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SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENT TO LIFE AND LEARNING AT A PRIVATE HIGHER INSTITUTION IN MALAYSIA

Abstract:

The rapid increase of international student number in Malaysian higher education institutions suggests that Malaysia and its higher education providers have a lot to offer. Experts, however, warn that to remain on top of the game, Malaysian universities need to constantly strive to enhance the quality of experiences of international students as this would make their educational migration to Malaysia meaningful and worthwhile. To do so, it is important that the voices of international students studying in Malaysian higher education institutions are heard and their adjustment issues and challenges are explored and understood. In this small-scale study, a survey questionnaire was distributed to 53 successful international students to explore their experiences of adjusting to life and learning at a private higher education institution in Malaysia. Data analysis reveals that even though many of these successful international students did not face problems adjusting to living far away from family and getting use to the weather and food, a significant number of them appeared to be having issues with time management and managing their expenses. As for adjusting to learning, problematic areas were found to be related to working in groups and gaining acceptance of others. Suggestions given to support international students' adjustment to student life include introducing integrative orientation and university events that promote cultural exchange and integration. To support international students' adjustment to learning at the university, suggestions were given for the improvement in the following areas: expectations, communication, classroom practice, and learning supports.

Keywords:

student adjustment, student diversity, student diversity, higher education

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