UWL REPOSITORY

repository.uwl.ac.uk

A phenomenological exploration of the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university

Singh, Naushaba (2016) A phenomenological exploration of the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university. Doctoral thesis, University of West London.

This is the Draft Version of the final output.

UWL repository link: https://repository.uwl.ac.uk/id/eprint/2857/

Alternative formats: If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact: open.research@uwl.ac.uk

A phenomenological exploration of the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK University.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of West London for the degree of Doctor of Education

Naushaba Singh

January 2016

Contents   Page Number

Chapter 3: Research Philosophy, Methodology and Design

Chapter 4: Findings – Analysis and Discussion

Pre-Arrival

Study Period

Post Completion

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

DEDICATIONS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my parents, my father, Khan Bahadur Abdul Hakim, for instilling in me a life-long aspiration for learning and my mother Asadunnessa, for allowing me to fly to new shores at a very young age for the fulfilment of my educational pursuits.

I am very grateful to my erstwhile work colleagues, Susan Broomfield, the MBA administrator at the University of West London, Charmaine Julien the Business School secretary and Maria Pennells, the graduate office manager for their unconditional support at many stages of the doctoral journey.

I am also extremely thankful to my final two supervisors, Julia Townshend for her patience and gentle and yet firm guidance and Joelle Fanghanel for her sometimes strict and yet always insightful feedback and seeing my work through to completion. The very different and yet complementary supervisory styles provided a much needed balance and stability after the turbulence of a number of changes in supervisors during my first three years of study.

I have been very fortunate in having a number of 'critical friends', Dr.John Breakell, Nazmeen Haq, Gowrie Ponniah and Dr. Cecile Lowe who listened patiently to my tales of woe and read my chapters. Their candid feedback helped in stepping back and viewing my work from perspectives other than my own.

A very big thanks to my husband Parminder who gave me time and space to pursue what he defined as 'a hobby'. Last and most importantly my two sons Zaraf and Sameer along with my daughter-in-law, Fatima, who also learnt to live graciously with a mother who, for many years, escaped into a study world of her own.

Finally, special thanks to the seven participants without whom my doctoral journey and this thesis would not have been possible.

Thank you all for your inspiration and support.

Abstract

This study aims to answer the main research question, *'what are the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university during their period of study?'* There is considerable literature on Chinese or Indian students studying overseas but no identified bespoke research on the entire study period of Bangladeshi students overseas. The purpose of the study is to explore the holistic challenges and coping strategies that occurred at different stages of the study sojourn of the Bangladeshi MBA students at a West London University. In addition, the purpose of the Doctorate in Education is to investigate an issue that is relevant in the workplace which is a higher education institution.

The research design is framed within a phenomenological approach whereby the research philosophy and methodology are defined as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The qualitative methodology has normally been used in psychological research. Its relevance in this educational research is that it has enabled the acquisition of in-depth cultural and academic insights into the holistic experiences of the research participants.

The findings are based on two in-depth interviews conducted with each of seven MBA students during and soon after completion of their study. The interviews elicited four themes: reasons for study abroad and choosing to study for the MBA, experiences and challenges during the study period, coping strategies and post completion choices. The reason for study abroad was to enhance their educational and professional status whilst the essential challenges were psycho-cultural, educational and financial. The coping

strategies included self-reliance, working in groups and seeking support from family, other students and tutors, working long hours to subsidise living expenses. The post-completion choices included returning to Bangladesh to continue in previous employment or to pursue career change or to remain in the UK for further educational enhancement.

The implications of the findings are that longitudinal studies provide a more in-depth understanding of the entire study experience as they are better able to chart the various challenges at different stages of the journey. In addition, the implications for practitioners are that they need to reflect upon and adjust their teaching to include a more geocentric rather than ethnocentric curriculum when teaching international students.

The main contribution of this study is that it considers various stages of the journey and also adds pertinent information on each aspect of the holistic experiences such as psycho-cultural, learning and language as well as financial challenges and coping strategies. The study also confirms the increase in confidence and resilience of the Bangladeshi students over a period of time as well as the development of a third culture identity.

Keywords: Bangladeshi, international, holistic, challenges, coping strategies.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Deciding to study abroad is often linked to an aspiration to visit another country for a better and different learning experience. The individual is exposed to new and different educational, cultural and social norms and practices that impact on the overall experience. The United Kingdom Council of Student Affairs (UKCOSA) defines an **international student** *'as any student not normally resident in the UK'* (UKCOSA, 2007, p.3). There were 435,495 international students in UK universities and private institutions in 2013-14 equating to 18% of the total student population with Business Studies being the most popular with student numbers totalling almost 39% (169,843) of international students (UKCISA, 2015).

This Professional Doctoral research explores the holistic journeys of seven Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university during their entire period of study and is contextualised within the framework of international higher education. Marginson (2015) contends that:

> '*international experience differs according to where people sit. International education is about students forming themselves, about piloting their own way through a complex world, and everyone does this differently and in their own terms* (Marginson, 2015, p.3).

This study highlights the congruences and divergences in experiences between each of the participants as they pilot their way through the numerous complexities of their experiences.

This study adopts a phenomenological approach to the understanding of the lived experiences of the MBA students and chronicles their unique journeys

through the complex world of international education. The main and sub-research questions focus on exploring the holistic experiences with a view to identifying the main challenges for and the coping strategies of the Bangladeshi international students. This holistic approach aims to demonstrate that the learning journey is affected by all the other experiences during a particular time period and mirrors Marginson's (2015) stance that:

> '*international education is a cross-cultural encounter through the medium of academic learning'* (Marginson's, 2015, p.3).

The study also evidences the change and development in the students by virtue of its post-completion interviews.

1.1 Rationale for study

International students enhance cultural and educational diversity in the classroom and are also large contributors to the economies of the host countries (Hawkes, 2014). International students generated over £10 billion for the UK economy in 2014 (HEPÏ, 2015). The rationale for undertaking this study is both pragmatic and personal. The pragmatic reason is to address and re-dress the gap identified in the literature on the experiences of Bangladeshis studying abroad, since there is currently no identified bespoke research. Bangladesh is fast becoming an important player in global economics with growth rates of between 5% and 6% over the past decade and this has resulted in more Bangladeshis affording to study overseas (Worldfolio, 2011). There were 4204 Bangladeshi students in the UK in 2012 making it the most sought after destination by Bangladeshis (UIS, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative to research the experiences of Bangladeshis

studying abroad – not only for the host countries but also for future cohorts of Bangladeshi students studying abroad. In addition, with the increase in numbers of international students both in the developed and emerging economies, continuing studies of their experiences become imperative for the planning of the academic and support infrastructures.

The personal reasons for undertaking this study originate from a desire to give something back to the country of my birth, Bangladesh. In this context, the 'giving back' is a contribution to knowledge relating to the experiences of one group of Bangladeshi students studying at a university in the United Kingdom. This insight into the experiences of the Bangladeshi participants in my research aims to provide a lens through which potential Bangladeshi students can view the possible challenges and excitements awaiting them during their own study abroad. As an academic who has taught in the public and private sectors of United Kingdom higher education institutions (HEIs) for nearly three decades, I had experiential knowledge of some of the components of the experiences of international students including the many challenges encountered by the Bangladeshi international students as well as the coping strategies adopted by them during the time when I was the MBA programme leader at the University of West London. The aspiration is to formalise this experiential knowledge within an academic study of doctoral research. In addition, the professional doctorate route is designed to apply the research findings in the work place in order to enhance practice. An essential element of the Professional Doctorate is not only to develop all professional practitioners but also to develop those practitioners who are already very experienced and wish to study the practice setting in more

depth and detail than is usually possible during normal everyday practice (Burgess, Siemenski and Arthur, 2006). As a practitioner with experience spanning nearly three decades, the professional doctoral route enabled me to develop my research skills and knowledge in relation to the experiences of international students in UK higher education institutions, with the dual purpose of adding to the existing body of knowledge as well as impacting on practice that will enhance the overall experiences of the international students.

Finally, this longitudinal study aims to;

> *provide a detailed exploration of the holistic experiences of the participants* (most studies consider on one or two aspects of the experiences, such as Grayson and Stowe (2005) who focus on the language problems of international students or Al-Zubaidi and Rechards (2010) who identify the cultural and language barriers of Arab postgraduate students in Malaysia)*,*

> *focus on their entire study period* (most research concentrates on early experiences or a particular period, such as Sawir (2005) who focuses on the early stage of the study period of international students), *and*

> *contribute to current scholarship on the impact of the holistic experiences on the identities and future aspirations of the research participants.* There is very limited research data on post-completion. The few identified studies include those by Iredale, Guo and Rozario (2003) and Tran (2008).

My data analysis confirms that a large number of the findings relate to most international students, such as difficulty in understanding different accents,

special dietetic needs, understanding and mastering a different approach to learning, learning to adapt to a different culture without having to lose one's own cultural or religious identities (Brown and Holloway, 2008; Liu, 2009; Osborne, 2012; Comrie, 2015). The study offers insights into the change and development of the participants' attitudes, behaviours and cultural and religious identities.

The next section considers the research topic and questions that underpin this study.

1.2 Research topic and questions

The research topic is described as a *'phenomenological study exploring the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK University.'*

Main Question

What are the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students in one University in the United Kingdom during their period of study?

Sub-questions

1. What are the challenges faced by the students as a result of their various experiences?
2. How do the students deal with the challenges?
3. Is there a period of transition or adjustment?
4. How do the students ensure successful completion of their studies?
5. What are the perceived similarities / differences in the experiences of Bangladeshi students compared with other international students?

(This relates to how the Bangladeshi participants perceived the similarities and differences between themselves and other international students).

The primary and secondary research questions are formulated as a raison d'être for this research and are informed by current literature on the challenges and coping strategies of international students.

1.3 International student experiences, challenges and coping strategies

Extant literature on the experiences and challenges of international students indicates that students experience a variety of challenges such as cultural (Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Brown and Holloway, 2008; Shafaei and Razak, 2015), educational (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005; Al Zubaidi and Rechards, 2010; McKinley, 2015), financial (Singh and Armstrong, 2006; UKCISA, 2008; Adeoye-Agboola and Evans, 2015) psychological, such as self-esteem and well-being **(**Ujitani and Volet, 2008; Liu *et al.,* 2016), safety and security (Nyland, Forbes-Mewett and Marginson 2010) and discriminatory (Krahe et al., 2005; Lee and Rice, 2007).

There is also an abundance of research on the coping strategies of international students (Constantine *et al.*, 2005; Yang et al., 2006; Shapiro, Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2007; Sicat, 2011; Mak and Kim, 2011; Lombard, 2014; Adeoye-Agboola and Evans, 2015; Ozer, 2015) which confirms that students use a variety of strategies including practising English language skills, working in groups, making friends with co-nationals and working part-time.

The context of my study is situated within the main psycho-cultural and educational challenges and on coping strategies.

The next section introduces the methodological approach.

1.4 Methodological approach

I wished to gain an in-depth phenomenological understanding of the range of experiences, challenges and coping strategies of each participant in the study. As I wanted to incorporate my own understanding of these factors based on my previous experiences and not fully bracket these influences when interpreting the data, I searched for a methodology that would enable such an approach to data analysis. As such, I have used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in the collection and analysis of the primary data. The approach to IPA research is explained in detail in chapter 3. Van Manen (2007) proposes that:

> '*phenomenological research carries a moral force'* (Van Manen, 2007, p.12).

as it aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the lived experience. IPA as a methodology is new in educational research but it is widely used in psychological studies of lived experiences of marginalised individuals (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

1.5 Significance and contribution of the study

The numbers of international students have grown considerably over the past few decades and this has been accompanied by a proliferation of research on the international student experiences in various parts of the

world such as UK (Durkin, 2008), USA (Urban and Palmer, 2016), Canada (Zhou and Zhang, 2014), and Australia (Bell, 2007). Alongside the generic research there has been specific research focussing on particular groups such as Chinese students (Tran, 2008; Gu, 2009; Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016) or Muslim students (Al-Hazmi and Nyland, 2010; Brown, Brown and Richards, 2014). Studying students' experiences from particular countries is an area of growth with most of the country specific research concentrating on Chinese students as they form the largest group of international students in the US, UK, Australia and Germany (UIS, 2013). Therefore, this study of Bangladeshi students studying abroad adds to the contemporary literature on country of origin focussed research.

In addition, the phenomenological methodology and longitudinal design of the study will contribute to the literature derived from the small number of qualitative studies that are either longitudinal (Gill, 2007; Brown and Holloway, 2008) and / or phenomenological (Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto 2005; Gill, 2007; Al-Hazmi and Nyland 2010). Most research is either quantitative (Grayson, 2008; Shafaei and Razak, 2016) or involves mixed methods (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009) or focuses on the early study experiences of international students (Huang, 2008). However, the longitudinal, mixed methods study by Schartner and Young (2015) recognises the need for a more holistic approach and explores the reasons for studying overseas as well as the academic, psychological and socio-cultural aspects of the study period.

In terms of influencing and enhancing practice the findings will contribute to the design and development of outputs aimed at improving the management

of future international students' experiences during their period of study at UK Higher Education Institutions.

1.6 Overview of the research

The remainder of the thesis will include the following:

Chapter Two reviews the literature on international student experience across developed and developing countries. It explores the reasons for study abroad, the various challenges experienced and coping strategies employed, as well as the post-completion decisions of international students in relation to staying on in the host country or returning to the home country after completion of studies.

Chapter Three discusses the research philosophy, methodology and design. It details the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) used by its founder Jonathan Smith (2009). It outlines the data collection and analysis process. Finally, it outlines the ethical principles adhered to *vis a vis* informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and the opportunity to withdraw during any stage of the study.

Chapter Four reports on and discusses the findings.

Chapter Five concludes by synthesising the data and positioning it within other research on this topic. It also includes recommendations for future work by addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter includes a brief explanation of the position of this study in the wider domain of international student experiences by clarifying the rationale for the research, summarising the extant literature, justifying the choice of methodology and summarising the contribution of this research to international education.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

International students are travelling to all corners of the world to enhance their educational qualifications. With the increase in numbers of international students both in the developed and emerging economies, a study of their experiences becomes imperative for the planning of the academic and support infrastructures. This literature review informs this research. It surveys current literature on the varying experiences of international students in different countries contextualised within the broad framework of the internationalisation of higher education in the 21st century.

This chapter commences with the contextual background to the review. It then explains the purpose, scope and search strategy used in the review. The remainder of the chapter systemises the review into reasons for study abroad, psycho-cultural, educational and language challenges and coping strategies as well as the choices available after completion of studies. This focus is informed by the major areas of research (that is the cultural and educational challenges of international students) as well as my own study which considers the full study period. As the experiences impact upon individual identities, the review is also informed by theories relating to identity and change as well as contributions from socio-linguistic, cultural and educational perspectives. The final section of this chapter considers the implications for future research.

The rationale for the structure of this chapter is based on the premise that the review of literature is an iterative process that commences with a research idea and isn't completed until the writing of the conclusion chapter,

as it needs to retain its currency and relevance. According to Denney and Tewksbury (2012):

> *'a well done literature review includes all of the themes and*

> *sub-themes found within the general topic chosen for the study'* (Denney and Tewksbury, 2012, p.1).

The process of reviewing literature is neither fully inductive nor fully deductive, but a combination of the two. My initial review of the literature was inductive and linked my research to the existing body of knowledge and included a historical overview plus many aspects of the international student experience such as culture (Zhou *et al.*, 2008; Yue and Le, 2012), language (Bamford, 2008; Al-Zubaidi and Rechards, 2010; Cağatay, 2015), learning (Zheng, 2013; Mckinley, 2015), safety and security (Tananuraksakul, 2009; Marginson *et al.*, 2010; Nyland, Forbes-Mewett and Marginson, 2010) and racism and ethnicity (Graycar, 2010; Iwamoto and Liu, 2010). However, as confirmed by Dewney and Tewksbury (2012), it is important to go through a rigorous selection process where the review moves along the continuum from being broad to being specific. They argue that in order to bring coherence to the review it is useful to

> *'examine the outline of themes / subtopics to see if these headings*

> *alone lead to the desired focus of the current research topic'* (Denney

> and Tewksbury, 2012, p.15).

Once I had read the literature on all of the above mentioned aspects of the experiences of international students, I considered my primary data and used

a deductive approach whereby the data informed the selection of the topics chosen for review and discussion in this chapter. Therefore, my final selection of areas for discussion focussed on reasons for study abroad, cultural and learning challenges, strategies adopted for addressing the challenges and finally, the post-completion status of international students. The iterative nature of reviewing literature made me search for new literature that I had not considered in my initial search, such as the impact of religion on the experiences of international students. The combination of the inductive and deductive approach to the review of literature is recognised by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003). It is envisaged that the remainder of this chapter will assist the reader in focussing on those aspects of the international students' experiences that are pertinent to this study and not all of the aspects that are covered in the entire bank of literature on international students.

2.1 Contextualising the Review

Students have travelled for overseas study as early as 272 BC to the University of Taxila in Pakistan.The next thousand years witnessed the establishment of international centres of education in India, the Middle East and Far East (Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001). During the period between the 14th and 17th century, many academic scholars such as Erasmus (1466-1536), travelled across countries to share their knowledge with others. Later, in the 18th to mid-20th century, the academically bright and social elite from the colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America secured scholarships offered by the top centres of learning in Europe such as those in the Iberian Peninsula and UK to study in Europe (Knight, 2004). The two

decades after World War II witnessed the dominance of USA higher education as a favourite destination while Europe struggled to recover from the ravages of the two wars. In addition, the USSR too began to promote international education (Opara, 2011). The 1960s and 1970s were dominated by education funds allocated by countries in Western Europe as well as the USA, Canada and Australia to countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This resulted in a 'brain drain' from the recipient countries but also an increase in knowledge and understanding for the same students from these countries (Opara, 2011). The generous funding of higher education by the USA and UK governments changed dramatically in the early 1980s when subsidies to universities in USA were ended (Cerna, 2014) and fees were introduced in the UK (Opara, 2011) for international students. The end of the 20th century saw a massive increase in private sector providers in the UK as the sector quickly recognised the lucrative opportunities in the market (Pearce and Bellings, 1999). This proliferation of international students in the developed countries such as the USA, UK, Australia and Canada was accompanied by many challenges for the higher education providers as they began to appreciate the requirement to address the academic, cultural, social and financial needs of the increasingly diverse international student population in their campuses together with the challenges of progressing from their national higher educational context to another one.

This recognition resulted in the creation of the concept of 'Internationalisation' of higher education (Knight, 2008). Finally, in the early part of the 21st century, Australia and the UK began to pursue aggressive policies of not only attracting international students to study in their

16

campuses but also validated courses to be taught overseas (OVC) thus entering a very competitive phase. This century has witnessed an increase in the complexity of internationalisation especially with the advent of globalisation being defined as:

'the process that is increasing the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology, and economy across borders, resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world' (Knight, 2008, p. x).

Higher education has become a market-determined process in the 21st century and educational globalisation has resulted in further widening the disparities between the developed and developing economies with the USA continuing to be the most sought after destination (Garcia and Villarreal, 2014). According to Langlather (2010) and De Wit (2013) the almost oligopolistic positions of the wealthy nations such USA, UK, Canada, and Australia are beginning to be challenged by the emerging economies as they form regional alliances in Asia, Latin America and Africa such as India announcing a very attractive package to students from Africa:

'Mr.Modi also announced 60,000 scholarships for African students to study in India'

Similarly, new stakeholders like private providers and professional bodies are (Tomlinson, 2015, p.41).challenging the domination of universities, governments and international bodies (World Bank, UNESCO) by entering the market place.

