

First Year Experience of International Students in Malaysian Universities

Authors : Nur Hidayah Iwani Mohd Kamal

Abstract : The higher education institutions in Malaysia is challenged with a more socially and culturally diverse student population than ever before, especially with the increasing number of international students studying in Malaysia in the recent years. First year university is a critical time in students' lives. Students are not only developing intellectually, they are also establishing and maintaining personal relationships, developing an identity, deciding about career and lifestyle, maintaining personal health and wellness, and developing an integrated philosophy of life. The higher education institutions work as a diverse community of learners to provide a supportive environment for these first year students in assisting them in their transition from high school to university. Although many universities are taking steps to improve the first year experience for their new local and international students, efforts must be taken to ensure organized and coordinated manner in order for the initiatives to be successful. The objectives of the study are to examine the international students' perceptions and interpretation of their first year experiences in shaping and determining their attitudes toward study and the quality of their entire undergraduate academic career; and identify an appropriate mechanism to encounter the international students' adjustment in the new environment in order to facilitate cross-functional communication and create a coherent and meaningful first year experience. A key construct in this study is that if universities wish to recruiting and retaining international students, it is their ethical responsibility to determine how they can best meet their needs at the academic and social level, create a supportive 'learning community' as a foundation of their educational experience, hence facilitate cross-cultural communication and create a coherent and meaningful first year experience. This study is simultaneously frames in relation to focus on the factors that influence a successful and satisfying transition to university life by the first year international students. The study employs a mixed-method data collection involving semi-structured interviews, questionnaire, classroom observation and document analysis. This study provides valuable insight into the struggles that many international students face as they attempt to make the adjustment not only to a new educational system but factors such as psychosocial and cultural problems. It would discuss some of the factors that impact the international students during their first year in university in their quest to be academically successful. It concludes with some recommendations on how Malaysian universities provide these students with a good first year experience based on some the best practices of universities around the world.

Keywords : first year experience, Malaysian universities, international students, education

Conference Title : ICEPSS 2017 : International Conference on Education, Policy and Social Sciences

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : June 28-29, 2017