

# A look at problems faced by international students in uk



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The experience of an international student is very diverse and includes both learning and adaptation related issues. UK is home to many of the top educational institutions in various disciplines which serve a source of attraction for international students as a result of which UK receives a huge influx of international students each year and in the session 2007-08, 15% of all university students in the UK were international students. However the international students face a multitude of problems that are quite unique and different from what the domestic student's experience. The objective of the research is to investigate whether International students from developing countries face more problems as compared to students from developed nations; International students find it harder to cope with intangible problems like cultural shock and linguistic problems than coping with a different educational system. To understand the problems of international students studying in the UK, a survey will be conducted and the target group will comprise of international students studying in major universities of the UK. The final result of the research study will help identify the most pressing problems faced by international students.

## **Introduction**

The experience of an international student is very diverse and includes both learning and adaptation related issues. The various tasks an international student has to accomplish include selection of university, courses, understanding the different educational system, language proficiency tests, applying for a visa, handling financial issues, arriving at the university, accommodation and coping with cultural differences. UK receives a huge influx of international students each year and in the session 2007-08, 15% of

all university students in the UK were international students, not domiciled in the UK[1]. It represents a significant proportion of the students and therefore it is necessary to conduct research regarding the problems faced by these students.

Over the years, international education, especially higher education is increasingly being promoted as a commodity. The pattern of student mobility is influenced by a multitude of factors including geographical location and accessibility, historical connections with host country and similarity in language and education systems. There exists a strong dependence of developing countries on developed countries in terms of higher education. With the announcement of the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI), various plans have been made by the government of UK to increase investment in the educational sector and attract more foreign students. In the light of such plans and expectation of the future, it is necessary for UK to continuously ameliorate the experience of the international students in its educational institutions.

## **Problem Statement**

UK is home to many of the top educational institutions in various disciplines which serve a source of attraction for international students which shows as a high percentage of international students enrolled in the universities in UK. However the international students face a multitude of problems that are quite unique and different from what the domestic student's experience. These problems include both tangible and intangible aspects of a student's experience at the educational institute and may become a source of stress

and anxiety for these students. In order to help these students achieve an easy transition, it is first necessary to understand their problems.

It is also not right to group all foreign students as a homogenous group as country of origin also plays a vital role in contributing or alleviating these problems for example a European Union resident is not subject to the visa requirements as students from other countries are. Keeping this in view, it is essential to understand the pre and post arrival problems faced by international students depending on their country of origin so that the major reasons and top most contributors to these problems can be identified.

## **Research Objective**

The main objective of this research will be to examine the relationship between country of origin and the number of problems faced by the students. In this way, the research study will be able to not only identify the top most problems being faced by all international students but also provide insight into the problems for a specific county of origin. The research objectives of this particular study are broken down into the following hypothesis:

International students from developing countries face more problems as compared to students from developed nations.

International students find it harder to cope with intangible problems like cultural shock and linguistic problems than coping with a different educational system.

Students find it easier to adapt in universities that have well developed system of support for international students than those without it.

## **Literature Review**

Even though various research studies have been carried out dealing with the issues of international students, these studies often treat international students as a homogenous group and not as individuals from different regions (Lowe and Tian, 2007). According to Chalmers and Volet (1997), host institutions often develop stereotypes regarding students from different regions and these stereotypes are used as an excuse to attribute the problems to the students rather than addressing their issues and examining the attitude of the host institution. Another study ranked difficulty in obtaining student visas and monitoring of international students as the top most obstacles for international students (Hanson & Zambito, 2003).

The economic and social factors existing in the home country serve as push factors and guide students abroad while the decision select a host country depends on various pull factors (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The factors that add to the problems of these students include poor knowledge of instructors for dealing with international students and the social problems faced by these students therefore both academic and social issues need to be addressed (Butcher and McGrath, 2004). In a study conducted regarding the experiences of international students in the UK, the top most problems faced by the international students were tEnglish language ability, making social adjustments and ‘ culture shock’ (Bamford, 2008).

According to Brown (2007), linguistic barriers are one of the major reasons of anxiety for the international students and that students with good communication skills find it easier to adjust to academic life, as well as gain acceptance in the host community. Clear and appropriate explanation of the education system, what is expected from the students, assessment methods and the type of support they are going to get are important considerations as a study revealed that information and guidance appears to be one of the most important aspects in helping the international students to achieve the transition and adapt to the new environment (Sovic, 2007).

A study conducted in Australia compared the foreign students with the local ones and it revealed that as the group comprising of overseas students faced more difficulties in adjusting to academic requirements had significantly greater difficulties adjusting to academic requirements, different study methods, learning independently, language proficiency, participation and time management. The international students also showed higher levels of stress as compared to the local ones (Burns, 1991).

## **Importance and Benefits of the Study**

The research study would benefit many stakeholders of the society. It will benefit the international students by serving as a realization for their unique needs and help in devising ways to reduce these problems in UK. Although the complex induction mechanisms and visa policies cannot be changed, international students can be guided in a better way to complete the requirements. Many universities already have their international student offices. From the results obtained from the acceptance/rejection of the

hypothesis formulated above, the international students and these offices  
<https://assignbuster.com/a-look-at-problems-faced-by-international-students-in-uk/>

can work together to develop better and more efficient procedures. In regards to the social needs of international students, training sessions can be arranged at the campuses to educate students about cultural differences and ways to reduce mental stress caused by such changes so that the academic performance is not compromised.

## **Research Design**

The basic purpose of the research study is to identify most of the problems faced by international students in the UK and identify the most recurring problems. In addition to this, the study will also determine the country specific problems being faced by the sample students. Finally, based on these results, the research study will suggest ways through which the problems of these students can be reduced or alleviated.