Universities must move forward by balancing the competing demands of maintenance of core value versus economic edge. The remainder of the review is set against this backdrop of global internationalisation of higher education. The review explores the drivers and challenges in international education from the perspectives of the international students.

2.2 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this review is to gain an understanding of the existing literature in the field of international student experience by:

> - identifying, analysing, synthesising and evaluating pertinent literature relating to the experiences of international students
> - considering its strengths and weaknesses in terms of the nature of the study, the methods, the key arguments, the interpretations, their scope and resultant gaps in this field,
> - linking the literature to my own research questions and
> - applying the current knowledge to refine the research questions and inform the conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

The scope of this review considers student experiences over the past four decades but essentially during this century. It reviews literature predominantly from the developed countries such as the USA (Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016), UK (Hawkes, 2014), Australia (Bell, 2007), Canada (Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto, 2005), Japan (Ujitani and Volet, 2008) and New Zealand (Campbell and Li, 2008) and also includes studies from an increasing number of developing countries such as Mexico (Cantwell, Luca and Lee, 2009), Poland (Bryla and Ciabiada, 2014), Turkey (Caḡatay, 2015;

Őzoğlu, Gűr, and Coskun, 2015) and Malaysia (Shafaei and Razak, 2016). The essential focus is on identifying the salient themes that are linked to international student experiences and their impact on adaptation, adjustment, performance and identity. As reviewing literature is an iterative process, the final selection was a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies that focused mainly on the major themes of psycho-culture, learning and language underpinned by changes in students' identities as well as the reasons for studying abroad and exploration of students' post-completion status. The reasons for including / rejecting studies were essentially driven by their degree of relevance to my own research questions as well as their overall contribution to the wider debate on international students' experiences in different countries and modes of study. My own study is informed by and has also influenced the final selection of the literature reviewed in this chapter. It positions itself amongst the qualitative, longitudinal and phenomenological studies of international student experiences within the context of internationalisation in the host countries. It is envisaged that my research findings will add to the body of knowledge relating to international student experience from several perspectives by providing:

> ***in-depth knowledge of the holistic experiences of Bangladeshis*** as well as

> ***an in-depth analysis of the full study period as there is a paucity of literature exploring the entire period of study*** *and*

> ***some insight into reasons for studying abroad and into choices after completion of studies of the Bangladeshi students.***

2.3 Search Strategy, Stages and Methods

The strategy for searching the literature was informed by the main and sub-research questions highlighted in chapter 1.

Stages

The search strategy included a three staged process using a number of methods.

The first stage focused on identifying the experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students in the United Kingdom (UK) universities. The search was unable to locate dedicated literature on this topic.

During the second stage, the search was widened to identifying the experiences of international postgraduate students in the top recruiting countries of USA, UK, France, Germany, Australia and Canada (UIS, 2013). In addition, the MBA was a very popular postgraduate course in all these countries. However, again the search could not locate any dedicated literature on Bangladeshi postgraduate or undergraduate students studying overseas. A report entitled *Student Migration from Bangladesh to the UK* (Anthias, 2007) was the only substantive document in this field. There were three other studies by Bell (2007) Iredale, Guo and Rozario (2003) and Hasan (2013) that provided some data on Bangladeshi students' experiences abroad. Most of the literature focuses on English speaking countries with a few focusing on non-English speaking countries such as Japan and Mexico.

The final stage was informed by selecting literature highlighting the most commonly cited experiences of international students as well as literature that complemented the primary data of my own research.

Methods

The methods included the use of various search engines such as EBSCO Host, Dialog Datastar, PsychMed, BMAF, ERIC and Emerald. The search concentrated on journal articles, government and non-government reports and conference papers plus relevant books. Key words with phrase screening, bolean / truncation: inter*national students / internationalisation and / or problems / issues were used to focus the search. Inclusion / exclusion criteria were limited to all publications in English relating to higher education over the past two decades only as the area of internationalisation of higher education has been changing at a very rapid pace, making most literature redundant very quickly. 'Citation chaining' was applied to identify original sources in the literature. Citation chaining is a process that:

> *'follows chains of citations that lead to other relevant material'* (Phelps, Fisher and Ellis, 2007, p.6),

in other words, selecting and reviewing the original articles that informed the one that is being cited.

2.4 Limitations in the Literature and Review

Much of the literature considers the experiences of international students from developing countries in the developed economies such as USA (Yeh and Inose, 2003), Canada (Grayson and Stowe, 2005), Europe (Savicki *et*

al., 2007), New Zealand (Campbell and Li, 2008) and Australia (Liamputtong, 2011) with very few studies researching students from developed countries studying in developing countries such as Mexico (Cantwell, Luca and Lee, 2009) Taiwan (Tsai and Lawrence, 2011) Turkey (Őzoğlu, Gűr and Coskun, 2015) and China (Ngwira and Mapoma, 2015) thus resulting in an imbalance of comparative information.

A number of studies, such as, Constantine *et al.*, (2005) group all international students as one homogenous group with certain exceptions, such as a comparative study of Japanese and Australian students in Japan (Ujitani and Volet, 2008), or Chinese students in the UK (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006) Canada (Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto, 2005) and the USA (Forbrush and Foucault-Welles, 2016) or Muslim students in Malaysia (Al-Zubaidi and Rechards, 2010) and Australia (Al Hazmi and Nyland, 2010). The overall findings indicate that even though there are commonalities between international students, they should not be grouped together as one homogenous group as there are differences in language, religion and culture, for example, between Chinese, Malaysian, Taiwanese or Singaporean students. The students ought not to be considered as one homogenous group even though they may all be of Chinese origin. As indicated earlier, there is scant research on the experiences of Bangladeshi students studying overseas.

There are also very few longitudinal studies, and the concentration on early experiences in some studies risks skewing conclusions as the data does not capture the developmental changes in the students as they progress through various stages in their study experiences. In addition, even though large

22

quantitative studies provide important statistical data, if they are not followed up by qualitative enquiry they do not capture the phenomenological experience of students. Similarly, there is limited research on students' motivations to study abroad and on post-completion experiences. However, Schartner and Young's (2015) mixed-methods, longitudinal study does address some of these gaps by covering pre-study as well as actual study exploration of holistic aspects of the international students' experiences.

An initial search of the research on factors influencing international student experiences confirms that these influences cut across the disciplines of education (learning experiences, language issues), sociology (cultural experiences), psychology (personal identity, self-esteem, discrimination) and management (managing change). The reading of various studies show that there is often an overlap in themes and findings, such as a study concentrating on cultural issues also identifies language and academic issues (Hellsten, 2002; Wu and Hammond, 2011). The overall evidence from the literature indicates that the main areas of research are linked to learning, language and psycho-cultural experiences and challenges.

The next section discusses the main findings of the review.

2.5 Findings

The developed economies are still the top recruiters of international students. In 2011 over 50% students travelled to the USA, UK, Germany, France, Australia and Canada (UIS, 2013). This trend was mirrored in the UK which recruited 13% of the total of international students worldwide and continued to be the second largest recruiter after the United States (16.5% of total) in

2011 (OECD, 2013). UK was the top destination for Bangladeshi students in 2012 with over 4200 students in its educational institutions (UIS, 2013). However, recent competition from Asian countries such as China, Malaysia, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan confirms that there was an increase in recruitment in the Asian countries from 25% to 34% in 2014. This increase was at the expense of a drop in student numbers in the USA and the EU (Shafaei and Razak, 2016).

The massive growth in international student numbers has created challenges in the UK for the government, higher education institutions as well as for the international students concerned. Studies have sought to identify the reasons for and solutions to these challenges. In the UK, the Prime Minister's initiative (PMI2) prompted two UKCOSA national surveys in 2004 and 2007 that focussed on post-arrival experiences and perceptions of international students. The results indicated that satisfaction with UK academic experience was high (UKCOSA, 2004) and that provision of support at UKHEIs had a fundamental influence on student satisfaction levels, acclimatisation and performance (UKCOSA, 2007). A 2011 report by UKCISA identifies improvements made by higher education institutions in the areas of financial advice in helping students prepare for transition and in guidance on employability. However, recent attempts by the UK government to include international students in the calculation of net migration has alarmed the higher education sector as it is likely to have a negative impact on the recruitment of potential international students especially, as according

to the Home Secretary:

'*if we are to attract more students to our world-class universities, we must also break the link between short-term study and permanent settlement in this country'* (Shipman, 2015, p.2).

This study aims to plug the gap in the literature relating to the experiences of Bangladeshi students abroad. In addition, the findings from the research contribute to the overall debate on the constantly evolving range of experiences and challenges faced by international students as well as the providers of education to the international students.

2.5.1 Reasons for Studying Abroad.

The literature review of the experiences of international students during their study period is better understood if consideration is given to their reasons for studying abroad and includes the works of Mazzarol and Soutar (2001), Maringe and Carter (2007), Cantwell, Luca and Lee (2009), Baharun, Awang and Padlee (2011), Hasan (2013), Liu, Elston and Zhou (2013), Garcia and Villarreal (2014) and Migin, Falahat and Khatibi (2015). Mazzarol and Souter (2001, p.4) introduce a 'push-pull' model of international student flow where there are a number of factors or reasons that 'push' the students to leave their home countries such as inadequate educational opportunities, too much competition or discrimination. Similarly, there are a number of 'pull' factors in foreign countries (USA, UK), such as reputable educational institutions, advanced curriculum and potential enhancement of career progression that 'pull' the students from overseas to apply to educational institutions in the UK and USA (Garcia and Villareal, 2014; Urban and Palmer, 2016). Hossler and

Gallagher (1987) consider these factors to be based either on rational cost-benefit analysis of the available options or the students' socio-economic status, general educational background and social networks or a combination of these factors.

In terms of the decision-making process, Hossler and Gallagher (1987, p. 215) further developed a 'Three-Phase' model that encompassed: predisposition, search and choice. Pre-disposition is the developmental phase when an individual decides to study, followed by the search phase where a list of possible options is created, culminating in the final phase of selecting one of the options. The following sub-sections explore the reasons for studying overseas.

A. Educational

The educational motivation of gaining an overseas qualification remains the most important and consistent reason for study abroad. Generally, students select a country and course before selecting the institution. In terms of the country pull, the USA and UK remain the top two recruiters of international students (Garcia and Villarreal, 2014). The United States of America has always been the most sought after study destination by the largest number of international students and a survey by Urban and Palmer (2016) of international students in a USA university identifies 'pull' factors, of which the two most important ones are – better educational opportunities in the USA and improved job opportunities in home country after completion of studies.

The UK is the second most popular destination for all international students (Garcia and Villarreal, 2014) due to the reputation of its courses and institutions (Huang, 2008).

In terms of courses in the UK, according to the Vision 2020 Report (2004) on forecasting international student mobility to the UK, over 25% of international students will continue to opt for Business related courses in UK Higher Education Institutions. Of this 25%, nearly 40% are on postgraduate courses with the MBA being a much sought after qualification across all continents (Zawawi and Jye, 2012). A Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC: 2012) extensive survey conducted between 2010 and 2012 of over 56,000 students confirms that 55% of respondents wished to pursue the MBA.

Students also wish to enhance their career prospects and this is discussed in the next section.

B. Professional

Career enhancement is a strong 'push' factor for the mature students. Out of the 55% respondents of the GMAC (2012) survey wishing to pursue the MBA, 4757 (15.5%) MBA students from around the world indicated that the reasons for pursuing the MBA were either for career enhancement or career change. The importance of international study for professional reasons was also confirmed in Hellsten's (2002) qualitative study in Australia plus a 2011 QS Global Employer survey of over 10,000 recruiters worldwide which conclude:

'*regardless of where a student is located it is a safe bet that he or she will* **enhance** *their employability prospects through participation in international education'* (QS 2011, p. 21).

C. Psycho-Cultural

Finally, students sometimes travel abroad for study due to personal reasons. The reasons may be positive ones such as aspirations for international exposure (Huang, 2008) or negative ones such as escaping from persecution in the home country as has been the case with asylum seekers from politically unstable countries such as Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone or Iraq. A study by Butcher, McGrath and Stock (2008) of Asian students in New Zealand found that the largest group was Malaysian-Chinese students, whose members were 'pushed' out of Malaysia or discriminated against as local universities positively favoured the Malay origin students, referred to as *Bhumiputra* (sons of the soil). On the other hand, other international students were 'pulled' to study in Malaysia as evidenced in Hasan's (2013) questionnaire survey of 100 Bangladeshi students which highlights religion as an important 'pull' factor as both Bangladesh and Malaysia are Muslim countries. In addition, the excellent transport system and lower cost of living when compared to Europe 'pulls' the students to choose Malaysia. The religious affinity and lower cost of living are further confirmed in Zeeshan *et al's.,* (2013) survey of 110 international students in two Malaysian universities where the attractions were low tuition fees, reputation of being a safe country and having an acceptable culture especially for Muslim students. Similarly, Turkey has become quite attractive, in recent years, for its lower cost of living and provision of an Islamic environment for Muslim

international students (Őzoğlu, Gűr, and Coskun, 2015). The studies confirm that even though the main purpose is to study overseas, the choice of the country can be influenced by personal factors such as religious affinity.

Therefore, as indicated above, the main reasons for studying overseas are educational, professional and personal. Once the students arrive in the country of study an exploration of their experiences can be divided into two main categories – psycho-cultural and educational respectively discussed in the next section. The literature indicates that the salient experiences mirror the reasons for study abroad – educational and personal.

2.5.2 Experiences during Study Period

There are a number of studies that have investigated the experiences of international students spanning several decades. These studies have focused on the challenges and anxieties related to personal well-being such as the quality of accommodation, language ability and communication, teaching and learning and living abroad (Hellsten, 2002; Peelo, 2007; Bell, 2007; Zhou et al., 2008; Brown and Aktas, 2012; Hawkes, 2014; Jamsiah, Taher and Taufik, 2014; Caḡatay, 2015; Shafaei and Razak, 2016). Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) argue that students experience stress and the levels are highest in the early stages of study while Brown (2008) and Gu (2009) posit that students experience both excitement and stress on first arrival in the UK, but the excitement soon converts into stress resulting from various shocks related to the differences in culture, learning, language, identity and role. Each of these dimensions is reviewed under two broad headings of psycho-cultural and educational experiences and the reader may notice some overlapping between them. The next section considers the

psycho-cultural experiences, challenges and coping strategies of international students during their period of study.

A. Psycho-Cultural Experiences, Challenges and Coping Strategies

When students travel for overseas study they experience a new culture where:

'a cultural experience encompasses varying degrees of experiences of the different beliefs, values, attitudes and expectations of the host culture. It impacts upon the educational experience of the international student, especially during the transition period' (Luzio-Lockett, 1998, p.7).

A.1 Culture Shock

According to Oberg (1960), these new cultural experiences result in 'culture shock' where:

'Culture Shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse' (Oberg, 1960, p. 142).

According to Oberg (1960) Culture shock occurs in four stages – honeymoon, hostile, recovery and acceptance (Oberg, 1960) and its effects can be psychological - such as mental disturbance (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2001) or academic, leading to a decline in performance (Ridley, 2004; Adeoya-Agboola and Evans, 2016). During the 60s and 70s culture shock was perceived as a medical condition requiring medical treatment. However, by the 80s, moving into a new culture was:

'a learning experience rather than a medical nuisance' (Zhou *et al.,* 2008, p.64).

A more recent definition by UKCISA (2008) describes culture shock as the impact of moving from a known environment to an unknown and new one with differences in social norms, food, language, climate and dress code.

Some researchers into culture shock (Zhou *et al.*, 2008; Yue and Le, 2012). argue that if international students were better prepared in terms of prior knowledge, appropriate attitude and developed the requisite skills, they would be more competent in dealing with culture shock. This led to the study of culture shock from sociological and psychological perspectives rather than a medical one and resulted in the development of the ABC Framework on intercultural contact theory (Yue and Le, 2012). Some of the current literature is framed within the (ABC) affective, behavioural and cognitive components of culture shock (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; *Zhou et al.,* 2008).

The *affective* component of culture shock is similar to Oberg's explanation of culture shock as being one of confusion, anxiety and bewilderment resulting in high levels of stress. International students have to address the stressors such as, the changes in food, climate, language and lifestyle and formulate appropriate coping strategies. A positive response to culture shock requires psychological adjustment (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2001). Zhou *et al.,* (2008) recommend that educational institutions should offer 'stress management' training to educational institutions as well as social support forums.

The *behavioural* component of culture shock is linked to being unfamiliar with the appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviours of the new culture. This may lead to misunderstandings and cause offence, as may be the case when women from Muslim countries do not make eye contact when communicating with men, who are not family, in western environments. Within the western context, lack of eye contact is considered as suspicious behaviour, whereas within the Islamic context, eye contact with strange men is not recommended. Other behavioural aspects include social skills such as giving gifts, resolving conflicts, classroom etiquette and individual physical space (Zhou *et al.,* 2008). Socio-cultural adaptation includes the learning of host country attitudes, behaviours and associated skills. Zhou *et al.,* (2008) recommend that intervention methods should include pre-trip preparation focussed on appropriate social skills relating to behavioural norms of the host country.

The *cognitive* component relates to identity and the degree of willingness or unwillingness to accept the norms, behaviours and beliefs of the new culture. This can cause anxiety if it results in identity conflict when individuals feel the pressure to choose between retaining own culture and rejecting host culture or abandoning home culture and embracing host culture or finding a middle way of retaining some elements of the home culture and adopting some new ones from the host culture. International students become involved in maintaining, developing and changing identity (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Zhou *et al.,* (2008) recommend that intervention methods should include mechanisms for retaining self-esteem and also developing inter-

group harmony by emphasising the similarities between individuals irrespective of cultural differences.

A recent study by Lombard (2014) argues that if international students are trained in psycho-synthesis techniques, they will be better equipped to deal with the affective, behavioural and cognitive elements of culture shock. Lombard defines psycho-synthesis as:

'*an integrative transpersonal psychology that provides a universal*

framework for coping with the anxiety of life changes and

understanding one's identity and will' (Lombard, 2014, p.3).

My own view is that psycho-synthesis may be an effective technique but in the context of the international sojourn, may end up being an additional stressor rather than a reliever of stress as it involves the learning of very specific techniques. International students are too stressed and lack the time or initiative. This is confirmed by Ngwira and Mapoma (2015) in their study of over 300 international students at a Chinese University, where the students were unwilling to make the necessary changes to adapt due to shortages of time.

The importance of the effects of a different culture on the emotional and intellectual well-being of the international student is evident in numerous studies undertaken across universities in most developed countries. The next section considers the components, causes, stages as well as strategies relating to culture shock.

Early anxieties and excitement

The onset of culture shock occurs during the early stages of the study sojourn (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005; Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006; Brown and Holloway, 2008; Hawkes, 2014; Ozer, 2015; Yan, 2015). Brown and Holloway's (2008) longitudinal, ethnographic, mixed method study of 150 international postgraduate students in a UK university shows that the move to a new society was a life changing event and the majority of students experienced anxiety, lack of certainty and fear of the unknown. In addition, students experienced homesickness and loneliness – both of which are well documented features of the international student's psychological experiences. Some of these findings are also confirmed in the mixed method study of 145 MBA students at a UK university where Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) found in each of their 3 case studies that all felt deeply uncomfortable at the start of their sojourn. However, a few students in Brown and Holloway's (2008) research did feel excited and privileged to be studying in the UK. Early enthusiasm for cross-cultural interaction was related to personal growth and improved employability. The studies confirm that in the very early stages of the sojourn the students experience both anxiety and excitement caused by their foray into the new and unknown cultural environment.

