods to collect data. One of the activities assigned to Zarita and Hani was for them to write learning journal entries on their everyday experiences in Semarang, Indonesia. There was no specification of the number of entries that they should complete but they were told to just write when they had anything to share. Based on their submissions, both Zarita and Hani completed 6 entries in their Journal and completed their final report. It was a requirement set by the International Student Centre in the participants' university in Malaysia. The final report was in a form of PowerPoint presentation slides that also included pictures and video clippings. Zarita and Hani were then interviewed separately. They were asked about their positive and negative endeavours as sojourners, opinions on the differences and similarities between USIM and UIN as well as whether they would recommend the CTP to their friends and other questions.

Data Analysis

In line with the qualitative nature of this study, the data were then analysed using thematic analysis. The data from the documents were triangulated with the data from the interview. Although it was done manually, the researchers were divided into 2 teams. Both teams did the analysis in 2 phases adhering closely to Merriam's (2009) two-level analysis (Figure 1). Figure 1 illuminates how the analysis was conducted. The themes were accepted when there were two or more excerpts categorised together. Once the themes and subthemes were established, they were compared and discussed among the 2 groups of researchers. There was no major discrepancy between the findings from the 2 groups, just some excerpts were moved to other subthemes that could suit them better.

Figure 1: Phases of analysis based on Merriam's (2009) two-level analysis

Phase 1: Open Coding	Phase 2: Analytical Coding
• both documents and interview transcripts were read and analysed • researchers coded the data generally by gathering similar excerpts from both documents and interviews in open coding groups • examples of the open coding groups - successes, challenges, problems, sweet memories, difficulties - these were then subsumed under two open coding groups or themes (i) successes, (ii) challenges.	• all of the excerpts in the 2 open coding groups were scrutinised to further categorise them into themes based on concept, anything concrete or even abstract. • the successes and challenges can be categorised into 4 themes - experiences, public relations, independence and communication skills.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the Learning Journal Entries and Interview transcription, specific excerpts related to experiences, public relations, independence and communication skills were categorised into four main themes. Each theme addresses the successes and challenges as experienced by the two sojourners. The two sojourners expressed themselves rather vividly for each theme. In the first theme, the experiences that they underwent could be seen in two lights – enriching and testing. The former deals with their visits to historical and recreational places, and lecturer's house. Furthermore, they also reported their involvement in cultural ceremonies. All these have enriched their experience. The other subtheme is testing experiences. These experiences are rather negative and very much testing their patience.

Figure 2: Themes and subthemes from the study

Experiences	
Enriching	Testing

Public Relations	
Positive social networking	Unproductive networking

Independence	
Boosting	Trying

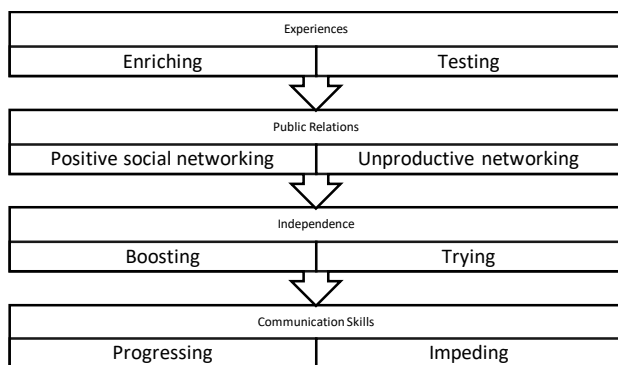| Communication Skills	
Progressing	Impeding

Figure 2 shows the 4 themes with 2 subthemes each. It can be surmised that the successes and challenges experienced by the sojourners can be seen in 4 aspects. Based on the input gathered (the four themes; experiences, public relations, independence & communication skills), from the first-hand experiences of the sojourners, based on their learning journal entries and the interview, a draft of guidelines or manual for any faculty or university to conduct a credit transfer programme in the future could be made possible. All the recorded successes, challenges as well as some suggestive tips to assist students in foreign countries could be documented as guidelines to many stakeholders, namely the 2 faculties and the 2 universities involved (own and host), as well as to the sojourners.

Conclusion

The recorded 6-month sojourn experience of 2 Malaysian students recorded in the Learning Journals Entries and transcribed Interviews were proofs of their successes and challenges in a foreign place. The report on their successes and challenges can be utilised as input for the guidelines or manual for implementing the Internationalisation of Education (ILe) programme at any university.

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