Chapter 65
Expectations, Dispositions, and Experiences of International Graduate Students

Alton Y. K. Chua
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to examine the expectations, dispositions, and experiences of international graduate students in a publicly funded university in Singapore. Using a qualitative research design, a total of 4 focus groups involving some 33 graduate international students from 8 countries were conducted. It was found that their expectations were set mainly in economic dimensions. These included good job opportunities, attractive salaries, and good career development prospects in Singapore. In terms of dispositions, participants' considerations for studying overseas were tied closely to the aspiration for graduate education as well as the perceived appeal of an educational qualification from Singapore. In terms of experiences, participants enjoyed pleasant encounters both on-campus and off-campus. Most felt welcomed and could cope well with their studies. This chapter paints a number of future trends before it concludes with a few implications for policy makers as well as suggestions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

The graduate education landscape has shifted over the years from being domestically oriented to one which embraces internationalization. In particular, it is not uncommon in many universities around the world to count international students as a significant percentage among their student bodies. For example, international students in Australian universities make up approximately 24% of the total student population (Khawaja & Dempsey,

2008). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the share of international students stands approximately at 15% (UKCISA, 2010).

In fact, OECD (2009) data show that in 2007, some three million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship, of whom 2.5 million (83.5%) studied in the OECD area. The report also indicates that economically developed Anglophone countries with Anglo-Saxon education systems, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New

Zealand are the core destinations of international students seeking higher education abroad. Among the compelling factors which attract international students to these traditional destinations include the use of the English language, the variety of academic programs, excessive capacity, quality of academic offerings, and the prospect of staying in the host country upon graduation (Marginson, 2006; Ziguras & Law, 2006). However, recently some other economically developed but non-Anglophone countries such as Singapore have emerged as equally attractive destinations for international students.

Graduate education involves adjustment to new academic and social environments. The demands of these new environments are often more complex for international students who need to grapple not only with foreign academic and social environments but also the culture and language of the host country (Mori, 2000). The notable presence of international students, along with the attendant issues and challenges have attracted much scholarly attention, including works related to students' individual experiences in a new educational setting (Lee & Rice, 2007), how students chose where to study abroad (Li & Bray, 2007) and what their career aspirations were (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007).

To enrich extant literature, this chapter represents a preliminary effort to examine the expectations, dispositions and experiences of international graduate students in a publicly-funded university in Singapore. Expectations refer to what students hope to gain from their time in Singapore. Dispositions pertain to students' general approach towards their studies and incoming factors such as degree-seeking intention and attractiveness of Singapore while experiences refer to both perception and actual encounter within the social and academic frames in Singapore.

The significance of this chapter stems from two counts. First, the three research foci, namely, expectations, dispositions and experiences of international students represent salient themes within the international education literature. These issues hold implications for students themselves in terms of their academic success, health and psychological well-being as well as for university administration and research communities (Glennon & MacLachlan, 2000). Next, Singapore serves as an interesting context for investigation. Although official numbers at the graduate level are unavailable, the rapid growth of international students as a whole is telling. The number rose from 86,000 in 2007 to 97,000 a year later. In fact, a government economic review panel recommends a target of 150,000 foreign students by 2012, more than double the 2005 figure of 66,000 (Yeoh, 2007). Even as Singapore is poised as a global education hub, research done on international students in Singapore pales in comparison to those undertaken elsewhere in countries such as Australia (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008), Canada (Chrikov et al., 2008) and United States (Lee & Rice, 2007).

BACKGROUND

The forces of globalization have brought about a change in the way international students are being perceived by host countries and institutions. From being typically viewed in the past as beneficiaries of development aid (Barber et al. 1984), international students are increasingly seen as a means of income generation (Lee et al., 2006), a potential source of skilled migration upon completion of studies (Tremblay, 2005) as well as a factor of intellectual capital enhancement for the host country and institution (Chellaraj et al., 2008). For these reasons, attracting international students has become an important agenda for many universities particularly those in Europe, North America and Australasia. For example, in the United Kingdom, the government shows a remarkably high level of commitment to international education through a number of initiatives such as the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES) international

9 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/expectations-dispositions-and-experiences-of-international-graduate-students/111894

Related Content

An Exploratory Mixed Method Study on H5P Videos and Video-Related Activities in a MOOC Environment

Stefan Thurner, Sandra Schön, Lisa Schirmbrand, Marco Tatschl, Theresa Teschl, Philipp Leitnerand Martin Ebner (2022). *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Education (pp. 1-18).*

www.irma-international.org/article/an-exploratory-mixed-method-study-on-h5p-videos-and-video-related-activities-in-a-mooc-environment/304388

Learner Performance and Satisfaction Level in Personalized Learning Environments

Irfan Suraland Müjgan Yazici (2018). *Digital Technologies and Instructional Design for Personalized Learning (pp. 55-79).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/learner-performance-and-satisfaction-level-in-personalized-learning-environments/199532

Is Schema Theory Helpful in Teaching and Learning Based on Visualizing Research?

Xinhong Xia, Xianglan Chen, Jing Zhang, Hongliang Louand Yachao Duan (2022). *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Education (pp. 1-15).*

www.irma-international.org/article/is-schema-theory-helpful-in-teaching-and-learning-based-on-visualizing-research/300332

A Bibliometric Analysis of Automated Writing Evaluation in Education Using VOSviewer and CitNetExplorer from 2008 to 2022

Xinjie Deng (2022). *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Education (pp. 1-22).*

www.irma-international.org/article/a-bibliometric-analysis-of-automated-writing-evaluation-in-education-using-vosviewer-and-citnetexplorer-from-2008-to-2022/305807

Strategies for Fostering Critical Thinking in Early Childhood Education

Katrina Woolsey Jordan, Michelle Fazio-Brunsonand Shawn Marise Butler (2023). *Research Anthology on Early Childhood Development and School Transition in the Digital Era (pp. 979-997).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/strategies-for-fostering-critical-thinking-in-early-childhood-education/315722