Being different and feeling alienated

Once the students begin to settle into their new cultural environment the differences in lifestyles and values between themselves and their hosts begin to cause discomfort and result in a 'cultural distance.' The '*cultural distance*'

34

hypothesis proposed by Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) states that the greater the differences between peoples of two cultures, the greater the difficulties in their interactions with each other. Therefore, the degree of culture shock experienced is the direct result of the degree of cultural difference or similarity between the cultures of the home and host countries. A number of studies in the UK (Seymour and Constanti, 2002; UKCOSA, 2004; Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005; Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006; Brown and Holloway, 2008; Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009; Adeoye-Agboola and Evans, 2015) confirm that international students felt different to and alienated from their UK counterparts, essentially due to differences in lifestyles, resulting in cultural distancing between the two groups.

Inadequate recognition by tutors of cultural diversity

A major cause of alienation is a lack of sensitivity by the host nation tutors towards the cultural differences of the international students. The host nation tutors are often unwilling or unable to make the adjustments necessary to incorporate diversity in the learning environment. Cultural sensitivity encompasses the:

> '*ability to interact effectively with individuals whose cultural rules and values are different from one's own*' (Seymour and Constanti, 2002, p.4).

Effective interaction requires the subjugation of prejudices and stereotyping whilst appreciating and respecting cultural differences by acting in a manner that demonstrates sensitivity to the identified differences. Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto's (2005) phenomenological study of the lived experiences of 10 Chinese students in a Canadian university concludes that the students

35

involved felt that they had been stereotyped by their tutors who demonstrated a lack of real interest in getting to know and understand the students as unique individuals and demonstrated high levels of cultural insensitivity. Such an approach appeared to result in feelings of disappointment with the tutors.

Religious discomfort

Cultural distancing also results from religious differences that prevent a sense of belonging that normally emanates from sharing religious beliefs and practices. I have included this as the participants in my study were all Muslims entering an essentially Christian environment. Cultural distancing triggered by being a Muslim in a non-Muslim country has gained prominence in the overall debate on international student experiences due to a perceived disconnect between Islam and the rest of the world's religions. Asmar's (2005) mixed method national survey of the perceptions and experiences of both international and local (174) Muslim students across 13 higher education establishments in Australia confirms that the 'pub and club' culture in Australia contributed to distancing especially for Muslim students who do not drink alcohol. The findings also show that religious distance, an aspect of cultural distance, was experienced acutely by the Muslim local students who felt uncomfortable when leaving the classroom to go and pray, or when wearing a hijab – thereby experiencing heightened distancing due to their more visible religious identity. Similarly, Al Hazmi and Nyland's (2010) study of Saudi Muslim male students in Australia revealed the discomfort felt by the students when they had to study in a mixed gender environment as Saudi Arabia imposes gender segregation in public places.

The next section considers the coping strategies adopted by international students.

A.1.1 Coping Strategies

It is important for their general well-being as well as ability to focus on studies that international students learn to adjust quickly to the cultural challenges so that they can begin to settle into their studies. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) postulate that socio-cultural adaptation and adjustment are most difficult during the first six months of the transition, after which it flattens to a plateau. A study of various development theories of inter-cultural adjustment proposed by (Oberg, 1960; Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001) agree that early successes in adjustment and adaptation have a positive impact on student learning and academic success (Savicki *et al.*, 2007).

More contact with local students

Cultural shock emanating from cultural distance can be reduced or alleviated via the pursuance of certain strategies, one of which relates to the *'contact hypothesis'* also known as *'Contact Theory'* proposed by Allport (1979) which argues that regular contact between individuals creates affinity - providing the groups share equal status, enjoy intergroup co-operation and common goals. This hypothesis was confirmed in the study of Chinese students in the USA by Yang *et al.*, (2006) who increased contact with local Americans as their stay in the country extended and were influenced by the dominant American cultural values, such as individual achievement which was contrary to their collectivist upbringing. In collectivist societies work is undertaken for

the common good rather than for oneself or the family (Hughes, 2010). Therefore, even though there was a marked cultural distance at the commencement of the sojourn, this was greatly reduced with increased contact with each additional year of stay in the USA. Some degree of caution needs to be exercised here as the study is nearly ten years old and China has experienced a more individualistic approach to achievement in recent years as indicated by Sima and Pugsley (2010) who claim that the youth in today's China are often only children, more educated than their parents and who pursue individual achievement giving rise to a 'me culture'.

In contrast, Bochner, Hutnik and Furnham's (2001) quantitative study of English and international students living in accommodation specifically designed to encourage integration tested Allport's (1979) '*contact hypothesis*' and found that the close residential proximity and regular contact did not succeed in creating bonds between the international and UK students. Seymour and Constanti (2002) and Ward and Masgoret (2004) suggest that sometimes, contrary to the predictions of the contact hypothesis, close contact with host country students may actually result in negative consequences such as increased anxiety and identity conflict for international students. This was further confirmed by Spencer-Oatey and Xiong's (2006) study where, in spite of sharing residential accommodation, the Chinese students avoided the UK students as a consequence of continuing differences in lifestyles and negative stereotyping. The findings from these studies challenge Allport's (1979) Contact Theory as they clearly demonstrate that by simply creating an environment for more contact, individuals from different cultures do not necessarily bridge the cultural

distance and create affinity. It also did not assist in reducing culture shock. The important influencing variable for reducing culture shock and distance appears to be contact with host country nationals over an extended period of time, which is more feasible for undergraduate than postgraduate students.

Be-friend co-national / other international / same religion students

Another frequently cited coping strategy is to seek out co-nationals or other international students with whom they can feel a cultural, religious or other affinity. Byrne (1997) introduced the concept of *'similarity attraction'* where the greater the degree of similarity between two individuals the greater the attraction between them. This was demonstrated by Seymour and Constanti (2002) in which Far Eastern students developed strong bonds with other co-nationals or with students from the same geographic region whilst home (UK) students sought support and friendship from other home students. Similarly, in Bochner, Hutnik and Furnham's (2001) study the majority of friendships (70%) exist between one international student and another international student. Further evidence was provided by the Arab postgraduate students in five Malaysian Universities who felt religiously close to their Malaysian hosts as they were all Muslims (Al Zubaidi and Rechards, 2010). Separate research conducted on Chinese students at two different UK universities showed that they felt more comfortable communicating with people who shared their own culture (Wu and Hammond, 2011) or with other international students (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006; Savicki *et al.*, 2007; Huang, 2008). These same students had great difficulties in their social interaction with host country students (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006; Grayson, 2008) confirming Ward, Bochner and Furnham's (2001) 'cultural

distance' hypothesis and refuting Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis'. In addition, a UKCOSA (2004) survey of 4796 international students at UK universities and further education colleges concludes that:

'*most of their friendships were with co-national and other international students'* (UKCOSA, 2004, p.14).

The survey supported the hypothesis that commonality (similarity attraction) of being an international student was the greater attraction in forming friendships, even though s/he might come from a different culture.

However, these findings are contradicted by Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) who found that over half of the students they surveyed in four UK universities preferred to mix with individuals from cultures other than their own.

Similarly, Ward and Masgoret (2004) identified studies in USA and New Zealand that propose that friendships with co-nationals are not always conducive to psychological and sociological well-being since closer contact with co-nationals can result in less contact with host nationals, thereby delaying or blocking adaptation and adjustment to the host culture. It is evident from the literature that the cultural experiences of international students are complex and multi-dimensional and that there are always exceptions to the norms and the evidence cautions against generalisations. The next section considers the link between cultural challenges and the impact on identity.

A.1.2 Impact on identity

Cultural

Cultural challenges begin to impact on the identities of the international students as they struggle to adjust to an environment that has different norms of behaviour, values and food.   There are a number of studies (Jamsiah, Taher and Taufik, 2014; Ngwira and Mapoma, 2015) that consider the impact of the cultural challenges and the associated coping strategies on the identities of the international students. Luzio-Lockett's (1998) early study is one of the few qualitative studies to focus on the holistic experiences of international students as it considers the impact of the overall experience on the self of the overseas student:

> '*The self is influenced and affected by the particular situation or experience and the self-image will vary according to experience* (Luzio-Lockett, 1998, p.7).

The influencing factors are related to affective (self-esteem) and cognitive (language) issues. Lockett (1998, p.209) introduces the concept of 'squeezing' whereupon an international student feels the pressure to adapt and adjust to the host culture by squeezing the confident self of the home culture to one that needs to adapt and become confident in the host culture. Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) also consider identity in their research and argue that the study period is transitional but transformational as it forces a certain degree of identity change amongst the international students. Their extensive four year study across four UK universities confirms a shift from squeezing (Luzio-Lockett 1998) to retaining some cultural beliefs and the

values of the home culture whilst adapting some from the host culture. Similarly, Gill's (2007) phenomenological longitudinal study of ten postgraduate Chinese students in a UK university posits that the process of becoming more independent, speaking a different language, learning in a different way:

> '*enabled participants to make meaning, re-evaluate their sense of self, and to (re) construct their identity'* (Gill, 2007, p.176).

The concept of 'third culture' identity is derived from the premise of integrating the values of two or more cultures resulting in a combined and new cultural identity.

It can be argued that the creation and development of a 'third-culture' identity is directly linked to length of stay as the shorter the stay the less the need to change original identity. Full-time postgraduate courses in the UK tend to be between 12 to18 months and students on these courses are less pressurised to make the adjustments as they return to their home countries in a very short space of time. However, longer stay in the host country allowed for identity change as evidenced in Yang *et al's*., (2006) study which showed that there was a positive correlation between a longer length of stay and the adoption of more of the hosts' worldviews. Cultural competence is developed to act as a bridge between the home and host culture values. However, the study does not differentiate between the degree of identity changes in the student who had been in the country for one year and the student who had been in the country for eleven years.

Religious

Cultural challenges also incorporate religious challenges and, as such, these challenges impact on the religious identity of international students. Maintaining an overt representation of religious identity has become more visible in recent years as has been evidenced in a religion like Islam where more and more Muslims are wearing Islamic garments and headgear. However, in spite of the discomfort evidenced in Asmar's (2005) study, there is an increase (local and international) in female students wearing the hijab (headscarf) with western clothing such as shirts and jeans in the UK and Australia, thereby re-constructing their religious identity to accommodate some western dress norms and demonstrating the creation of multiple identities of an international student, a religious woman and westernised Muslim. The creation of such multiple identities allows for the harmonious co-existence of these identities as the students are able to show their dual allegiance to the faith as well as fashion. The multiple identities combine to project a base identity of a westernised Muslim woman studying overseas. However, a recent study by Brown, Brown and Richards (2014) of international Muslim students across two UK universities concluded that the participants in the study had experienced suspicion and mistrust from the host population, especially because they were Muslims. Brown, Brown and Richards (2014) also recognise the importance attached, by their participants, to the maintenance of their religious identity. The tension between the overt symbols of Muslim identity such as the hijab, veil, turban or a long beard and the suspicious response from the UK host population

has added an additional layer to the challenges experienced by international students, especially if they happen to be easily identifiable as Muslims.

The discussion in the next section focuses on the educational challenges and coping strategies of international students.

B. Educational Experiences, Challenges and Coping Strategies

'Education is an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill and attitudes of individuals, groups or communities.' (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2011, p.10).

Some international students experience loss and disorientation as they confront new learning, teaching and assessment pedagogies in a different language. Most developed countries (USA, UK, Australia) teach in the medium of English and even though all international students meet the English language requirements there is often a considerable gap between achieving the required test score and being able to converse fluently, read and write at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Sovic, 2007). This creates dissonance and discomfort for the international student and has led to a proliferation of studies by Krahe *et al.*, (2005), Bamford (2006), Gill (2007), Peelo (2007), Brown (2008) and Durkin (2008). The findings are discussed within the broad remit of learning shock and language shock.

B.1 Learning and Language Shocks

The phrase '*learning shock'* was first introduced by Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) who found that learning in the new environment involves un-learning attitudes, behaviours and values and re-learning new attitudes, behaviours and values. This process of un-learning and re-learning incorporates a variety of negative emotions resulting in '*learning shock'* (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005). They compare learning shock to culture shock where the former entails:

> '*experiences of acute frustration, confusion and anxiety felt by some students ... (when) exposed to unfamiliar learning and teaching methods'* (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005, p.277).

Their research claims that learning shock is a:

> '*distinct phenomenon experienced by many adult learners returning to study'* (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005, p.296).

Therefore, learning shock is experienced by international as well as mature students.

The link between learning and language is explored in an Australian university by Sawir (2005) and concludes that the language difficulties experienced by Asian students in an English educational environment are grounded in weaknesses in their prior learning experiences in their home countries. Sawir (2005) proposes that students' prior English language learning is didactic, concentrating on grammar and limiting practice of spoken English, thereby rendering them ill equipped to function in a country

where this is a native language resulting in *'language shock'*. Language shock can emanate from not understanding various accents, lacking confidence and competence to participate in classroom discussions and not being able to write at the required level of language competence.

The following sections explore the various aspects of language and learning shocks.

B.1.1 Language related challenges

Language affects our worldview and competence and language and culture are inter-related. As we learn to speak, read and write another language we also learn to understand the culture of that language and broaden our general outlook and tolerance of 'the other' (Fantini, 1995). Therefore, lack of language competence creates a sense of isolation and powerlessness.

English language competence

Linguistic competence is the ability to speak, read and write effectively in a language. There has been considerable research on the language related challenges of international students and included amongst them are the works of Sovic (2007), a mixed method study of 141 international students at a UK university and a study by Hellsten and Prescott (2004) of international students on a course on English as a Second Language (ESL) at an Australian university. All of these studies highlight speaking and listening difficulties as being the causes of high levels of stress, especially for those students whose first language is not English. Listening difficulties are mainly associated with understanding the different accents of the tutors (Grayson

and Stowe, 2005; Campbell and Li, 2007; Bamford, 2008; and Al-Zubaidi and Rechards, 2010) or those of other international students (Tran, 2008) Students also suffer from speaking anxieties (Cağatay, 2015). Campbell and Li's study (2008) of Asian students in a New Zealand University concludes that they were prevented by:

> '*language barriers from effectively communicating with lecturers and other students, following instructions, understanding assessment criteria and procedures, doing exams and tests, and socialising with domestic residents. Even after one year of study the undergraduate students still could only understand 50% to 60 % of instructions and examination questions'* (Campbell and Li, 2008, p.381).

This mirrors Brown's (2008) findings on postgraduate students who also claimed to understand only 50% of their lectures together with Brown's (2007) study on UK Masters dissertation students who were experiencing similar difficulties to the students in New Zealand even after being on the programme for over nine months. Brown indicates that there remains a:

> '*discrepancy between the linguistic ability and the level of linguistic competence needed to write a Masters dissertation'* (Brown, 2007, p.3).

This confirms that even though the students had been able to acquire the linguistic competence needed for the assessments and exams at Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma levels, they lacked the linguistic competence needed for the independent writing of the Master's dissertation.

Lack of language competence also results in loss of face as evidenced in the studies by Yeh and Inose (2003) in North America and Brown (2008) in the UK. The students experienced language problems from the time of landing at the airport right through to the end of the course. The accompanying emotions of panic, frustration, impotence, inferiority and loss of power reflected the myriad of issues that arose as a result of inadequate language competence. The impact of these emotions resulted in high levels of stress and withdrawal from contact with English students and local inhabitants, thus compounding the problems even further.

As learning and language are interlinked, language competence impacts directly upon learning ability and success as indicated by Grayson and Stowe (2005), who conducted an extensive comparative study of the language problems of international and domestic students across four Canadian Universities. Their findings concerning the international students indicate that they faced problems in reading course material, writing reports and essays, understanding lectures (different accents and speed), and participating in class discussions, thereby confirming both learning and language challenges. Grayson and Stowe also conclude that:

> *'it is reasonable to assume that English language difficulties encountered educational outcomes such as by students for whom English is a second language would affect academic achievement'* (Grayson and Stowe, 2005, p.12).

The next section explores the coping strategies.

B.1.2 Coping Strategies

Seeking out same language speakers / co-nationals

Just as culture shock prompted the international students to seek out co-nationals (Seymour and Constanti, 2002), high levels of foreign language stress led to seeking out same language speakers. The language and cultural distances in Yeh and Inose's (2003) and Brown's (2008) studies prompted the international students to seek out co-nationals who provided emotional support, thus confirming the '*similarity attraction'* hypothesis. In both the studies, the combined effect of the withdrawal from host country nationals and the gravitation towards co-nationals prevented the development of English language skills of the students. Therefore, even though the mono-lingual communication provided emotional comfort, it delayed the progress on foreign language competence.

Feeling empowered

However, in some cases, increased language competence resulted in empowerment as was evidenced in Gill's (2007) phenomenological study of international students in the UK where students developed a stronger self-identity and higher self-esteem. Similarly, Brown's (2008) study also confirms that as the students had no option but to complete their assignments and communicate in English, there was a gradual improvement in their levels of competence. Once again, the longitudinal nature of the study allowed Brown (2008) to chart the progress in linguistic competence from 'really struggling to coping quite well' and evidencing the change in identity from not feeling

confident or competent to some resurrection of confidence and competence over the longer period.

On the other hand, for some students the continuing high linguistic barriers resulted in feelings of insecurity and lack of self-confidence and self-esteem (Campbell and Li, 2008 and Brown, 2007).

B.1.3 Learning challenges

As shown earlier, the literature has examined the variety of learning challenges experienced by international students in their new learning environment. I now focus on the impact of 'learning shock' at different stages of the educational journey.

Critical reading and critiquing

Learning shock is experienced when students face difficulties in being able to think, read and comprehend at the new level of study. Masters level study in business related disciplines requires an analytical mind that can critique by deconstructing, analysing and reconstructing the text and / or statistical data to inform the discussion and argument. McKinley (2015) argues that:

> *'critical thinking processes are shaped by awareness of the socio-*
>
> *cultural conventions of academic discourse* (McKinley, 2015, p. 25).

One aspect of academic discourse involves reading in postgraduate academic study and the reading practices of students from different parts of the world is under-researched and was taken up as a research challenge by Bell (2007) in her ethnographic research of Indian and Bangladeshi students

studying at an Australian university. Her main findings indicate a high level of diffidence during the first semester arising from the large volume and depth of reading. These findings were mirrored in the studies by Grayson and Stowe (2005) in Canada, Al-Zubaidi and Rechards (2010) in Malaysia and Zheng (2013) in China. Reading in a foreign language often requires a heavy reliance on a dictionary or even translating into own language in order to ensure better comprehension. This process can be painstakingly time consuming. Difficulties in reading result in major difficulties in writing (Hawkes, 2014).

Independent learner

Learning shock is also linked to the concept of the 'independent learner' which prevails in higher education pedagogies. Very early in the study experience, international students realise that they are expected to take control of their own learning by not depending on the tutor and a large number find it extremely difficult to make this transition (Choo, 2007; Pringle, Fishbacher and Williams, 2008). The Chinese MBA students across three UK universities in Choo's (2007) ethnographic study resisted the idea of taking responsibility for their own learning and expected the tutor to provide guidance and learning materials at every stage of the learning process. Many international students are used to studying from one textbook and find it extremely challenging to independently seek knowledge from additional learning resources (Wong, 2004). Learning in some Asian cultures does not prepare international students for independent learning (Pringle, Fishbacher and Williams, 2008).

