

## **THE OPPORTUNITIES AND DIFFICULTIES OF STUDYING ABROAD FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**Annotation:** This review of the literature summarizes the challenges and benefits of studying abroad alternatives. The increasing number of students studying abroad is posing problems for both students and higher education institutions. Colleges have found it difficult to provide international students with enough institutional and personal support. Students who study abroad have a number of challenges, including language barriers, social integration issues, and financial difficulties. Despite these challenges, colleges and students alike have profited from the rising number of students studying overseas. These benefits include financial gains for the school as well as improvements for both domestic and international students and host institutions to obtain global knowledge and cross-cultural understanding. There are recommendations to help international students.

**Key words:** Financial constraints, Cultural adjustment, Language barriers, Homesickness, Academic differences, Visa issues, Social isolation, Health and safety, Cultural immersion, Language development, Global perspective, Career prospects, Personal growth, Independence, Networking opportunities Academic enrichment

### **Introduction**

Studying abroad is very interesting and opens up new opportunities, increases interest in studying and is a great opportunity for students. There are good sides as well as bad sides, i.e. financial difficulties because it is not easy to study abroad, you need a lot of money and it is not easy to go and live in another country and get along with different people in them, but a student who wants to study can easily overcome these difficulties. It will not be an obstacle for him to study well. It is interesting to learn that other countries have different customs and traditions. A foreigner may face a lot of problems due to not knowing a foreign language, so he can't resist to study abroad, but you will make great friendships with the friends you make abroad, which is great. Many people

who study abroad complain about their health because the climate there is different and most people are indifferent to their health abroad, which is not good. No matter where a person is, he should not be indifferent to his health. Studying abroad greatly enhances students' cultural awareness, language skills, and personal growth.

### **Literature review**

In recent years, the number of students studying abroad has grown significantly (Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2011). For instance, between 1972 and 1973, around 146,000 international students were studying in the United States. By 2015, this figure had risen to approximately 974,926 (Institute of International Education, 2015).

International students play a key role in contributing economically to both host countries and educational institutions (Paltridge, Mayson, & Schapper, 2012). According to an analysis by the Association of International Educators in the United States (NASFA, 2015), international education added \$30.5 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2014-2015 academic years and created more than 373,000 jobs (Institute of International Education, 2015).

### **Methodology**

Many researchers have examined the phenomenon of international education and the challenges faced by foreign students (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Barratt & Huba, 1994; Chen, 1999; Constantine et al., 2005; Sheehan & Pearson, 1995; Yi, Lin, & Kishimoto, 2003). Research shows that international students encounter numerous challenges while living or studying abroad.

For example, a survey by Lin and Yin (1997) revealed that foreign students experienced various difficulties, including accommodation issues, language barriers, discrimination, financial struggles, and cultural misunderstandings. With the increasing number of international students, it is essential to identify and understand these adjustment challenges.

Additionally, Paltridge et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of enhancing methods and strategies to support international students' social, economic, academic, and psychological well-being. China is a country which has realized the importance of studying abroad. Zhang (2000) reported that Deng Xiaoping, a leader of China Republican from 1978-1992, realized the importance of studying abroad to increase the knowledge of Chinese students and bring what they learned back to their community to be used properly. The decision to send Chinese students and professionals to study abroad during that time was an important factor to decrease the Chinese isolation and to communicate with Western countries.

In 1978, China started to shape open relations with international and foreign societies after a period of segregation which led to a number of students studying abroad (Zhang, 2000). At that time, Jianjun (2012) found that Chinese students felt pressure from both global and domestic forces to abandon some old habits and traditions which made them welcome these changes. Now numerous Chinese students are studying abroad. In particular, in the United States, the U.S. Institute of International Education (2014) reported in 2013-2014 that there were 274,439 Chinese students in the United States.

### **Results/findings**

**Benefits of Hosting International Students** International students have become important source of revenue for many countries. A number of countries, including the United States, host international students as part of their strategic plans to function effectively in an age of globalization and as a way to increase their revenues (Harryba, Guilfoyle, & Knight, 2011).

The Association of International Educators (NAFSA, 2015) reported that in 2009 international education contributed more than \$17.65 billion to the United States economy. In the 2014-2015 academic years, the revenue from international education increased almost doubled and contributed \$30.5 billion to the United States economy (NASFA, 2015).

