

Managing acculturative stress and building an effective intercultural relation: A case study among international students at Universiti Malaysia Sabah

ABSTRACT

Employing a qualitative method approach and Berry's Acculturation Theory as well as Kim's Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory, this study investigates the intercultural experiences which focus on acculturative stress experienced and coping strategies employed by the international students in an institution of higher learning in Sabah, Malaysia, namely Universiti Malaysia Sabah, particularly among the Chinese students from the People Republic of China (PRC). It is interesting to note that even though there are many problems and hurdles in managing the teaching and learning of the PRC students, the number of PRC students enrolled in the university continues to grow yearly. The figure is outnumbered compared to other international students. Normally, the sojourners will experience a certain degree of acculturative stress or culture shock at the early phase of migration, especially among those adopting the separation and marginalization strategy of acculturation. Contrastingly, the findings reveal something different. Even though some of them have experienced a certain degree (minor) of acculturative stress, most of them could handle their migrating life as sojourners in Sabah quite comfortably. The results of this study contribute to the understanding of the obstacles and constraints faced by the sojourners and factors that lead to their successful adaptation. It offers positive implications and constructive recommendations towards building a conducive inter-cultural relation between the sojourners and the host.