Non-acceptance of prior knowledge

In addition to becoming independent learners the students often find that their prior knowledge and expertise does not help much in the new learning environment. Learning shock is also experienced when there is a negation of prior learning and expertise. Students arrive with a bank of knowledge and expertise from their own learning environment and discipline but research (Yosso, 2005) indicates that this cultural capital is often ignored or negated by the academics in the institutions where they study. Kingston and Forland (2008) posit that UK higher education institutions are caught up in 'cultural imperialism' whereby the accepted norm is that the international students should be making all the adjustments in order to benefit from a 'British' education. This is corroborated by Durkin (2008), in her grounded theory research on the adaptation of East Asian masters students to western norms of critical thinking and argumentation in the UK. Leung (2001) describes eastern pedagogy as being content oriented and examination driven where knowledge is tested through memory. In addition, the imparting of knowledge is dominated by the tutor with minimal student involvement. In comparison, the western pedagogy tests knowledge through understanding, debate and student involvement. Durkin (2009) concludes that lecturers in the UK are either unable or unwilling to deliver a curriculum which combines eastern with western pedagogies, making it an indirect cause of learning shock.

Song (2016) further challenges some of the negative perceptions that the western academic environment has of the international student by stating that:

'International students build their knowledge and critical appraisal on

what they have known before and what they experience as they

confront globalisation (Song, 2016, p. 5)

Therefore, the exposure to different ways of learning enables the international students to become competent in both western and non-western approaches to reasoning. Song (2016) also argues that the Anglo-European model of critical reasoning is only one of many ways of critical reasoning and that the approaches used in non-western countries are equally valid and valuable.

Studying a new discipline

Finally, learning shock may also result from a change in the study discipline, especially for postgraduate students who change the discipline when transitioning to postgraduate study for reasons such as career enhancement and / or desire to expand their educational portfolio. In addition, courses such as the MBA tend to be multi-disciplinary, thus further aggravating the absence of individual discipline related knowledge. This challenge is experienced most by students transitioning from natural to social sciences (Clifford and Joseph, 2005; Bamford, 2008 and Durkin, 2008). In addition, Tran (2008) highlights the language and pedagogic practices of different disciplines, where they are implicitly understood by the academic community but not visible to the novice student who has no prior experience, such as case study analysis.

Stages of Learning shock

Unlike culture shock which is felt most acutely in the early days of the study period, learning shock can occur at any stage of the study period. A comparison of early learning experiences (Bamford, 2008) with the final stage of writing a dissertation (Brown, 2007) indicates that the students in both studies experienced remarkably similar difficulties. Bamford's students had recently registered on their study course and were struggling with the requirements of a UK university learning environment whilst Brown's students had successfully completed all taught modules but were now being challenged by the demands of their final independent dissertation, albeit supervisor supported. Brown's (2007) focus on dissertation students confirms the complexities of the challenges at different stages of the study period as even though the dissertation students were nearing the end of their academic sojourn they still experienced learning shock in relation to appropriate referencing, searching, analysing and synthesising relevant literature - all of which were accompanied by the continuing linguistic challenges of academic writing at Masters level. Just as the students acquired competence in assessments and exams they were exposed to a completely new experience of almost entirely independent study with limited guidance from the tutor. The various studies confirm that stress and feelings of incompetence may occur at different stages with high levels of stress at the initial stage followed by increasing confidence and competence in the middle stage and then again a possible decline in both confidence and competence at the final stage of study. The following section considers the coping strategies of the students.

B.1.4 Coping Strategies

Students are exposed to a number of learning challenges resulting in learning shock at various stages of their study period and, as such, have to formulate strategies for combating the difficulties in order to successfully complete their studies.

Critical thinkers

Being able to read, comprehend and present an argument that demonstrates critical thinking is an often cited challenge in the literature (McKinley, 2015). Indian and Bangladeshi students in Bell's (2007) study in the US applied a combination of reading tactics such as using dictionaries to translate, re-reading, testing understanding by explaining the text to each other in first language (Hindi or Bengali) and seeking help from others. By semesters two and three the competence levels improved considerably and impacted positively on critical thinking and research writing. This confirms that longitudinal studies are better able to chart the progress and changes in competence and performance. There is evidence to suggest that students are tactical in finding a resolution to the challenge. This means that students do not negate their previous experiences of being fully dependent on their tutors or a rote learning in their attempts to be more critical as confirmed by Durkin's (2008) research which concludes that international students find a '*middle way*' of combining the western style of debate and argument with their own tacit and non-challenging acceptance of all tutor knowledge. The 'middle way' incorporates:

'sensitivity towards others' feelings and face merges with a search for truth, so that one can be true to oneself and honest, without being offensive' (Durkin 2008, p. 23-24).

The students develop skills of critical thinking and learn to critique but do not necessarily cross their own pedagogical boundaries to such an extent that they lose their 'roots' completely. Students choose this 'middle way' for a number of reasons; a return to the home country requires a return to the home country pedagogy thereby rendering the Western pedagogy obsolete. Furthermore, a one year postgraduate study rarely allows time for total transformation from an eastern to a western pedagogy. The 'middle way' approach deserves to be commended as it indicates that even though international students are eager to come to the west for higher studies they are not necessarily willing to accept the western pedagogy without reservations. They find a different approach that fits more comfortably with their own pedagogy whilst also accommodating certain elements of western pedagogy. This is similar to the development of the *'third culture'* identity as defined by Yang *et al.*, (2006), which was discussed in the earlier section on cultural adaptation and identity. Both approaches seek out a compromise, a bridge that prevails over the dichotomies of the western and eastern cultures and pedagogies. However, Wong's (2004) findings go a stage further as they evidence a clear shift and preference for the western pedagogy by the time undergraduate students in an Australian University got to the third and fourth years of study. Again, as was seen with cultural adjustment, length of stay is an important determinant of change in identity and degree of adaptation.

The independent learner

Taking responsibility for one's own learning is a difficult challenge but there is considerable evidence to demonstrate that international students rise to the challenges of independent learning by adopting various strategies. Tran's (2008) case studies of four Chinese students in an Australian university explores the concept of independent learning and confirms that they actively sought to improve their learning experiences by constantly seeking clarification and confirmation of their own understanding during lectures. Similarly, Wong's (2004) study confirms the progress made by students as they advanced from first to fourth year of their studies with the first and second year students preferring more lecture centred learning but shifting to more independent learning in the final two years of study.

Tutor support

Even though there is an expectation by higher education institutions that international students should become independent learners, there is also a counter expectation by students that they still require a degree of tutor support, both of which result in mutual tensions between the students and tutors. The degree of tutor support is crucial to the reduction of learning shock. Learning is a two-way process where the engagement of the student can be enhanced or undermined by tutors, the style of delivery, level of enthusiasm, degree of support they provide students as well as class size. Fostering student engagement at module and programme levels does result in improved performance (Bryson and Hand, 2007).

Summary

This review highlights the complexities of the many different types of psychological, cultural, learning and language challenges experienced by international students (Brown, 2007; Bamford, 2008; Caĝatay, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2016). These experiences can be challenging and debilitating, resulting in the erosion of confidence and impacting negatively on self-esteem, identity and performance. However, there are also many positive effects of the experience, such as increased self-esteem resulting from taking control of their studies and lives as self–reliance boosts self-confidence (Brown, 2009). As the students become more acclimatised to the new culture they develop a cultural sensitivity together with an intelligence and competence which enables them to reject or adapt and adopt some or all of the host cultures values and practices, often resulting in the construction of 'third culture' identities befitting the requirements of the new cultural environment (Gill, 2007; Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). Similarly, as language competence increases over a period of time it impacts positively on self-esteem (Gill, 2007). Finally, international students find a middle-way of amalgamating their previous learning behaviour with the new requirements, which can result in successful completion of their studies.

The studies reviewed confirm that the experiences of international students are often similar across countries and that it is possible to draw some generic conclusions, such as cultural challenges of living in a new country. As a study of experiences is a phenomenological concept the contribution of qualitative research is more pertinent in this review. Likewise, the longitudinal studies provide a more in-depth analysis of the different stages in a student's

study period. Finally, studies that are holistic rather than focussing only on culture or language or learning, provide a more rounded view of the experiences of international students.

The next section of the review considers the chosen post-completion choices of international students.

2.5.3 Post-Completion Choices

As my study focuses on the entire study period, it recognises that some understanding of the immediate post-completion choices allows for a more complete understanding of the holistic experiences of international students. There are very few studies that consider the post-completion experiences of international students and this may be partially due to the logistical problems of staying in contact with students after the completion of study as well as having to extend the study period to include post-completion. The literature essentially concentrates on reasons for staying on in the country of study or for returning to the home country immediately or soon after completion. The 'push-pull' model (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001) is applied to review the following literature.

A number of studies were conducted in the USA (Levy, 2000; Hadis, 2005) to explore the pull and push factors that influenced international students to stay or leave after completion of studies. In addition, the studies also looked at the impact of their international experience on the returning students. In a study of 185 international students in an American university, Hazen and Alberts (2006) explore the staying or leaving intentions and discover that the main 'pull' factors for staying included economic and professional reasons

while the 'push' factors to return home included personal and societal reasons.

A project carried out for the UK government (BIS, 2012) involving over 13,000 post-completion international students concludes that in the first year after graduation - of those who had found employment 22% were in the UK but this number dropped to 17% after three years, again indicating a shift which could be due to more stringent visa controls and or better job opportunities elsewhere such as in China and India. The most recent stance by the UK government on post-completion rights is likely to impact negatively on the UK's position as the second most attractive destination for international students. The Home Secretary stated:

'the right to study in the UK cannot become an automatic right to live here unconditionally' (Shipman, 2015, p.2).

The proposed withdrawal of right to work in the UK for family members of international students will be an additional deterrent in choosing UK as a study destination. This is already shown by the drop in student numbers from India to the UK from over 22,000 in 2012-13 to less than 20,000 in 2013-14 (UKCISA, 2015).

This reduction in attraction of the developed countries is also highlighted in studies in Australia and New Zealand. Even though the New Zealand government actively encouraged international students to stay in New Zealand, almost 80% returned home in a study conducted by Butcher, McGrath and Stock (2008). Their findings indicate that the 'push' factor was lack of employment opportunities whilst the 'pull' factor to return home was

their family. Similarly, 'push' and 'pull' factors were confirmed by Iredale, Guo and Rozario (2003) in their mixed method study of Taiwanese, Chinese and Bangladeshi students returning to their home countries after study in Australia, UK and USA. Job opportunities in Australia were unattractive as there was downward social mobility thereby pushing the return to the home country. The 'pull' of the home countries such as China and Taiwan are evident in this study.

The downward social mobility trend is also confirmed in a study by Nunes and Arthur (2013) who explore the experiences of 16 international students who had planned to stay in Canada and seek employment. As one of the aspirations for studying abroad had been career enhancement, the students in this study pursued this aspiration in the country of study, Canada. Only 4 had found jobs within the first 12 months of completing their studies. They perceived that lack of networking, poor knowledge of the Canadian employment norms, as well as language competence were the main barriers to attaining employment that matched their qualifications.

The 'pull' factors of the home countries include a positive perception of the home country (Soon, 2009), an almost triumphant reunion with family and friends (Haines, 2013), increased status within family and colleagues and opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills (Iredale, Guo and Rozario 2003). With the shift in economic power and the active encouragement by governments in countries like China, India and Taiwan (Iredale, Guo and Rozario, 2003) the 'pull' factors to return to home countries have become stronger this century.

Finally, the review of the experiences of international students also included a number of studies (Levy, 2000; Iredale, Guo and Rozario, 2003; Hadis, 2005; McGrath, Stock and Butcher, 2007; Butcher, McGrath and Stock, 2008; Tant, 2009; Pritchard, 2011; Haines, 2013; Urban and Palmer, 2016). These explored the impact of the international study experience on students after completion. A summary of the findings indicates marked changes in identity and the development of '*multiple cultural identities*' as confirmed by Pritchard (2011, p.105).

As the students return home they face some euphoric but also some difficult challenges. Levy (2000) claims that:

> '*the more comfortable the sojourner becomes in the new culture, the more difficult the transition home*' (Levy, 2000, p.79).

As students learn to adjust and adapt to the differences in the host country, they construct new identities and form a 'third culture' identity (Yang *et al*., 2006) which is an amalgamation of the home and host country identities. The third culture identity incorporates higher status in home society (Iredale, Guo and Rozario, 2001), increased desire for international mobility (Hadis, 2005), greater individuality and freedom (McGrath, Stock and Butcher, 2007), becoming global citizens and learning to think independently, willingness to change and greater proficiency in English (Tant, 2009), more career minded and ambitious (Pritchard, 2011) and more responsible (Haines, 2013). This third culture identity confronts 'reverse culture' shock upon returning home as the:

> '*return process mirrors the going process*' (Haines, 2013, p.29).

Not only are the students in a new experience but so are all their family and friends who have to adjust to the 'changed returnee' (Haines, 2013, p.29). Reverse culture shock manifests itself in different forms, such as frustration with the infrastructure (Iredale, Guo and Rozario, 2001), lack of preparation for re-entering the home societies and feeling isolated from family and friends (Butcher, McGrath and Stock, 2008). In his mixed method study of 42 Vietnamese students returning home from study in Australia, Tant (2009) concludes that:

> *'the graduates involved have been able to construct their own meaning of their educational, social and cultural experience in Australia and have had the opportunity to observe and adapt their behaviour while firstly in Australia and then when they returned to Vietnam after graduation'* (Tant, 2009, p.12).

This conclusion points to the resilience and ability of the international students to continuously re-construct their identities by responding to the changed circumstances in both their host and home countries.

Summary

The brief overview of the immediate post completion choices of international students highlights the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of the journey and the impact on an individual's identity. It identifies new challenges of reverse culture shock along with higher status and self-esteem in the home country. It enables charting of the route of the construction of multiple identities that never stop evolving and it confirms that the termination of one journey is inextricably linked to the commencement of the next.

2.6 Implications for Future Research

The international student body is not a homogenous body and neither are their experiences. In addition, it is important to recognise differences between regions and even countries within regions; Asia may be a region but it comprises countries that are very different from each other such as China and Pakistan. Researchers must also factor in the changes in the students at different stages of their study and refrain from inferring overall conclusions made on evidence from one time period. Similarly, whilst large quantitative or mixed methods studies are able to provide statistical information, small qualitative studies allow for the creation of more in-depth data.

Chapter 3

Research Philosophy, Methodology and Design

3.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to explain the underpinning research philosophy and methodology as well as the design. As indicated in chapter two the limited research on the experiences of Bangladeshis studying abroad was the main driver for this study.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Cresswell (2009, p.5) argues that research is underpinned by the philosophical worldview held by the researcher. There are essentially four philosophical worldviews, postpositive, social construction, advocacy and pragmatic (Cresswell, 2009, p.6). An understanding of the philosophical worldview informs the selection of an appropriate methodology and method/s (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). The positioning of the research philosophy emerges from the researcher's ontological and epistemological approaches to the construction of reality and knowledge. Wisker (2008, p.67) defines ontology as '*being in the world.'* It refers to how we perceive reality. In other words, is there only one reality or is it constructed differently by each individual? My ontological stance in this research is that reality is constructed by individual experience and interpretation of the experience. Therefore, my ontological position aligns itself with social constructivism and qualitative research. Constructivist paradigms use small samples and generate rich data about each individual's perceptions of reality.

> *'Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences...' 'Researchers*

recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation ...
'(Cresswell, 2009, p.8).

A constructivist ontological position has informed my epistemological assumptions relating to the acquisition of knowledge in this study with epistemology being defined by Hirschheim, Klien and Lyytinnen (1995) as:

'*the nature of human knowledge and understanding that can possibly be acquired through different types of enquiry and alternative methods of investigation'* (Hirschheim, Klien and Lyytinnen, 1995, p.21).

My epistemological position is that knowledge is gained through an interpretive understanding of personal experiences. Therefore, the researcher interprets the experiences of the participant through a process of de-construction and reconstruction of the experiences (Laverty, 2003). I have followed the interpretative framework of phenomenological enquiry to explore the experiences of the research participants. As a research philosophy, phenomenology is the study of experience, *'a return to things themselves'* as stated by its founder Edmund Husserl (1959-1938) in (Langdridge, 2007, p10). The Husserlian approach to phenomenological research is essentially descriptive where the researcher has to bracket (withhold) his / her world view, knowledge and experience when describing the experience of the research participant (Langridge, 2007). Husserl's student Martin Heidegger deviated from this path and advocated an interpretative approach where the researcher uses his / her own knowledge and experiences to interpret the experiences of the research participant.

Heidegger argues that:

'*whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us'* (Heidegger, 1978, p.191-192).

This means that the researcher brings personal pre-conceptions, assumptions and prior experiences to the interpretation of data as:

'*we are constructing the world from our own background and experiences* (Laverty, 2003, p.4).'

It is important to note that priority must always be given to the research participant's experiences but it is equally important to recognise and accept that qualitative phenomenological research incorporates the influences of the researcher's own experiences and / or pre-conceptions but with a clear recognition that the interpreted data must be valid and trustworthy. Even though Gadamer (1977) viewed bracketing as 'impossible' a certain degree of bracketing was essential in order to ensure that my experiences did not begin to overshadow my understanding of the experiences of the participants. It is important to ensure that interpreter subjectivity does not overshadow the participant's experiences.

The phenomenological approach as advocated by Heidegger better suited my framework of not wanting to completely bracket my experiences during my interpretation of the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students

during their period of study. Heidegger also introduced hermeneutics into phenomenology (Gadamer, 1977). The next section explains how hermeneutics is linked to phenomenology in my study.

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation owing its origins to the interpretation of biblical texts and is the second influence on my methodology that is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) along with phenomenology. Therefore, an interpretation of the textual articulations of the experiences of the research participants from a hermeneutical perspective is an understanding of the understanding of the experiences, as spoken by the participants, thus resulting in double hermeneutics. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows the interpreter to 'put herself in the place of the other' and her own experiences inform the interpretation. In hermeneutic phenomenology interpretation is not neutral and biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed but rather embedded as being essential to the interpretative process, a practice openly acknowledged by qualitative researchers such as Langdridge (2007), Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) and Willig (2009). The next section discusses the selection of an appropriate methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

3.2 Methodology (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis)

Laverty (2003) posits that:

> *'the choice of methodology must follow from and reflect the philosophy chosen as it carries on throughout the project'* Laverty (2003, p.16).

69

According to Trafford and Leshem (2008), in addition to the philosophical underpinning, the choice of research methodology must balance the conflicting tensions of:

> *contextual matters of access to data, ethical aspects, time and resources against the technical suitability of various possible data collection techniques'* (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.38).

In addition, the practical implications of how one proposes to investigate the research topic are informed by personal competence, experience, time, funding, availability and willingness of research participants. As mentioned earlier, the research is taking place in only one UK University and a review of student numbers over the past five years indicates that the sample population of Bangladeshi students is likely to be small. My study requires detailed and in-depth data on the holistic experiences of the participants and as such needs to be a small, longitudinal, qualitative study. The following section discusses the rationale for the chosen methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was first introduced by Jonathan Smith in the UK in the 1990s to address the lack of qualitative research in Psychology and draws from Hermeneutic phenomenology (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience and the meaning of that experience as expressed by the individual in his or her own terms, without any pre-defined categories (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). IPA has mainly been used in psychological research.