Australia is also among those countries that put hosting international students as one of their major strategies. For instance, international students play a vital role, particularly in the Australian economy. Mariginson (2011) stated that international education is considered the fourth largest revenue source in Australia. According to the Australian Education International (2011), the economic contribution of international students to the Australian economy was nearly \$18.6 billion in fiscal year 2009.

As a result, Paltridge et al. (2012) found that the revenues from international education showed a significant contribution to Australian's economy and its educational system. In addition to tangible economic contributions, international students bring several non-economic benefits to the hosting countries. For instance, in Australia, Adams, Banks, and Olsen (2011) gave a wide range of benefits of international education such as an increase of public commerce and diplomacy, an enrichment of educational climate culturally for domestic students, and enhancement of the awareness of diversity among all students.

Therefore, international students bring cultural diversity to the host country (Olivas & Li, 2006). Numerous researchers (e.g. Kell & Vogel, 2008; Mahat & Hourigan, 2007) claim that international education reinforces intercultural interaction. This interaction minimizes racism and increases tolerance between people (Bochner, 1986; de Wit,

1995, Gudykunst, 1998). At the same time, international students often benefit from living and studying in a foreign country. Domestic students benefit from international students as well. In the United States, American students benefit from the enhancement of their cultural skills and their sensitivity in working with people from different cultures (Calleja, 2000; Carnevale, 1999).

Most international students are satisfied with their living and studying abroad. In Australia for example, a survey conducted by the Australian Federal

One nation that has recognized the value of studying overseas is China. According to Zhang (2000), Deng Xiaoping, the leader of the Chinese Republican Party from 1978 to 1992, recognized the value of studying overseas for Chinese students to broaden their knowledge and apply what they gained back to their community. The choice to send Chinese professionals and students to study outside at that time was crucial for fostering communication with Western nations and reducing Chinese isolation.

Following a period of segregation that resulted in many students studying overseas, China began to establish open links with foreign and international communities in 1978 (Zhang, 2000). Jianjun (2012) discovered at the time that Chinese students experienced pressure from both domestic and international sources.

### **Discussions**

According to a government poll, 86% of international students from all academic institutions expressed satisfaction with their time spent living and learning in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). 3. Concerns of International Students When living and studying overseas, foreign students face a variety of challenges despite the benefits of global education.

These problems typically have to do with language barriers, adjusting to a new educational system, psychological issues including homesickness, prejudice, and loneliness, and sociocultural issues with the financial and health care systems (Tseng & Netwon, 2002). Cultural shock, depression, and financial difficulties are additional problems (Khoo et al., 2002; Leong & Chou, 1996; Lin & Yi, 1997). The greatest number of international students have been drawn to the United States (Sandhu, 1995). Wadsworth, 2007). Paltridge et al. (2012) also pointed out that international students usually face difficulty in forming new friendships with local citizens due to cultural differences, language barriers, and heavy study which limits time for socializing.

Besides these factors, the unwillingness of many citizens to form friendship with international students may reduce the students' opportunities to participate socially. For example, in the first-year international students encounter a number of challenges when they are abroad. In addition, the majority of these students wish to form friendships and interact with domestic students (Butcher & McGrath, 2004). Cross-

cultural differences in social interactions emerge as a factor preventing international students from forming friendships with domestic students.

In addition, cross-cultural differences in social interactions may also contribute to acculturative stress (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). Paltridge et al. (2012) stated that international students' status as temporary visitors causes social exclusion. In other words, social exclusion is the failure to integrate fully in the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of the foreign country. Compared to permanent residents and Australian citizens, Paltridge et al. (2012) believed that international students do not have same opportunities and ability to integrate and participate culturally, socially, and economically with the community. This exclusion has a negative impact on international students' security and safety including exploitation and violence against them (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Marginson, 2011). Also, international students may face some cultural difficulties when they live in a foreign country. For instance, in Australia, some international students come from Asia which is not a part of the dominant Anglo Australian culture, and the international students' concerns and opinions are quite different. So that tends to make students feel lonely and isolated from the society around them (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008).

### **Recommendation**

Beside social issues, international students face a variety of psychological concerns including ethnic and racial discrimination, homesickness, alienation (Yeh & Inose, 2003), and separation from family and friends (Akhtar, 2011). As an explanation, Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008) indicated that international students constantly miss the support and assistance from their families and friends when they study abroad. Paltridge et al. (2012) also pointed out that international students usually face difficulty in forming new friendships with local citizens due to cultural differences, language barriers, and heavy study which limits time for socializing. ISSN 2220-8488 (Print), 2221-0989 (Online) ©Center for Promoting Ideas, USA [www.ijhssnet.com](http://www.ijhssnet.com) 19 Besides these factors, the unwillingness of many citizens to form friendships with international students may reduce the students' opportunities to participate socially.