## **Variables**

The intention is to carry out a research study that will remain valid in the future as well and for that the study will attempt to develop a mathematical model incorporating the various variables. Certain dependent and independent variables have been established. As the title of the study suggests “ problems” faced by the international students are the dependent variable as it is dependent on various other factors. The independent variable therefore is “ Environment of Host country”. It is represented by the following factors:

Presence of procedures in institutions that allow enrollment of international students.

Existence of foreign student facilitation centers in universities.

Scholarships available to foreign students

Presence of large immigrant population in the host country.

Presence of good educational institutions in host country

## **Procedure**

To understand the problems of international students studying in the UK, a survey will be conducted and the target group will comprise of international students studying in major universities of the UK. The first task will be to obtain foreign student enrolment information from the universities and targeting the universities with the highest proportion of foreign students. The research study is designed in such a way that it considers the pre and post arrival problems faced by these students on a regional level. For analyzing the results, students from one country will be grouped together. The data will be collected from Interview Conversations and Self-administrative questionnaires. The proposed research relies on quantitative as well as qualitative techniques which would be used throughout in our research. The use of statistical tools and analysis is a vital part of this research design.

## **Target Population**

Target population of our research design includes all the international students studying in the UK universities regardless of the type of degree they are pursuing. The students in the universities are aged 18 and above. The study incorporates participants (students) from all fields of to make our research study comprehensive and unbiased. A country will be considered as



a separate category only if at least 20 students belong to that country among the sample surveyed.

## **Sample Size**

The sample size would be at least 300 students. After obtaining the filled questionnaires, they will be classified and separated according to country of origin. It will be made sure that there are not an excessive number of students from one country of origin; the maximum number of students from one country can be 50 while there is no lower limit. The selected number of sample size is adequate enough to capture all the relevant information required for our research study and the 300 sample size will represent all the different aspects of target population.

## **Instrument Design**

The types of measurement scales used will include a four point balanced Likert scale, Multiple-Choice, Multiple-Response/Checklist and open ended questions. The variables that will be studied can be roughly divided into pre and post arrival issues. Pre arrival issues of foreign students are:

Finding the desired course may be a challenge as the course may be taught under a different name or taught in combination with another course.

Selecting the university is also a complex task as various factors like location, access, fee structure, presence of international students etc may be considered by the prospective student.

Another task to be completed before admission is granted is fulfilling entry requirements for courses in the UK such as taking aptitude and language proficiency tests and sending the results to the selected university.

Once the university is selected the international student may try contacting the international student offices, advisors and identifying special induction programs.

In addition to the other requirements, the student may be required to obtain health certificates and get certain vaccinations done.

After receiving confirmation of admission, the international student applies for a student visa.

Post Arrival issues of foreign students are as follows:

Applying for insurance.

Applying for university accommodation or trying to find a private accommodation.

Registering with the local police.

Opening a bank account and obtaining debit and credit cards.

Getting permission for part time employment

Registering for Income tax and national insurance

Obtaining a driver's license

## Dealing with Cultural shock

The students will be asked to rate the difficulty level of these problems on a five point likert Scale as follows:

**1 2 3 4**

Extremely easy somewhat difficult Hard Extremely difficult

The preliminary list of questions to be included in the questionnaire is presented as follows:

What is your country of Origin?

Why did you choose to come to this specific university?

How did you hear about the selected university?

How much information was provided to you by the university before your arrival?

Did you receive an invitation to an induction programme from the university for foreign students?

Was adjusting to the new environment as easy as u had expected?

List down the most difficult factor that you encountered here?

Is the English system of teaching and learning easy to adopt?

How would you rate, adopting English as a secondary language in terms of difficulty?

Do you find it easy to communicate with other students and colleagues in this language?

How easy is it for you to socialize with UK students?

How difficult was it for you to find accommodation?

What do you find most stressful in this course?

Have you used the international student support system at the University?

Was it easy to contact this office from your home country?

Did the office cooperate in handling related issued like opening a bank account?

What do you enjoy about studying at your selected university?

Name the things that you would change if you were able to do so at your university.

## **Data Analysis**

Tables, Graphs, Scatter Diagrams and other tools will be used to interpret the resultant conclusions derived from the data. Pareto charts will be made to determine the highest contributing problems for international students and mean and standard deviation of the responses will be calculated. Next the questionnaires will be grouped according to country of origin and then the top most causes will be identified again.

The final result of the research study would comprise of either rejection or acceptance of hypothesis. However for the international students and for universities, who are the stake holders, the final interpretation in terms of acceptance/rejection of hypothesis carries great significance. The results would help the universities to realize the ways through which problems can be reduced which can improve students' performance. The research findings would explain why or why not our hypothesis has been proved or disproved. In the light of this we will also suggest further areas of research.

### **Assumptions**

The basic assumption of this research paper is that foreign students necessarily have a negative experience and face problems when they come to study in UK. However, this may not always be true and there may be accompanying benefits like exposure to better quality of education etc that are not being considered in the study.

### **Limitations**

This study will be restricted mainly to the university students in major universities in UK but foreign students come to almost all institutions. The results will be based on the questionnaires and interview however direct observation of the students' behavior will not be feasible. The level of skepticism of students regarding the study cannot be judged because of which they might not answer the question truthfully which can result in data distortion.

## **Facilities & Resources**

The main source of information will be the students who will fill the questionnaires while the other facilities and resources that will be required in our research study include online journals, books, interviews and previous studies.