My research attempts to use IPA to explore, understand and interpret the holistic lived experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university during their period of study. In IPA the 'experience' is related to something major in the individual's life. The literature review complemented by my own experiences of over twenty years of teaching international students have led me to suggest that the holistic experiences of overseas students can be defined as a 'major event / experience' in the students' lives as it is a 'life changing' event. As confirmed by the literature review the overseas study experiences impact on self-perception and identity, often resulting in the construction of new identities.

In the framework of IPA research the possibility of an in-depth interpretation, depends on shared common ground between the interpreter and the interpreted (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Within the context of this study, the sharing included common ethnicity between the participants and myself (both are of Bangladeshi origin), study mode (both studied the MBA as international students) and country of study (both studied in UK Universities). Elsewhere, Al Hazmi, (2010) a Saudi citizen studying in Australia conducted a phenomenological study of the 'lived experiences' of Saudi students in his university in Australia. He shared his Saudi nationality, Muslim religion and Arabic language with his participants.

In addition to phenomenology and hermeneutics IPA is also underpinned by idiography. Idiography is concerned with the '**particular'** and is the third major theoretical influence on IPA (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). IPA works with small samples that have been purposely selected with homogenous traits. Therefore, IPA aims to understand:

> '*how 'particular' experiential phenomena have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context*' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.29).

In the proposed research the 'particular' may be identified as;

particular phenomena - the holistic experiences of,

particular people - Bangladeshi MBA students,

particular context - studying at a UK university.

To the best of my knowledge, there has been research on Bangladeshi migrant students in the UK but no bespoke study on Bangladeshi students travelling for higher studies overseas. By using IPA, this study aims to give a voice to the Bangladeshi students studying in the UK universities.

Even though idiographic research involves small samples, Tsoukas (1989) argues that such studies are in a position to make general claims about the world. My study will argue that its claims are pertinent to the general scenario of international students. The findings may be used to provide bespoke information to potential Bangladeshi students wishing to study abroad or to provide a more in-depth perspective of some of the common experiences of most international students relating to issues such as language problems (Cağatay, 2015) and cultural alienation (Ozer, 2015). It is important not to generalise the findings and yet, at the same time, recognise the contribution of IPA data from the 'particular' perspective.

The next section highlights some of the benefits and limitations of using IPA as a research methodology.

3.2.1 Benefits and Limitations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The benefits and limitations have been discussed in detail by Smith (2004) and a summary would include the following. The main attraction of IPA is that it is an interactive process where the researcher is an active participant in the understanding of the data generated by the respondent by actively probing and seeking clarification of understanding. IPA is dynamic as it aims to explore and explain the meaning of an experience at first hand. Most importantly, the respondent is viewed as the 'expert' thereby shifting power from the researcher to the respondent as it is the latter who decides what is / is not to be divulged to the researcher. Control of the imparting of information remains with the respondent. Smith (2004) also argues that the in-depth analysis allows for validity for that group by allowing for probing and for going beyond the original articulations. It aims to read between and beyond the lines by attempting to understand not only the experiences of the participants but also the impact of these experiences on the participants.

IPA has certain limitations as it is important for the researcher to develop the skills associated with IPA and these include being able to read between the lines, self-reflexivity, actively constructing interpretations of the experience and questioning how those interpretations were arrived at. I undertook IPA training during the early and final stages of data acquisition and analysis. It is extremely difficult to bracket personal experiences whilst, at the same time, being aware of the contribution of personal experiences in the co-construction and interpretation of meaning of the respondents' experiences. There is a fine balance between knowing when and how to introduce

personal experiences into the study and ensuring that this introduction does not dilute but rather strengthen the account of the participant. The process is very time consuming as the individual interviews may last for one hour or more and the transcription is extremely detailed. It should be noted that Smith (2004) claims that the findings cannot be generalised for a wider population.

The next section considers another alternative for data collection.

3.3 Alternative Approach

I considered using an ethnographic approach but its heavy reliance on observation would make it difficult to observe a sub-group (Bangladesh MBA students in the full MBA class). This is mainly due to the difficulties of separating the participants from the rest of the class especially, for example, when working and presenting in small groups that include non-participants. The presence of non-participants in the class would make it difficult to observe and comment on the impact of those students on the participant group. The next section considers the design that was informed by the methodology.

3.4 Research Design

Research design is essentially framed within three elements; philosophical underpinning, methodological stance and chosen methods of research (Cresswell, 2009). Silverman (2006) defines methodology as:

> '*a general approach to studying research topics'* and method as '*a specific research technique'* (Silverman, 2006, p.13).

There must be compatibility between methodology and method/s (Willig, 2001; Caelli, Ray and Mill, 2003; Van Manen, 2007).

The research topic along with the researcher's personal experiences and training inform research design (Cresswell, 2009). The research topic is '***a phenomenological exploration of the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university during their period of study.***' I have a personal preference for gaining knowledge from a small sample population that allows me to generate rich data and in-depth analysis. Huang (2008) confirms:

'*Studies of international students based on a particular student cohort most often look at the experiences of international students from the researcher's own country of origin*' (Huang, 2008, p.1009).

The remainder of this chapter includes a discussion of the research questions, sample population, method of data collection, data analysis, ethical issues, validity and reliability.

3.4.1 Research questions

According to Van Manen (2007) a truly phenomenological research must ask what something is 'really' like in terms of the nature of the lived experience?' Huang (2008) posits:

'*without knowledge of the international student experience as a whole, efforts at improving the experience for this group of students may be unnecessarily disjointed... Therefore, projects which investigate the*

experience of this group of students holistically are urgently needed' (Huang, 2008, p.1004).

This study aims to respond to this urgency by seeking answers to the following questions.

Main Research question:

What are the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students in one University in the United Kingdom during their period of study?

Sub- research questions:

1. *What are the challenges faced by the students as a result of their various experiences?*
2. *How do the students deal with the challenges?*
3. *Is there a period of transition or adjustment?*
4. *How do the students ensure successful completion of their studies?*
5. *What are the perceived similarities / differences in the experiences of Bangladeshi students compared with other international students? (This relates to how the Bangladeshi participants perceived the similarities and differences between themselves and other international students).*

The nature of the questions focuses on the above mentioned aspects of what this 'holistic experience has really been like' and is such that any meaningful data could best be obtained from a small sample. Van Manen (2007) reminds us that reflection on the experiences is always retrospective and not introspective (Van Manen, 2007). However, I would argue that the two are

inter-connected as it is difficult to be retrospective without being introspective, as it is not possible to reflect on the past without looking into one's self at the present. The main question informed the selection of the sample population.

3.4.2 Selecting the Sample Participants

The selected sample could only be Bangladeshi MBA students at one UK University.

'*Sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor personal: it should be theoretically grounded'* (Silverman, 2006, p.306).

For this research the theoretical grounding is provided by the methodology and points to sampling defined as 'purposive sampling' where the sample comprises individuals who are best placed to answer the research questions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009):

'*sampling must be theoretically consistent with the qualitative paradigm in general, and with IPA's orientation in particular'* (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.48).

The participants in this research comprise only Bangladeshi students because they can:

'*grant us access to a particular perspective on the phenomena under study'* (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.49),

which are their holistic experiences during their period of study at a UK university.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis requires a purposive and homogenous sample selection with in-depth qualitative analysis of four to ten participants, with more than one interview per participant. The focus is more on number of interviews per participant and less on total number of participants. Therefore, a study of four participants interviewed twice generates data equivalent to eight interviews. The primary concern of IPA is with a detailed account of individual experience and how individuals make sense of that experience, which can be obtained in more detail and depth by conducting more than one interview with each participant (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The sample for this study comprised seven international Bangladeshi MBA students studying at the University of West London, who were each interviewed twice It is important to emphasise that the purposive and homogenous sampling is a means of ensuring similarity within the participants as well as being able to analyse the convergences and divergences between the participants as they experience the particular phenomena of being 'Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university.'

The University has two intakes per year, February and September. I approached students from both intakes during the academic year 2009, to give more breadth to the study in terms of a longer time period. There were a total of twenty-five students in the February MBA intake of which only six were from Bangladesh. The September intake had a total of twenty-one students of which only one was from Bangladesh.

My position as Programme Leader of the MBA allowed me regular access to all the students including the potential sample population. Prior to seeking their permission to participate in the research I briefed the students on the

nature of the research and also asked them to think about the holistic experiences that they were having as these would form the basis of the data that I would be seeking at a later date.

All seven students volunteered to participate in the research as it was a bespoke study about them and their experiences as Bangladeshi MBA students in a UK university. I sensed a feeling of pride in their being participants in this research and this was expressed by one of the students at the briefing meeting. I followed the guidelines of the ESRC research ethics framework (2015) and obtained informed consent after a briefing about the research, distribution of a participant information sheet and the signing of consent form (Appendices 1, 2 and 3). A more detailed discussion of ethical considerations is contained in 3.6 of this chapter.

My research sample comprised six participants selected from one cohort on an 18 month MBA course and one participant from the next cohort who was on a 15 month MBA course. The seven equalled 100% of Bangladeshi students on the MBA for the two intakes in 2009. The difference in length of study period is due to different start dates. The first group registered in February and the additional length of study was due to the summer break of four months. Their names have been changed in order to ensure anonymity and their details are as follows:

TABLE 1: Sample participant list

Name	Start Date	Expected Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Age
Mohsin	February 2009	October 2010	October 2010	34
Kaisar	February 2009	October 2010	October 2010	36
Nizam	February 2009	October 2010	October 2010	35
Zakir	February 2009	October 2010	July 2011	28
Farhan	February 2009	October 2010	July 2011	26
Rashid	February 2009	October 2010	July 2012	31
Tazeen	September 2009	March 2011	July 2011	29

IPA is focussed on homogeneity with homogeneity being defined by each study (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.50) In my study, homogeneity included studying the MBA at a UK university and being a Bangladeshi international student. The reader will note that only the first three participants' actual completion dates match the expected completion dates. This is due to the fact that they passed all their modules in the first attempt. The remaining four participants had to re-sit one or more modules, thereby delaying the completion date. The impact of the re-sits on the individual experiences is discussed in detail in the analysis and discussion chapters.

The next section considers the alternative methods for this research and describes the choice of an appropriate method as well as the times and locations of primary data collection.

3.4.3 Primary Data Collection Method and Process

Every research involves the collection of primary or original data. In phenomenological research the primary data or '*lived experience material*' is

collected by the researcher (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008, p.142). Crabtree and Miller (1999) confirm that qualitative research involving a purposive and homogenous small sample researching the lived experiences of the participants relies on primary data collection methods that enable the collection of rich and in-depth data. According to Van Manen, (2007) there are a variety of approaches to the acquisition of lived experience material and these include interviewing, observing, obtaining experiential descriptions and diaries,. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) advocate in-depth interviews and diaries as best suited for collecting detailed first-person accounts of lived experiences for IPA research. As this is a longitudinal study, I decided on two in-depth interviews per participant. I had also considered asking the participants to keep a diary of experiences for the periods between the interviews but decided against this as it would put too much pressure on the participants over a fifteen to eighteen month period that is the duration of the study period as the MBA course is extremely intensive and demanding. Another reason for discounting the diary approach was my lack of knowledge of the writing competences of the participants.

A. Method (In-depth Interviews)

In IPA the approach used involves interactive interviewing where both interviewer and interviewee are active participants and where the interviewees describe their experiences of phenomenon. The interviewer co-constructs the meaning attached to the experiences, essentially from the interview transcripts but also during the interview when seeking clarification or probing for more information. Co-construction of meaning involves the interviewer's understanding and also confirming the understanding of the

interview *vis a vis* the experience. The questions tend to be open-ended and exploratory and focus on 'meaning' rather than 'cause' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). I also returned an initial interpretation of the interview transcript to each of the participants for participant feedback of my understanding of their understanding of their experiences. This is the 'double hermeneutic' of IPA.

Gadamer's (1977) statement that:

> '*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs and understanding occurs in interpreting*' (Gadamer, 1977, p.63),

provides a succinct explanation of the approach to interviewing in IPA. Within the context of this research the '**lived experience**' of the Bangladeshi MBA students has been accessed via open-ended in-depth interviews.

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) describe the qualitative research interview as:

> '*a conversation with a purpose*' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.57).

This purpose is informed by the research question, '**what are the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university during their period of study**?' However, in IPA it is actually less of a conversation and more of the participant being given full freedom to decide which aspects of his / her experience will be revealed and reflected upon. Within the context of my research, the IPA framework allows me to work from one main question and also to a series of sub-questions.

Even though IPA advocates control of the agenda by the participant, each participant needed to respond within the broad framework of the main and sub-questions. The first round of interviews focussed on the main question plus some of the sub-questions such as for example 'what were the main challenges and how they were dealing with the challenges', while the second and final interview conducted within weeks of confirmation of award re-visited some elements of the first interview and also sought more detailed responses to the sub-questions.

The next section clarifies when and where the interviews took place.

B. Process (Time, Location and Special Considerations)

The timing of the data collection was dictated by;

- the research question

- realistic expectations from participants in terms of the time needed for the interviews

  and

- final completion of the study period.

The data has been collected via two rounds of face-to-face interviews with each participant. As the study period (3 semesters) was 18 months for the February intake and 15 months for the September intake and as the final interview would be after completion of the course, I decided to conduct the first interview in the second semester of the studies to allow the participants time to settle down and provide a rich narrative of the early as well as the latter experiences of the first semester. Both the interviews were aimed at eliciting the holistic experiences, the challenges and coping strategies as well

as any changes within the participants' views and changes in identity during the different stages of study.

All fourteen interviews with the seven participants took place between December 2009 and July 2012. All the first interviews were conducted in a quiet meeting room on the University premises. Of the final seven interviews, five were conducted in Bangladesh as the participants had returned to their home country after submitting their dissertations. The other two final interviews were conducted at the University premises.

Finally, there was one special consideration that I had to take on board. Two of the participants requested to speak in Bengali rather than English, as they were not confident that they would be able to describe their experiences effectively and comprehensively if speaking in English. Students may meet the language requirements of the course but still suffer from feelings of 'language incompetence' (Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Bamford *et al.*, 2006; Green, 2007; Brown, 2008; Liu, 2009). This issue of diffidence has been recognised by Constantine *et al.*, (2005) where both English and Mandarin were the languages used by the student interviewees and Al Hazmi and Nyland (2010) in their research with Saudi Arabian students in Australia where the students requested to speak in Arabic.

As I am fluent in three languages including Bengali, I agreed to this request. I surmised that the articulation would be richer and more fluent if spoken in the first language of the participant. Van Manen (2007) concurs:

'A person who is at home in several languages knows that one can say some things in one language that one cannot say in another language' (Van Manen, 2007, p.xiii).

IPA assumes that language communicates the reality of the lived experience (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Therefore, it was crucial to get the language of communication in the interview, right. I found myself becoming translator as well as interpreter as my interview questions continued to be in English. The interview transcripts were transliterated and translated by a professional translator. My own language competence allowed me to conduct an initial check of the accuracy of the translation. Even though I recognise that:

'*translation makes what is said in the foreign language sound flat and no translation can replace the original*' (Gadamer, 1977, p.68),

I am of the opinion that speaking in the first language resulted in richer data and that any dilution of the richness of the translated script could be reduced by verification and validation of the translation by the participant during the participant feedback stage of the data analysis. In addition, what is lost in translation is far less than what is gained in terms of rich data articulated in the first language of the speaker. Interestingly one participant (Kaisar) spoke in Bengali during both his interviews while the other (Mohsin), specifically asked to speak in English for his second interview. I agreed to as this was clear evidence of the increased confidence in articulating in the medium of English.

All the interviews were tape-recorded with verbatim transcripts. Participant names plus any information that could be used to identify the participant have been changed. Examples include first degree details, family connections and university of undergraduate studies.

The analytical process is explained in detail in the next section.

3.4.4 Data Analysis Process

Van Manen (2007) posits that:

> '*the aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience*' (Van Manen, 2007, p.36).

How do lived experiences become hermeneutic?

> '*Lived experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) gather them by giving memory to them*' (Van Manen, 2007, p.7).

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) advocate that IPA analysis needs to follow an 'empathic hermeneutic' approach where the researcher tries to understand what it is like from the point of view of the participant and using 'questioning hermeneutics' by asking probing questions from the interview transcripts aimed at unearthing what lies beyond the obvious. Both aspects of the inquiry are likely to lead to a richer analysis and to do greater justice to the totality of the person.

IPA allows the researcher to analyse the data either by following the steps recommended by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) or by incorporating additional stages or by using their own analysis framework. In addition, a

86

reading of IPA related research papers (Chapman and Smith, 2002; Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008) informed my data analysis process as in the following:

- An initial reading of the text of each interview a number of times enabled me to gain a deep understanding of the narrated experiences,

- I then wrote my exploratory comments alongside the original text,

- I returned the exploratory comments to each participant for verification of my understanding of his / her understanding of his / her experiences. This is referred to as 'respondent validation' (Silverman 2006) or 'participant feedback' (Yardley) in Smith (ed) (2009). I concur with Silverman (2006) who proposes that by taking one's findings back to the participants to verify the findings one can be more confident of their validity. Yardley in Smith (ed) (2009) also confirms that this approach ensures the avoidance of misrepresentation of the data. In addition, the audit paper trail (stages of the analysis) has enabled me to demonstrate validity and quality of the analysis.

- During the next stage, I identified the emergent themes related to the exploratory comments.

- This was followed by clustering the emergent themes under subordinate themes. There were ten subordinate themes such as, *Learning and Assessment.*

- The next stage involved collating the ten subordinate themes under super-ordinate or over-arching themes. There were four overarching themes, such as, *Challenges.*

- Once the super-ordinate and subordinate themes were confirmed, I further de-constructed the subordinate themes into sub-sections, such as, *Not passing on first attempt,* under the subordinate themes; to structure the analysis and discussion in a coherent manner.

- I analysed each interview transcript. Then I compared and contrasted the two interview transcripts for each participant. This comparison was undertaken to highlight the changes in the participant during the period between the two interviews.

- Finally, I conducted a cross-case analysis of all fourteen interviews and identified the congruences and divergences amongst the seven participants as well as the link with current literature. The discussion chapter was informed by the cross case analysis of all fourteen interviews.

The next section considers the steps taken to ensure rigour and integrity of data presentation.

3.5 Rigour and Integrity of Data Presentation

I have applied Yardley's four principles; sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and impact and importance to demonstrate the rigour and integrity of the data presentation (cited in (ed) (Smith, 2009). There is an ongoing debate on what constitutes quality and rigour in research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The free textual analysis was returned to each participant for validation. In addition, as recommended by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). I have attempted to stay true to Yardley's four principles by seeking feedback from

other IPA researchers during an IPA data analysis training workshop. In recent years qualitative rigour has been sought by proposing various ways forward for the researcher, some of which include:

(i) *'articulating a knowledgeable, theoretically informed choice regarding their approach to rigour*

(ii) *selecting an approach that is philosophically and methodologically congruent with their inquiry'* (Caelli, Ray and Mill, 2003, p.15).

Caelli, Ray and Mill (2003, p.16) propose that returning to each participant allows the participant to consider the researcher's understanding as well as re-visit their own articulation of their experiences. It also ensures transparency of the interpretation.

I have demonstrated rigour by completing the following:

> Return to each participant with my initial understanding of the interview. This is recommended in IPA and is a means of validating the intent of the statements made at the interview. Guba and Lincoln (1989) regard 'member checks' or 'participant feedback' as '*the single most critical technique'* for establishing credibility (cited in Rolfe, 2006, p.305). However, this approach may be open to criticism as it opens up the possibility of 'triple hermeneutics' since it then becomes the participant's understanding of the researcher's understanding of the participant's experiences. In spite of this probability, I believe that returning to the participant with the analysis does ensure scrutiny by the expert - the participant - as the premise of IPA is that the participant is the one with expert knowledge of his / her experiences.