International students may experience more psychological issues than American students (Leong & Chou, 1996; Mori, 2000). Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) pointed out that international students perceived to be ethnic minorities, especially those from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, India, and Asia, experience more discrimination than European international students or domestic students. Spencer-Rodgers (2001) mentioned a wide variety of types of discrimination that international

students experienced such as stereotypes, negative images of foreigners or those of different ethnicities and races.

Financial issues. International students may face basic welfare issues. They may not have appropriate opportunities to work due to holding a student visa. For example, Babacan et al. (2010) and Ham (2011) found that many international students in Australia have limited work rights and limited knowledge about their rights in workplaces. Also international students sometimes may miss some public services. In other words, Paltridge et al. (2012) mentioned that international students do not have the right to obtain many common support services such as free public health care, and they must obtain private health insurance. In some states and territories, international students are ineligible to get free tickets for public transportation.

Another important issue for international students is insufficient funding. Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, and Forbes Mewett (2010) stated that one of the requirements for a student visa in some countries including Canada, the United States, and Australia is proof that a student has sufficient money to cover living expenses and tuition costs for one academic year, this amount is checked only when they apply for a visa. However, insufficient funds have led some international students to give fake accounts, for example, temporarily borrowing money from their relatives or asking their relatives who will not actually pay for sponsorship. By doing so, students will obtain a visa without having sufficient financial support for themselves during their studies and living abroad. Lane (2011) and Mazzarol and Souter (2002) noted that to increase the competitive international education market, it is important to provide international students sufficient and appropriate financial support which increases the positive reputation for a hosting country. Among this list of issues and difficulties faced by international students, most students spend most of their time outside their educational institutions which sometimes cause problems for them.

International students experience off-campus problems such as finding appropriate accommodations and employment including exploitation by employers and landlords (Paltridge, 2009; Marginson et al., 2010). Therefore, some international students may face difficulties such as discrimination or individual safety concerns (Marginson et al., 2010; Olding & Kwek, 2012). Suggested strategies to Help International Students many types of support can be offered to international students. Paltridge et al. (2012) wrote that volunteer jobs can play pivotal role in supporting international students socially.

In addition, they noted that volunteer jobs are not only beneficial for international students, but also have a positive effect on the local government budgets. Also, participation in social activities can help to address problems of social isolation,

improve English language proficiency, and reinforce community development. Moreover, Paltridge et al. (2012) found that programs and services can be run in cooperation with charities, societies, and religious groups and thereby dividing the costs among multiple parties. The Couch International Students Center in Melbourne, Australia is an example of these supportive programs. The Couch International Student Center was founded by the Salvation Army with support from the City of Melbourne (Perkins, 2009). Likewise, the project of Welcome to Wollongong was a joint initiative of the Illawarra Business Chamber, the city of Wollongong, located in Australia, and different types of educational institutions in Wollongong (Wollongong UniCentre, 2012).

According to Paltridge et al. (2012), educational institutions play a significant role in supporting and helping international students, but international students need more social support. They confirmed a need to support international students when they are off-campus. They added that the local government can play a significant role to fill this gap by giving international students greater integration and security when they are away from their educational institutions. In addition, one study conducted by Tseng and Newton (2002) reported eight methods that help international students adjust positively. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 6, No. 5; May 2016 20 Those methods include forming relationships, seeking assistance, increasing English proficiency, improving social and cultural communications, building relationships with faculty members, identifying themselves and others, letting go of issues, and expanding their view to the world.

## Conclusion

International education has become a phenomenon, and international students are considered an important source of revenue for many countries.

At the same time, international students benefit from living and studying abroad, including understanding other people's thoughts, beliefs, and cultures. However, international students frequently encounter issues related to their adjustment to new academic and social environments. For example, international students face a wide variety of challenges such as language difficulties, academic problems, social issues, and racism. To help reduce these difficulties, policy makers, faculty members, and counselors should expend effort to meet international student needs and address the particular issues of international students, particularly those involving work, government relationships, social integrations, and language support. Also, academic higher institutions and hosting countries should collaborate to increase international

students' awareness toward the host countries' society and help international students to integrate and contribute to these societies.

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