It also contributes towards ensuring the validity and accuracy of the analysis within the premise of the subjective domain of qualitative research.

➢ Peer review as a form of investigator triangulation of analysis is recommended by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). The review is there to ensure that the outcomes arrived at are auditable and credible. At the IPA analysis training workshop, I was required to present my analysis for peer review by other participants in the workshop. The feedback was very positive and reassuring as it validated my interpretation of the data presented. IPA does not claim that the outcome is the only credible one as another researcher may provide a different but equally credible outcome. What is important is that the narratives should resonate or '*strike a chord'* with the reader (Pringle, Fischbacher and Williams, 2011, p.23).

Rigour can be demonstrated when the process of inquiry is underpinned by:

'*reflexivity, construction of texts that are credible to the experience and understood by insiders and outsiders*' (Laverty, 2003, p.23).

According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) IPA studies should aim to go beyond an analysis that is just 'good enough' by demonstrating explicitly the commitment and rigour in the entire study process. This means being true to the detailed process recommended by Smith (2009) by being meticulous and explicit at each stage of the data acquisition and analysis.

However, I recognise and accept Finlay's (2009) premise that any knowledge produced is:

> '*contingent, proportional, emergent and subject to alternative interpretations*' (Finlay, 2009, p.17).

I also agree with Rolfe (2006) who argues that:

> '*rather than search for an overarching set of criteria by which to judge the validity of qualitative research, we should perhaps acknowledge that there is a multiplicity of (so-called) qualitative paradigms, each requiring very different approaches to validity. There is* no *qualitative paradigm at all, so that each research methodology (and perhaps each individual study) must be appraised on its own merits'* (Rolfe, 2006, p.310).

This mirrors my ontological position of 'many realities'. The premise of my research is to recognise the 'reality' of each participant as being true from an epistemological perspective and to construct knowledge by identifying common themes that occur across the participants' experiences.

In conducting qualitative research there is a requirement to reflect as reflexivity has become an integral element of qualitative research. There is growing recognition and acceptance of the need to accommodate the researcher's perspectives, attitudes, motives and emotions during the duration of the research (Crabtree and Miller, 1999 and Langdridge, 2007). This acceptance of the credibility of the psychological input of the researcher is diametrically opposed to the traditional approach of objective and

detached research. A detailed reflective account is contained in the portfolio that complements this thesis.

All research must demonstrate transparent adherence to ethics and ethical considerations, discussed in the next section.

3.6 Ethics and Ethical Considerations

> *'All research undertaken in situations which involve people interacting with each other will have an ethical dimension; educational research is no exception and the ethical issues are often complex'* (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009, p.489).

'Research Ethics' refers to the moral principles guiding research from its inception through to completion and publication of results and beyond (ESRC REF, 2015). The reader must trust the integrity of the data and its analysis and I have ensured that this trust can be gained by providing an audit trail of the authenticity of the data and the accompanying analysis.

Primary research for Professional Doctorates is quite often conducted in the researcher's own organisation as it involves bringing about a change in practice. The University's Research Ethics Committee considered my research proposal and granted ethics clearance for the study to be undertaken with the students in my own Business School. Therefore, access to my sample population (Bangladeshi MBA students) was gained with relative ease and I was able to obtain their consent as soon as I explained the aims of the research. I have ensured that the principles of the Research Ethics Framework (REF, 2015) are adhered to and that the participants had been guaranteed anonymity through a change of their names, confidentiality

and the opportunity to withdraw at any point in time (Appendices 1 to 3). In addition, the names of all staff at the university where the research took place as well as its recruiting agent have also been changed to ensure anonymity.

It is important to recognise that ethical issues can arise at any stage of a research project. The ethical issues and possible dilemmas of researching my own students within my own workplace are discussed within the Research Governance and Organisation domain of the Researcher Development Framework (2010). This domain is concerned with responding to the ethical and legal requirements imposed by the research area. It informs professional conduct involved in the planning and completion of the research.

> *The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is a major new approach to researcher development, to enhance our capacity to build the UK workforce, develop world-class researchers and build our research base. The RDF is a professional development framework for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education. It articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages them to realise their potential* '(RDF, 2010, p.1).

3.6.1 Research Governance and Organisation

The positioning of the researcher as an 'insider' or 'outsider' is an essential requirement of qualitative studies and needs to be made transparent at the onset of the research so as to ensure ethical credibility in the generation and

interpretation of data (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Court and Abbas; 2013; West *et al,* 2013; Savvides *et al.*, 2014). My role in this study is that of an 'insider' researcher. Greene (2014) defines insider research as:

> '*that which is conducted within s social group, organisation or culture of which the researcher is also a member*' (Greene, 2014, p.1).

'Insider' research includes various commonalities such as, language, race, history, similar experiences, religion, between the participants and researcher (Court and Abbas, 2013; West *et al.*, 2013). Research is often carried out in the researcher's own work organisation. The combination of researching participants from one's own organisation results in many advantages as well as dilemmas for the 'insider' researcher. The advantages and difficulties have been recognised and articulated in a number of studies (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Wainwright and Sambrook, 2010; Bhatta, 2013; Court and Abbas, 2013; West *et al,* 2013; Wilkes and Halcombe, 2013; Savvides *et al,* 2014), and especially in the field of professional doctorates (Drake, 2010; Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Hanson, 2013; Greene, 2014). The common theme across all these studies is the recognition by the authors who were themselves 'insider' researchers that 'insider' research has a legitimate place in qualitative research, as such research often results in rich data and empathic interpretation (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). The other advantages of 'insider' research include proximity to participants, more likely to win trust of participants as an insider, intimate knowledge of the subject of enquiry as well as the organisation, less power differential between the researcher and participants as both are members of

the same organisation (West *et al.,* 2012; Hanson, 2013; Wilkes and Halcombe, 2013).

However there are also some disadvantages of 'insider' research and these include: shared background may result in participants expecting the researcher to understand without necessarily being told, complacency to probe, superficial analysis and biased interpretation of data, juggling the conflicting demands stemming from the dual identity of researcher versus colleague / manager / programme leader, imbalance of power if the researcher also happens to be the line manager or programme leader thus resulting in perceived status differences between the two parties involved in the research (Wainwright and Sambrook, 2010; Savvides *et al,* 2014).

As an 'inside' researcher, conducting the research in my place of work, I had the advantage of easy access to the participants and yet, at the same time, the disadvantage of being their programme leader and personal tutor which could be perceived as wielding power to gain consent or even using the interview information outside of the study. I assured the participants that they would remain anonymous and the research data would not be shared. I agree with Hanson (2013) and Savvides *et al,* (2014) who recognise that the shared commonalities create a level of trust that cannot be gained by an 'outsider' researcher. In my case the shared commonalities were those of country of origin, language, religion and the experiences of being an international student.

However, I was also aware that this could prove to be a disadvantage, as due to sharing a common country of origin and language the participants

might assume that I would have a better understanding of their experiences than another researcher without the same commonality, a dilemma recognised by Wainwright and Sambrook (2010) and Savvides *et al.* (2014). The majority of the participants had not studied in the medium of English, prior to their study in the UK. This was an area where there was a divergence between myself and the participants as my primary and secondary education in Bangladesh had been in the medium of English. As a result, I had not experienced the language problems identified by the majority of the participants when I first arrived in the UK. Therefore, even though I was an overall 'insider', in this particular aspect I was an 'outsider.' In addition, even though I had taught international students for over two decades, I was still unable to fully empathise with the degree of anxiety and fear of loss of face felt by the participants *vis a vis* language related challenges.

During the entire study, I was mindful of my dual positions of programme leader as well as personal tutor and not unaware of the possibilities of the following occurring during the study: participants agreeing as they didn't want to disappoint the programme leader, participants telling me what they thought I might like to know, participants withholding important information due to my multiple roles, participants fearing that information imparted during the interview might be shared in a negative manner. These concerns are not new to insider researchers especially when they are also in positions of power such as line manager of the participants (Wainwright and Sambrook, 2010). I was not the line manager but in an equally powerful position as programme leader of the participants. The navigation of conflicting

requirements of dual or multiple roles is an issue faced by many, especially when managing professional and personal demands. Similar to the dilemma articulated by Wainwright and Sambrook (2010), I could not be fully confident as to whether the participants were responding to me as a researcher or as their programme leader. There is also the question of the honesty of the participants in sharing the truth. However, this is issue is not exclusive to insider research as there is no guarantee in any type of research that the respondents are being totally honest.

It can be argued that if an 'outsider' was gathering the data, the information would be shared with just the one role of researcher. My own stance on this issue is that I believe that the commonalities outweigh the possible disadvantages and this is evident in the richness of the data obtained. As I was mindful of my dual roles, whenever there was a crossing over from researcher to programme leader, I had to remind the participant to raise the issue again, outside of the interview, in my role as programme leader. One such issue was a complaint against a colleague. This issue was raised formally outside of the interview and followed through by me as the programme leader, according to the institution's policy and processes on dealing with student complaints.

The above mentioned challenges of being an inside researcher helped develop the emotional sensitivity and intelligence needed to separate my roles of programme leader and personal tutor from that of researcher and follow the recommendation of Dwyer and Buckle (2009) who propose that the requirements of inside research should be:

'*that the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience'* (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.59).

Insider research, by its very definition, can be extremely problematic and complex but I factored this in when I chose my methodology and method of research. The awareness of the tensions acted as guards overseeing the process. I cannot claim with certainty that I am aware of the extent, if any, to which my multiple roles affected the behaviour of the participants. Similarly, I do not believe that it is possible to ensure no influence on any research involving human participants.

However, I can claim that being mindful of the dilemmas of 'inside' research I have demonstrated the integrity required by Dwyer and Buckle (2009) by providing an accurate and adequate analysis and discussion of the participants' experiences. Therefore, to the best of my knowledge, even though there was a possibility of the influence of my dual roles on the data obtained, I believe that my findings are valid and reliable.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explained how research philosophy has underpinned the methodology and design of this study. It has also discussed validity and reliability and concluded by considering the ethical issues related to the research.

Chapter 4

Findings: Analysis and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis and discussion of the research findings within the thematic framework of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Tian and Lowe (2009) contend:

> *'student experiences and their impacts can only be understood if treated holistically, as interacting parts of the students lives as a whole'* (Tian and Lowe, 2009, p.664).

This study explored the holistic experiences of seven Bangladeshi MBA students during their period of study and was set against the backdrop of internationalisation of higher education accompanied by an increasing international student population, confirmed by HEPÏ (2015) and Marginson (2015).

Unlike quantitative analysis, which focuses more on presentation of factual data, qualitative analysis is based on interpretation of data. Howitt (2010) recognised that:

> *'in qualitative research, it is not possible to make the rigid distinction between the results of the data analysis and the discussion of the data analysis that applies to quantitative research'* Howitt (2010, p.104).

Therefore, I have opted to combine the interpretive analysis and comparative discussion in this chapter.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the participants' age and employment status and start and completion dates of their courses. The second section focuses on the

thematic analysis and discussion of the interview data which is underpinned and informed by the extant literature supporting the research questions and identified themes. The third and final section presents a summary of the findings.

4.1 Participants in the Study

TABLE 2 – Sample participant list

Name	Start Date	Expected completion date	Actual Completion Date	Age	Employment Status	MBA Result
Mohsin	February 2009	October 2010	October 2010	34	Senior government officer	Merit 60% or above
Kaisar	February 2009	October 2010	October 2010	36	Senior government officer	Merit 60% or above
Nizam	February 2009	October 2010	October 2010	35	Senior government officer	Merit 60% or above
Zakir	February 2009	October 2010	July 2011	28	In between jobs	Pass 50% or above
Farhan	February 2009	October 2010	July 2011	26	In between jobs	Pass 50% or above
Rashid	February 2009	October 2010	July 2012	31	In between jobs	Pass 50% or above
Tazeen	September 2009	March 2011	July 2011	29	Director in family firm	Pass 50% or above

Singh and Armstrong (2006) contend that international postgraduate students are often older than undergraduate students, may arrive with family, leave well-paid jobs and status, have strong academic backgrounds and well defined expectations from their chosen course of study.

4.2 Analysis and discussion

This section focuses on analysing and discussing the empirical findings of the study within the framework of the main and sub-research questions:

Main research question:

What are the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students in one university in the United Kingdom during their period of study?

Sub-questions:

1. *What are the challenges faced by the students as a result of their various experiences?*

2. *How do the students deal with the challenges?*

3. *Is there a period of transition or adjustment?*

4. *How do the students ensure successful completion of their studies?*

5. *What are the perceived similarities / differences in the experiences of Bangladeshi students compared with other international students?* (This relates to how the Bangladeshi participants perceived the similarities and differences between themselves and other international students).

As the study was longitudinal with the final interview taking place after completion of the course, it became evident from the interviews that the participants considered the whole journey to have taken place within three time periods, the pre-arrival phase which included the decision to study overseas leading up to actually arriving in the UK, the actual study period

and the final post-completion period when they had had the opportunity to reflect on the overall impact on their lives of the journey.

Analysing each participant's experiences separately enabled an in-depth understanding of the whole journey from an idiographic perspective. This is essentially my subjective interpretation and it is recognised that other researchers interpreting the same data may have identified different themes in their analyses.

No changes have been made to the verbatim extracts from the interviews. The quotes from participants are presented in italics showing the respective line and interview. Three dots between lines indicate missing text. The cross reference with each participant quote is indicated as: anonymised participant name, line number, interview number such as (Tazeen: 59:1) or (Zakir: 36:2).

The following section is the cross-case analysis and discussion of the holistic experiences of the seven participants within three time-periods, identifying the convergences and divergences in the experiences and within four super-ordinate themes. The simultaneous discussion of the data is underpinned and informed by the extant literature and relevant theory.

4.2.1 Super-ordinate and Subordinate themes

Super-ordinate themes are defined as the over-arching themes and subordinate themes are the specifics that jointly inform the super-ordinate themes. Within the subordinate themes are sub-sections which enable the reader to appreciate the subtle as well as the more transparent differences and similarities in the experiences of each of the participants. There are a total of four super-ordinate and ten sub-ordinate themes that encompass the

experiences from pre-arrival to post-completion of the course and are discussed under three time period headings: prior to, actual study period and post-completion.

Themes and Time periods:

> the first theme '*reasons for study abroad and choosing the MBA'* focuses on the experiences prior to the actual study, experiences that were the triggers for the study;

> themes two and three 'c*hallenges' and 'coping strategies'* concentrate on the holistic experiences during the MBA journey and also compare the convergences and divergences between the participants and other international students, as perceived by the participants..

> theme four *'appraisal of post-completion status*' evaluates the post-completion status and identifies future plans and highlights the various changes in the individual during or as a result of the entire journey.

PRE-ARRIVAL

4.2.1.1 *Reasons for study abroad and choosing the MBA*

Any study of the experiences of international students is better informed when it demonstrates an understanding of the reasons for the study abroad. Van der Meid (2004) concurs that interest in study abroad comes at different times for different students. Therefore, the first super-ordinate theme explores the reasons for study abroad as well as the choice of country and course

Figure 1

Reasons for study abroad and choosing the MBA (super-ordinate and subordinate themes).
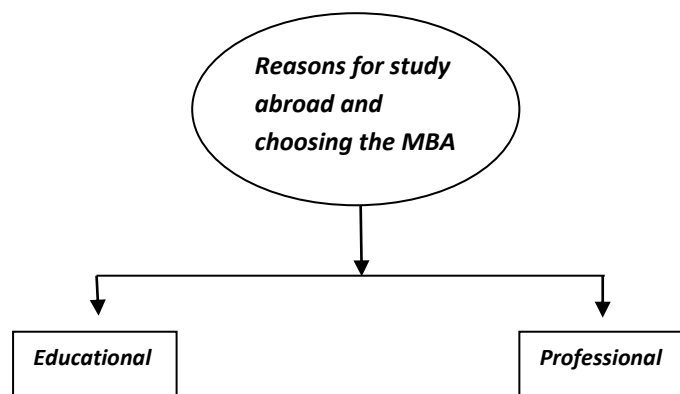
The participants in my study appeared to have two main reasons for choosing to study abroad and these are discussed under the subordinate themes relating to educational and professional drivers.

A. Educational

Education is one of the two main motivators for study overseas for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The historical link that the UK has with Bangladesh was an influencing factor in making the UK the most

107

popular destination for Bangladeshi students in 2012 (UIS, 2013). The MBA is the most sought after post-graduate qualification and its global popularity continues to increase (Zawawi and Jye, 2012). A Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC 2012) survey conducted between 2010 and 2012 of over 56,000 students confirmed that 55% of respondents wished to pursue the MBA in the USA, UK, Singapore and Australia. The combined popularity of the UK as well as the MBA could be considered to be the two main 'pull' factors during the search phase.

However, the MBA was not an automatic choice for the majority of the participants:

'*I was really keen on pursuing my post-graduate studies in Environmental Science*' (Mohsin: 8:1).

Similarly, Kaisar had also aspired towards an overseas qualification but in his chosen discipline of Environmental Studies, not the MBA.

Tazeen was beginning to come to terms with some changes in her life and felt that she needed a different focus and direction:

'*I will move on with my life after I do my masters, the masters would be just a break for me, and obviously to distract my mind, so that is basically why I came for MBA at this point of my life* (Tazeen: 33:1).

The choice of the MBA was an emotional decision.

On the other hand, Rashid, a Sociology graduate was the only participant who had made an informed choice of course:

'*We come to London with a clear goal to do our MBA, especially those of us who come from different subjects, not commerce or business'* (Rashid:6:1).

His conscious choice of the MBA indicated clarity in educational aspiration and direction.

An important influencing push factor was the recruiting agents who are considered to be the local experts who are able to guide potential students by providing detailed information on overseas educational institutions. Students find themselves overloaded with information and need proper guidance from recruiting agents. Five of the seven participants made their final choice via the same recruiting agent in Bangladesh:

'*In no time at all they processed the offer letter and all other supporting documents that were necessary to get admission'* (Mohsin:19:1),

'*As I didn't get my visa for my Bachelors I didn't want to take any risk for my Masters. So Mr. Rehan somehow helped me'* (Tazeen:26:1),

'*I will always remember the co-operation we received from Mr.Rehan and others in his organisation'* (Kaisar:14:1).

The reflections demonstrated the extreme reliance that the participants had on the recruiting agent to provide them with information and support during all the 'search and choice' phases. Huang's (2008) empirical survey of 139 international undergraduate students at a UK university asserts that choice of institution was determined by recommendations and attractive courses. My study concurs with Huang's (2008) findings that the recommendations of the

recruiting agent in identifying the UK institution where the participants eventually studied became a crucial factor in the final choice.

Another influencing factor is the expectation of the financial sponsor. Mohsin, Nizam and Kaisar had received scholarships from their employer to study overseas. The 'push' to avail the scholarship within a very restricted time resulted in the forced choice of the MBA. Mohsin and Kaisar resisted but soon realised that they were constrained by circumstances:

> *'we received the application on 11th January, we had twelve hours in hand .... then I realised that if we didn't do this my scholarship would lapse, not for the MBA, I decided to apply just so that I could avail the scholarship'* (Kaisar: 3:1).

Therefore, even though the driver was essentially educational it was underpinned by the financial opportunity offered by the employer and cost-benefit analysis was the deciding factor. Bangladesh is a poor country and yet its government had allocated scholarship funds for its officials Kaisar, Mohsin and Nizam to study abroad and they were very fortunate in availing the offer. As the MBA was the only course available at that particular point in time, they had no option but to apply for the MBA.

The findings from my study concur with the literature on the 'pull' factors of the UK as a popular destination but less so for the MBA, even though it is a much sought after qualification, especially by Asian students. The next section analyses the professional reasons for study abroad.

B. Professional

Students, especially post-graduate students travel overseas for a qualification so that they may enhance their career prospects either in the home country or pursue employment opportunities in other countries. The 'pull' factor related to professional reasons for the acquisition of any qualification, especially a Masters qualification, is well documented in relation to the MBA which is a course that is attractive to the mature and experienced individuals aiming for professional enhancement (GMAC, 2007; Zawawi and Jye, 2012; GMAC, 2012; Urban and Palmer, 2016). However, the 'push' factors for Asian students in the GMAC (2012) survey were more often career switches than career enhancement.

In my study, Tazeen and Farhan were clear career switchers as Tazeen was switching from a career in the chemical field and Farhan from Law to Business Management. The 'push' factors related to acquiring knowledge and expertise in Business related disciplines which would allow them both to progress their careers in new directions. In comparison, even though Mohsin, Nizam and Kaisar were also changing study discipline from Sciences to business, they were not switching careers as they continued to work for the Government. However, the acquisition of an overseas and higher level qualification could result in future career enhancement.

Zakir and Rashid, on the other hand clearly viewed study abroad as career enhancement with Zakir articulating:

> '*I had worked there for a long time, like past three years and I got post-graduation degree but even though they hired another accountant, give*

him senior position with higher pay.........why is that?' and '*no, not anymore, I will take another degree from foreign'* (Zakir: 4 and 5:1).

Zakir's perception that a Bangladeshi qualification was no longer adequate for promotion 'pushed' him into considering an overseas qualification as an essential pre-requisite for career enhancement.

Rashid perceived a very clear link between the study of the MBA and its contribution to the continuing growth of the Bangladesh economy:

'*MBA is very important in our country's perspective because we are an export oriented country. The ready-made garment industry has developed greatly, therefore, having an MBA is very important for our careers'* (Rashid: 6:1).

In Rashid's case the economic infrastructure and future career prospects in his home country were the main 'push' factors for embarking upon the MBA. However, whereas Zakir's decision to study abroad was an emotional reaction to adverse professional circumstances, Rashid's decision was more that of the 'rational man' planning future career enhancement. The importance of international study for professional reasons can be further confirmed via the study of Hellsten in Australia (2002) plus a 2011 QS survey of over 10,000 recruiters worldwide which concluded:

'*regardless of where a student is located it is a safe bet that he or she will enhance their employability prospects through participation in international education'* (QS, 2011, p.21).

This theme has highlighted the complex nature of student choice in establishing reasons for study abroad. My research data shows that students work through the three phases of pre-disposition, search and choice; where there are a number of influencing 'push' and 'pull' factors within the broader framework of personal, educational and professional reasons for studying overseas. In addition, the process of decision making was not necessarily linear or straightforward as there was a combination of emotional and logical factors influencing final choice.

In addition to the educational and professional reasons for study abroad, there are times when these reasons are overshadowed by personal drivers:

> *'unfortunately, I got divorced and it was really tough for me to stay in Bangladesh so.........I wasn't really running away from the situation but I wanted to do something which would divert my mind'* (Tazeen:9:1).

The adverse personal circumstances were the 'push' factors for Tazeen. Her decision to study abroad was not the result of rational cost-benefit analysis but rather a reaction to social and cultural factors as defined by Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith (1986).

Similarly, when Zakir was bypassed for promotion by a person with an overseas qualification he felt inadequate and this was the initial trigger for his search for a similar qualification.

The literature does not focus much on personal motivators, with a few exceptions, one of them being Huang's (2008) study where the students were very keen to have an international experience with other international

students at a UK university, thereby indicating a desire for multicultural experiences. In another study of Asian students in New Zealand by Butcher, McGrath and Stock (2008), discrimination in the home country was the personal 'push' factor for the Malaysian-Chinese students who were 'pushed' out of Malaysia as local universities positively favoured the Malay origin students.

The next super-ordinate theme focuses on the various challenges faced by the participants during their actual period of study, and compares them with conclusions in the current literature.

STUDY PERIOD

4.2.1.2 *Challenges*

Figure 2

Challenges (super-ordinate and subordinate themes)
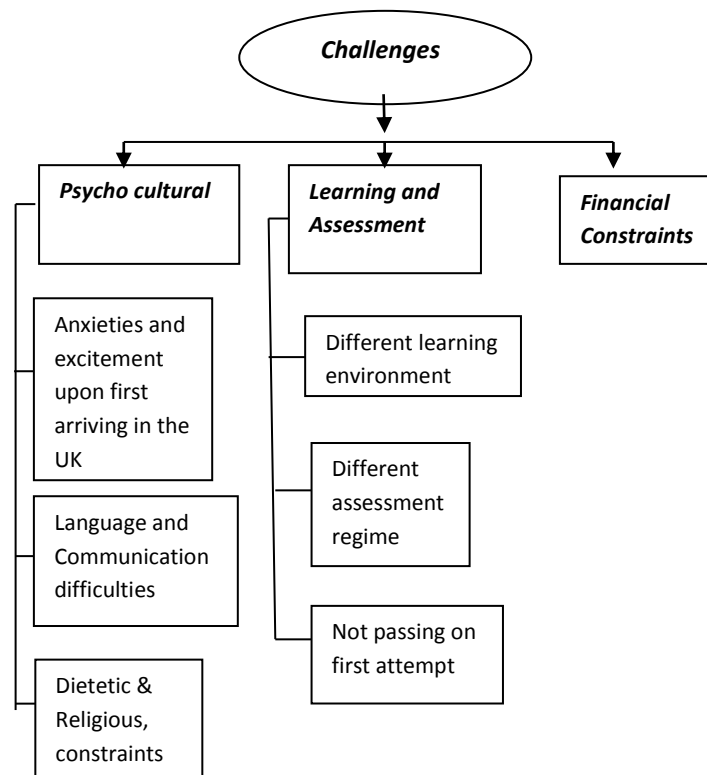
This theme considers the various challenges experienced by international students, not only in their educational environment but also in their day-to-day interactions with the host country society. It also compares the convergences and divergences in the challenges as perceived by the participants in my study. Singh and Armstrong (2006) contend that it is important to investigate the various challenges faced by international students with an aim to improving the overall student experience of a very diverse group of such students. The challenges have been studied

extensively by individual researchers, educational institutions, quasi-government and government organisations across most developed and developing countries (GMAC, 2007; UKCISA, 2008; Mustafa and Illyas, 2013).

The most frequently cited challenges relate to either emotional challenges such as homesickness or self-doubt (Van Der Meid, 2004; Thomson, Rosenthall and Russell, 2006; Brown and Holloway, 2008; Adeoye-Agboola and Evans, 2015), educational (Bamford, 2008; Zawawi and Jye, 2012; Mckinley, 2015), cultural (Campbell and Li, 2008; Ngwira and Mapoma, 2015; Shafaei and Razak, 2015) and religious (Al-Hazmi and Nyland, 2010; Weller, Hooley and Moore, 2011; Brown, Brown and Richards, 2014).

As the interviews progressed in my study, it became apparent that the various challenges faced by the participants throughout the study period, formed the base of the holistic experiences. This theme reflected the research sub-question, *'What are the challenges posed by the differing experiences?* These challenges were stressful and had to be managed in a fairly short time period, especially by the participants who were on a 15 or 18 month programme of study at the UK University.

The following sections discuss the challenges as psycho-cultural, learning and assessment or financial challenges experienced by the participants.

A. Psycho-Cultural Challenges

This subordinate theme is related to the personal psychological and cultural challenges faced by the student during the journey. Any student travelling overseas is confronted with 'coming out of the known into the unknown'

especially if the country of study is culturally, educationally and physically distant from the country of origin. If the student travels from Bangladesh to India to study, there will be many cultural similarities in language, food and climate compared to if s/he were to travel to France where the cultural differences will far exceed any similarities. The participants in my study were from Bangladesh, studying in a UK university where there were differences in cultural norms, language of communication and religious practices. This is further discussed under the following sub-sections.

A.1 Anxieties and Excitement upon First Arriving in the UK

Travel to a new country can cause anxieties originating from not knowing the geography, transport system, societal norms and dietetic choices. Travellers have to learn the art of navigating in the new country almost from the moment they first arrive in their new destination (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Brown and Holloway, 2008). International students also face similar anxieties and research on the 'early experiences of international students' indicate that students experienced anxieties or culture-shock related to personal well-being, such as quality of accommodation, language ability and communication, teaching, learning and living (Zhou *et al.*, 2008; Yue and Le, 2009; Brown and Aktas, 2012). A number of researchers have further developed the concept of culture shock including Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) who introduced the ABC model of 'culture shock'. The ABC (Affect, Behaviour and Cognition) model focused on the affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of cultural learning, stress and coping, and social identification. For the purposes of this study, some of the pertinent discussion will be framed within the ABC model. According to the 'stress and

coping' (affect) concept, individuals experience stress upon entering a new country and culture. This is evidenced by the participants in my study:

'*We were gripped by an unknown fear*' (Mohsin:37:1) ,

'*This was the first international travel for all of us. We were extremely tense and nervous at the prospect of making our way out of the airport*' (Kaisar: 16:1).

Even though Tazeen stayed with relatives for the first three weeks:

'*it was actually a little difficult for me because I had never been away from my family and this was the first time I had been away from everyone*' (Tazeen:29:1).

Mohsin and Kaisar were senior government officials and mature individuals and yet the prospect of travelling to an unknown country resulted in extremely high levels of stress and nervous tension. A summary of their feelings indicate that stress of international travel is not ameliorated by age, maturity or experience of life.

Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) argue that stress levels are highest in the early stages of change. Brown and Holloway's (2008) study of the initial stages of the international students' experiences concluded that the students suffered from anxieties relating to arrival at the airport, travelling to the university campus and settling in the new accommodation, thereby concurring with the findings of my research.

The next section explores the personal challenges that arise from not being very fluent in the language of the host country.

A.2 Language and Communication Difficulties

All international students travelling to English speaking countries such as the USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada must fulfil the English language competency tests. However, a big challenge for international students concerns English language ability and competence. Even though the students meet the English language requirements there is often a considerable gap between achieving the required test score and language competence required for study (Sovic, 2007). Language competence impacts upon learning potential. A vast majority of students originate from countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, Nepal and Korea where the medium of instruction is their first language and not English. A number of studies (Bamford, 2008; Brown, 2008; Huang, 2008; Tian and Lowe, 2009; Al-Hazmi and Nyland, 2010; Liamputtong, 2011; Mustafa and Illias, 2013; Caĝatay, 2015) on international students' language competences confirm that lack of confidence in the English language impeded communication, with the problems arising from difficulties in spoken language competence and confidence as well as understanding various accents of tutors and peers. This results in diffidence and lack of participation in class (Tian and Lowe, 2009; Al-Hazmi and Nyland, 2010; Liamputtong, 2011) thereby creating feelings of stress, anxiety, shame and exclusion (Hellsten and Prescott, 2004; Brown and Holloway, 2008; Liu *et al*, 2016).

According to the 'culture learning' (behaviour) concept of the ABC model, stress is generated by the inability to interact effectively in the new society (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Some of the participants in my study found it extremely difficult to understand the language as they moved from

one language environment to another. This resulted in 'language or linguistic shock' (Fan, 2010).

> *'I faced some initial problems due to poor listening ability and lack of confidence in English'* (Mohsin:47:1),

> '*My English was not very strong........I had difficulty in understanding and it was a big disadvantage for me'* (Rashid:16:1),

> *'another problem we faced with regards to language was the fact that we found it extremely difficult to follow the lectures of one or two teachers'* (Kaisar:24:1).

Kaisar found it difficult to understand the different accents of the tutors. All three participants had fulfilled the English language entry requirements for their programme of study and yet suffered from extreme levels of language shock. Their experiences resonate with the experiences of other international students in studies across the UK (Bamford, 2008), New Zealand (Campbell and Li, 2007), Canada (Grayson and Stowe, 2005) and Malaysia (Al-Zubaidi and Rechards, 2010) where the different accents of the tutors created difficulties in understanding lectures. The primary and secondary data demonstrate that difficulty in understanding different accents is a common problem experienced by international students across continents.

Luzio-Lockett (1998) argued that language difficulties in understanding or contributing to academic discourse had a negative impact on self-perception and self-confidence as confirmed by Nizam:

'*I'm not that much fluent in English*' (Nizam:73:1). '*I thought it might be reason for laughing of the whole class that I am not understanding the simple thing*' (Nizam70:1).

Nizam had secured a government scholarship for his study in the UK, thereby confirming a high level of academic competence but his early class experiences resulted in a fear of 'loss of face' in the presence of his peers. This impacted negatively on how he perceived his changed and less competent, new identity. This concurs with Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto's. (2005) phenomenological study of the lived experiences of 10 Chinese postgraduate students at a Canadian university which reported that the students remained silent in the classrooms and hardly participated in class interactions due to feelings of frustration, inferiority and loss of confidence.

The findings from this study are similar to Wisker's (2008) proposition where she emphasises that studying in a second language adversely affects thinking and articulation. This, in turn supports Hofstede's (1993) assertion that without linguistic competence early acclimatisation to the new environment cannot be achieved.

Another finding from this research project is that there are differences in levels of confidence at different stages of the study period. Even though the first round of interviews took place after a few months of being on the study programme; Mohsin, Nizam and Kaisar requested to speak in Bengali, their first language thereby confirming their continuing diffidence. On the other hand, Tazeen and Farhan spoke very confidently in English, during the interview. Zakir and Rashid struggled during the interview but persevered in

speaking in English. The development in competence and confidence was clear during the final interview as Mohsin chose to speak in English. This is discussed further in the next section on coping strategies.

Sawir (2005) observed:

'*When students from Asian countries enter English-speaking nations, they must adjust rapidly and learn fast, coping both academically and socially. No element is more important in this than communication: in the classroom, in dealing with university administration, and in other social sites'* (Sawir, 2005, p.568).

The first round of interviews confirmed the differences in adjustment as well as the levels of confidence in communicating in English between the participants.

With regards to the language competence of other international students in the class:

'*actually, I think the main problem all of us Bangladeshi students faced was the poor background in English. It was our basic difference with the others, especially those who came from Africa. Their English skills were better than us. Even those who went from India were better than us'* (Kaisar:69:2).

Therefore, what is clearly evident here is that there are varying degrees of language competence amongst the international students and prior exposure to the host country language results in comparative advantage.

In addition to adjusting to a new society and communicating in a different language, international students also have to contend with challenges arising from differences in diet and religious practices which is discussed in the next subordinate theme. All the participants in my study were Muslims and as such, the dietetic and religious challenges are considered as being those specifically confronted by Muslim students.

A.3 Dietetic and Religious Constraints

This subordinate theme highlights the strong links between religious beliefs and diet together with the ensuing impact on the general wellbeing of the international student. A 2011 census conducted by the Business Skills Unit, UK estimated that 18% of international students in the UK were Muslim, with the highest numbers originating from Pakistan, Malaysia and Nigeria. The findings indicate that some Muslim students felt that university provision did not meet their specific religious or cultural needs. The two principal issues were adequate prayer room provision, and student loans:

> *There is a perception that most Muslim scholars forbid student loans as they involve the payment of interest, meaning that the taking out of a student loan is potentially problematic'* (BIS, 2011, p.5).

The report suggested that faith was central to the lives of some of the Muslim students and played a strong role in decisions they made about their education (BIS, 2011).

There are clear Islamic edicts on religious and dietetic practices such as praying five times a day and not consuming alcohol or pork and only eating

meat that has been slaughtered in accordance with Islamic religious requirements (Halal). These practices guide day-to-day living in a Muslim country like Bangladesh and when Muslims travel overseas to study:

> *'They still want to practice their religions because it shows that although they are not in a Muslim country, they are still responsible Muslims regardless of where they live'* (Mukminin, Yanto and Yanto, 2013, p.38).

It is important for them to retain their religious Muslim identity.

When Muslim students travelled overseas to other non-Muslim countries, they were faced with certain challenges relating to their religious beliefs and with practices which could impact adversely on their performances (Novera, 2004; Asmar, 2005; Mostafa, 2006; Brown and Aktas, 2012; Brown, Brown and Richards, 2014). When Mohsin, Kaisar and Nizam first arrived in the UK, the university arranged for them to stay at the YMCA which was located next door to the campus. As all three were Muslims, there was a religious requirement to eat only halal food. All three faced certain difficulties:

> '*Since no distinction was made between halal food and haram food, often times I'd be forced to embarrass myself (and others) by repeatedly asking questions about which was halal and which was haram'* (Mohsin:86:1).

> *'It was a horrible scenario over there at breakfast, lunch and dinner. At every meal we would be very upset-worrying what we would eat or what they would be serving* (Kaisar:14 :2).

'But some of the items in the breakfast it was not mentioned here that what are the items and we identified some of the items that was made of pork' (Nizam: 31:1).

The constant worry of not knowing whether they were being served halal food resulted in an unpleasant experience of being served pork (forbidden for Muslims). This caused immense shock culminating in an urgent desire to remove themselves from the premises:

'*we scoped out the neighbourhood and could not find a single halal shop or restaurant. We then decided that it was not possible to continue living in that area'* (Kaisar: 20:1).

Even the university canteen did not cater for a Muslim diet:

'Their items were limited, every day I had to have chips' (Kaisar: 92:2).

The fact that all three participants could not adjust to eating any non-halal food demonstrated a very strong need for '*fidelity to the religious norms*' (Seul, 1999, p.561) and the maintenance of this fidelity was so crucial that they were willing to jeopardise their studies:

'*in the first few days we could not concentrate on our classes and therefore, I think that if we could have found the location of the halal shops then I think this would not have interfered with our class times and our studies'* (Nizam:7:2).

The importance of maintaining fidelity was evidenced in the studies of Novera (2004), Mubarak (2007) and Brown and Aktas (2012) where the Muslim students articulated their difficulties in gaining access to halal food.

The studies by Brown, Edwards and Hartwell (2010) and Yan (2015) also reiterated the importance of appropriate food in the general well-being of the international students, albeit not necessarily from a religious perspective.

Another major problem faced by some of the participants related to access to prayer facilities where again their fidelity to the religious norms was seriously challenged:

> '*I never got to say my Friday prayers in that one year and it made me feel very bad'* (Kaisar:93:2).

> '*So after coming here, I have to face a problem to finding out where the location of the mosque because on that time I could not know that much information'* (Nizam: 79:1).

These difficulties in locating appropriate spaces for their daily prayers were also experienced by Muslim students in the studies by Asmar (2005), Mubarak (2007) and Mukminin, Yanto and Yanto (2013). The phenomenological study by Mukminin, Yanto and Yanto (2013) of four Indonesian students at a U.S university concurred with the findings of my research, with regards to the problems associated with lack of access to halal food and prayer facilities. The students displayed similar feelings of remorse as shown by Kaisar when they had to forego their daily prayers.

The evidence from my research confirmed the powerful impact of the religious challenges on the identities and the overall journeys of some of the participants. Nizam, Kaisar and Mohsin experienced religious distancing as a result of their religious beliefs and practices, an experience that was similar

to the Muslim students in Asmar's (2005) mixed method national survey in Australia. This religious distancing did not sit comfortably with the three participants in my study as it was accompanied by a sense of guilt in not being able to fulfil their religious obligations. Oppong (2013) comments that:

'*Religion is positively correlated with identity formation. This implies that identity achievement is highly related with internationalisation of religious commitment'* (Oppong, 2013, p. 150.

Brown and Aktas (2012) acknowledge that little attention has been paid to the religious needs of Muslim international students even when there was a recognition that faith may impact on the overall experience. Novera (2004) and Cole and Ahmadi (2010) argue that the unique challenges faced by Muslim students on college campuses need to be given concerted attention when studying their experiences as being Muslim has an impact on the other experiences as they participated in more *'diversity-related activities than their Jewish or Christian peers'* (Cole and Ahmadi, 2010, p.134). Çelic and Snoubar (2013) argue that Islamophobia is influencing Muslim students to go to other Muslim countries for study, rather than the west. '*Religion is set to be the new battleground*' (Hellen, 2015, p.13). One London University has launched a 'religious literacy programme' in the autumn of 2015 to raise awareness of the appropriateness of serving certain foods as well as acknowledging and respecting the differences in religious clothing, symbols and practices (Hellen, 2015, p.13).

The aforementioned challenges stemmed from psycho-cultural factors such as fear of the unknown, language diffidence and religious beliefs.

The next section considers the pedagogical challenges of learning and being assessed in a new and different environment.

B. Learning and Assessment Challenges

As with adjusting to the cultural norms of a new country, students also have to contend with studying in a different way. The participants in my study confronted many pedagogical challenges such as learning in a new environment, studying a new discipline focussing on an ethnocentric curriculum, a different assessment regime and not passing assignments on first attempt. The term 'ethnocentric' was first coined by the Department of Education and Science (1985, p.315) to describe the curriculum in UK schools as being dominated by British values of imperialism and racial superiority.

B.1 Different Learning Environment

Learning is an elusive and complex phenomenon as it is difficult to provide a universal definition of learning.

> '*Learning involves change. It is the process of gaining knowledge and expertise'* (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2011, p.11).

Arrival in a new country is often linked to confronting a new learning environment which is different, especially for students from Asia venturing for higher studies to western countries such as UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The differences are related to ways of learning and assessing. The two main schools of thought that feature in discussions by writers on international student learning, teaching and assessment are the Socratic or

dialogic (two-way) approach of debate and argument (Western) and the Confucianist or didactic (one-way) approach of memorising and regurgitating (Eastern). According to Choo (2007), Durkin (2008), Pringle, Fischbacher and Williams (2008) and Subhash (2013) the Socratic or dialogic approach to learning involves the ability to understand, dissect and critique knowledge that is presented to the students through dialogue and debate. On the other hand, the Confucianist or didactic approach to learning accepts, memorises and re-produces the knowledge that is presented. There is absolute acceptance and no dialogue or critiquing. This has resulted in a demarcation between Western (dialogic) and Eastern (didactic) approaches to learning. A more detailed discussion of the pros and cons of these two approaches to learning lie outside the scope of this chapter. However, as international students return to their home countries and some become teachers, they take back with them newly acquired skills relating to a dialogic approach to learning and teaching. They become competent in both western (dialogic) and non-western (didactic) approaches to learning (Song, 2016). This could impact on future generations of students who might experience a dialogic approach to learning in their home countries.

The participants in my study had been used to a didactic approach in teaching and learning. The tutor was the expert and imparted knowledge that was accepted without any challenge. Assessments were generally exam based and tested memory more than understanding. The approach had been appropriate resulting in academic success in the home country. However, upon arrival in the UK they were expected to adopt the dialogic approach to learning.

Both Nizam and Kaisar articulated feelings of anxiety and tension when first experiencing the new learning environment, resulting in erosion of self-confidence:

so the new subject matter and coupled with the listening problem, this create a significant problem for me – because I could not understand what my teacher was saying' (Nizam:50:1)

'*I was in fear that I thought I could not pass the module and I could not get the degree'* (Nizam:54:1).

'*at one point it crossed our minds that we would probably not be able to graduate because we didn't understand anything during the lectures'* (Kaisar:25:1).

This situation was extremely difficult for academically competent (scholarship students) individuals who were reduced to such high levels of incompetence:

'*we achieved first class throughout'* (Kaisar:52:1).

Kaisar found it difficult to come to terms in a learning environment where his prior excellent educational achievements did not contribute to academic competence in the MBA study experience.

Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005, p.276) describe these feelings of despair as '*existential crisis.'* This existential crisis further delayed the adjustment required for embracing the new dialogic learning environment. Nizam and Kaisar observed:

'and regarding the academic problems that I faced....I think the people, most of the people from the sub-continent I think they have – they experience lots of problems similar to me.'(Nizam:40:2)

'in class the language problem was not only for me but for others too' (Kaisar:80:2).

It was their perception that language and communication problems were also experienced by the other international students on their course.

The experiences of the research participants were mirrored in other studies where students, especially from Asian countries, had also experienced learning in a more didactic manner (Durkin, 2008; Kingston and Forland, 2008). This approach had been successful in their home countries but upon arrival in the Western countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia they were expected to unlearn the didactic approach and learn the dialogic approach to learning (Ridley, 2004; Clifford and Joseph, 2005; Bamford, 2008) resulting in learning shock. The experiences of the participants in my study confirmed that there was a strong link between communication competence, familiarity of discipline studied and the learning experience.

The next section considers the challenges of studying a new discipline within the new learning environment.

B.2 Studying a new discipline

This section analyses the challenges faced by those participants whose first degree was in a non-business discipline. The MBA is either a multi-disciplinary generalist MBA or a specialist course such as MBA in Marketing

or Finance. The generalist MBA (the one studied by the participants in this study) is a multi-disciplinary course comprising different disciplines such as, for example, Psychology, Sociology, Marketing, Accounting, Operations, falling within the broad framework of a business curriculum. Therefore the very nature of the multi-disciplinary content of the MBA can be challenging for all non- business studies students.

Six of the participants in my study had studied non-business subjects at undergraduate level and, as such, were unfamiliar with business subjects. The articulation of the challenges by three of the participants demonstrate 'learning shock' arising from differences in prior discipline knowledge:

'*I faced some problems when I came here to do my MBA. Since I was a Social Science student, I didn't know anything about Accounting or Marketing'* (Rashid:7:1),

'*each and every subject will be tough for me because I have to do it against my will because I'm so comfortable with science subjects'* (Tazeen:73:1),

'*he has to face another problem when he entered in the class because ...... most importantly, the course content is very much unfamiliar with him'* (Nizam:45:1)

These challenges were further compounded for Nizam by his communication difficulties. Nizam would revert to third person speech even when speaking about himself.

Farhan observed that a substantial number of the MBA students were from a non-business background:

> '*I'm not sure – about 70% were not from business background in the MBA...we were all in the same boat, things were new to us*' (Farhan:18:2).

Being in class with very few business students has certain advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that as the majority struggle with new business modules there is less concern with loss of 'self-esteem.' The main disadvantage is that the low level prior knowledge and understanding of the subjects impacts negatively on the rigour of academic discussions in the classroom.

The overall outcomes for some of the participants were high levels of stress, learning and language shocks and these resonated with the findings of Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005), Ridley (2004), Bamford (2008), Durkin (2008) and Tran (2008) where international students experienced discourse and learning shock related to pedagogical differences between the formats prior and current learning. Non-business undergraduates and especially those with natural science backgrounds found it extremely difficult to transfer to learning social science subjects. The studies by Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) and Durkin (2008) recognise that a main reason for the difficulties arise from the fact that social science subjects are more fluid as knowledge is not absolute but relative. Students from a natural science background struggle with the concepts of different solutions to the same problem in business case scenarios, with each solution being

considered as possibly correct, as opposed to a mathematical problem where there is only one correct solution (Durkin, 2008).

The next section highlights the challenges of studying a curriculum that is extremely intensive and also ethnocentric

B.3 An intensive and ethnocentric curriculum

In addition to new disciplines the MBA students, like other postgraduate students in the UK, face the challenges of completing their course within a very short period (12 to 18 months) as well as having to study an ethnocentric (western) curriculum.

The challenges of an intensive postgraduate curriculum are well documented in a number of studies across the UK and indicate that students have to acquire the skills needed to cope with a large amount of reading and analysing within a short transition or adjustment period (Bamford, 2008; Pringle, Fishbacher and Williams 2008), together with a heavy workload (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005; Wu and Hammond, 2011) and the requirement of many additional hours of outside class study (Subhash, 2013).

The participants in my study also had to contend with an intensive curriculum:

‘the MBA course matter covered a wide number of areas and what I found particularly difficult was the tremendous pressure with coursework’ (Mohsin:48:1),

> '*we have heard that IBA, the MBA department in Dhaka university does not make students complete as many credits in two years as we complete here in the first semester'* (Rashid:14:1).

This benchmarking with the most prestigious business studies department in Bangladesh created a sense of pressure vis a vis expectations from his UK University. Rashid soon realised that not only would he be challenged by new subjects but also by the breadth and depth of the entire curriculum, thereby having to cope with two distinct and rigorous challenges. The next section considers the challenges presented by an ethnocentric curriculum.

Much has been written about internationalisation of curriculum and whether it should be regional / ethnocentric or geocentric (Caruna and Hanstock, 2003; De Vita and Case, 2003; Bell, 2004; Clifford and Joseph, 2005). The arguments acknowledge that some disciplines cannot be taught from a universal perspective as the models and theories are essentially Western and that students should be prepared to learn the curriculum of the host country, accepting that academics resist being forced to include international content within the curriculum which would make it geocentric (Hellsten, 2002) since it involves additional study on their part (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005; Kingston and Forland, 2008; Campbell and Li, 2008; Durkin, 2008; Marginson, 2015).

The increasing numbers of international students in UK classrooms create challenges for the teaching staff, the main one being the curriculum content. In a classroom with essentially UK students it would be pertinent to use mainly UK examples as pedagogy is informed by the context and cultural

values of the UK society (Subhash, 2013). However, where there are many international students studying a business focussed curriculum and the majority of examples used by tutors are from the UK, the implications are that the ethnocentric approach to the teaching does not take on board the lack of prior UK knowledge resulting in consternation amongst the international students:

'*when our tutor Mr. Douglas gave us lectures and for example like Sainsbury, Tesco ...we were in the dark. We didn't get in touch of those ideas – superstores and the brands'* (Mohsin:70:2).

Challenges similar to those faced by Mohsin are found in the studies conducted by Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto (2005) and Sovic, (2007). In addition, studies by Bamford (2008) and Durkin (2008) have identified the lack of tutors' knowledge of their students' countries. This lack of knowledge can undermine what is being taught as there is no attempt to provide a culturally inclusive pedagogy (De Vita and Case, 2003; Song, 2016). There is also an underlying belief by some developed country academics that their academic ethnocentric approach is the best as confirmed by studies in the UK (Durkin, 2008; Kingston and Forland, 2008; Subhash, 2013), New Zealand (Campbell and Li, 2008), and Australia (Hellsten, 2002; Bell, 2004). This has been criticised by Kingston and Forland (2008) as 'cultural imperialism' and by Wisker (2000) who confirms that the accepted norm is that the international students should be making all the adjustments in order to benefit from a 'British' education. Marginson (2015) provides a more holistic explanation by recognising that along with cultural superiority and inertia, a more geocentric or globally focussed approach is hampered by

136

resource constraints as well as the increasing numbers and diversity of the international student population in the UK. Song (2016) goes a stage further by arguing that the combined exposure to western and eastern approaches to learning result in the international students' being more competent in their reasoning ability than their western counterparts.

The problems related to an ethnocentric curriculum are further evidenced in the next section where Mohsin struggled with his first assessment which required him to analyse the UK car industry, something he was totally unfamiliar with.

B.4 Different Assessment Regime

This section discusses the challenges of being assessed in a different context. Historically, the dialogic approach to assessments in Western societies has included a variety of methods that test the students' abilities to critique, such as case study analysis, reflective portfolios and business reports. In comparison the main mode of assessment in Eastern societies has been the use of exams that essentially test memory with very few essay type assessments. The participants in my study had been used to the didactic mode of assessment prior to their study of the MBA:

> *'what we did in Bangladesh was basically memorise a theory just before an exam…..or we used to write our answers in a way that we knew would get us the maximum marks'* (Kaisar:54:1).

Even though prior learning was successful and had its legitimate place in Kaisar's academic success to date, he had to learn new ways of

demonstrating his knowledge by researching, analysing, synthesising the information and presenting in a report format as opposed to memorising for an exam. This same struggle was evidenced in Rashid's articulation:

'*here we had to do critical analysis...brain storming which we had never done before – it took some time for us to cope with these new methods of learning'* (Rashid:9:1).

Likewise, Mohsin was severely challenged,:

'*we remained in the dark about how to complete assignments......given that I had set foot in the UK barely about 24-25 days ago, this was tantamount to a bolt from the blue'* (Mohsin:52 and 55:1).

The pressure of having very little time to adjust to the new learning environment was evidenced in Mohsin's articulation. The challenges identified by the participants in my study were also reflected in the studies conducted by Choo (2007), Campbell and Li (2008) and Tran (2008). Campbell and Li's (2008) empirical study of 22 second year Asian undergraduate students at a university in New Zealand confirms that students struggled to understand the assessment requirements as they were rarely deconstructed and explained by the tutors. Similarly, Choo's (2007) Chinese students in three UK universities could only understand 50% of the exam questions, even after a year of study. In addition, Tran's (2008) Chinese students struggled with lack of clarity in the assessment guidelines, grading criteria, structuring of assessment and with a lack of guidance by tutors relating to academic expectations. This was in direct contrast to their prior experience in China where detailed guidance was provided by the

tutors. It could be argued that student expectations were linked to their having been dependent learners in their erstwhile educational experiences whereas the western education systems encouraged the taking of more responsibility and autonomy for own learning. What is noteworthy here is that there is an assumption on the part of higher education institutions that all international students should automatically acquire the independent learning skills, without any bridging support.

Some of the participants also perceived a lack of transparency in marking and feedback. The next section highlights the important link between the integrity of marking assessments and the perception of students of the degree of integrity in the marking. The findings from this study indicate an overlap between the two. More than half of the participants expressed their misgivings with the marking system and the dissonance between the feedback comments and the actual grade. This experience is not necessarily specific to international students.

Both Zakir and Mohsin's experiences on the course relating to the marking of their assessments were mixed. In the first semester Zakir had to resit two assessments:

> '*I think this was my fault because I saw other assignments and saw that there is the lacking in my assignments and reports. Yeah, that's alright, its my fault and I can do resit but in the second semester, you know aah I don't want to mention*' (Zakir: 74 and 75:1).

Zakir had accepted the weaknesses in his assessment as identified by the tutor feedback comments. However, he had another resit in the second

semester where tutor feedback caused confusion and frustration in Zakir's mind:

> '*he said like comments …… but I am not supposed to give everything over there – it's a proposal.... if he wants everything you should mention that you have to elaborate, you shouldn't give... word limitation*' (Zakir:88:1).

Zakir summed it up as an experience where he could not fathom what was expected of him as he experienced dissonance between the detail he was expected to include within a restricted word limit. The underlying concern here related to lack of transparency and clarity in explaining the exact requirements of the assessments. If the student has difficulty in understanding the assessment brief and the tutor is perceived as changing the requirements then the confusion results in frustration for the student.

In contrast, Mohsin was initially very complimentary of the robust grading criteria used for providing feedback, especially as it could inform the writing of future assessments:

> '*yet another point worth raising was that ...evaluation system is excellently formatted. The marks allocated for each section, the marks I obtained, my particular strengths and weaknesses – everything is reflected in the evaluation sheet which I found to be extremely helpful*'(Mohsin:62 and 63:1).

However, he also had a similar negative experience on the same module as Zakir; he perceived a lack of transparency in the treatment of students as

there were inconsistencies in the application of the university's regulations relating to submission deadlines:

'at the same time I would like to point out that I observed that there was some non-transparency in ... evaluation procedure. For instance, late submissions weren't being counted. Many who had submitted two to three weeks late had received 70 or near about (Mohsin: 127 and 128:1).

Mohsin found the inconsistencies in the marking of the module extremely frustrating:

'I had a very difficult time with all this since this isn't what I expected from ... evaluation system. I got in touch with the Head of the Business School' (Mohsin: 134 and 135:1).

Similar to Mohsin and Zakir, Farhan also experienced dissonance:

'feedback should be a bit like more clear...When you say someone is outstanding you expect a 80% - we felt the comments never matched the marks' (Farhan:32:1).

Such dissonance makes it extremely difficult for the student to understand the accurate standard of his work.

One can argue that the assessment brief at Masters level requires students to think beyond the obvious when attempting the assessment. However, there is a need to recognise that the international students, as identified in my study and other research, also have to contend with differences in language, curriculum, approaches to learning and types of assessment;

which make it extremely difficult for them to comprehend assessment requirements, unclear feedback comments and dissonance in marking.

The combination of the various learning challenges resulted in some of the participants not passing all their modules at first attempt. This created further challenges that are discussed in the next section.

B.5 Not Passing on First Attempt

When students attempt assessments they expect to pass. Failure to pass on their first attempt may result in negative emotions such as erosion in confidence, fear of delay in completion and worries related to additional finances for funding a longer stay in the country. Anxiety can impact negatively on academic performance (Adeoye-Agboola and Evans, 2015) whilst personal well being has a positive effect on academic performance (Sibley, Hamilton and Chugh, 2015). Five of the seven participants were unable to pass all their modules at first attempt and this increased their anxiety levels. In addition, only three completed the course on schedule (eighteen months), three had to re-sit some modules and completed after twenty-four months whilst the seventh participant completed in forty months. This scenario clearly indicates that passing on first attempt was difficult for the majority of the students in my study.

There is limited literature on the experiences of international students who had to re-sit their modules. The longitudinal nature of my study made it possible to identify the challenges of the new learning environment at various stages of the learning journey of Master's students, such as the first stage being the completion of the taught modules and the final stage being the

dissertation stage. The challenges of re-sitting modules and especially the research proposal and dissertation resonate across the experiences of a number of the participants:

> *'I mean educationally if I think yes there were like a lot of problems I was facing, like when I had a few re-sits and when my dissertation proposal was being rejected like five or six times, I was really having this feeling that may be its going to take quite some time for me to finish it'* (Tazeen:7:2).

Longitudinal studies (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005; Campbell and Li, 2008; Gu, 2009) indicate that students' self-confidence improve as they become acclimatised to their new learning and assessment regimes. However, there is very limited research that charts the peaks and troughs in confidence levels as students face varying obstacles over the study period. Tazeen's experiences of having to re-sit at various stages of her study period had resulted in deep erosion of confidence.

Similarly, Mohsin faced a problem when he failed to pass his research proposal on his first attempt:

> '*this matter is inextricably linked with whether or not I get a degree, whether or not I will remain in service and whether or not I'll have to reimburse the Government £30, 000. The fact that I have received consistent grades has no implication whatsoever here. The only thing that is of any significance here is that I did not pass my research proposal'* (Mohsin: 138, 139 and 141 and 142:1).

Rashid had to re-sit four modules including his research proposal and dissertation over a period that spanned more than three years. In addition, Rashid had to contend with the differences in marks between two markers:

> '*I passed but I failed because my supervisor - I got from my supervisor good marks, but second marker according to my second marker my feedback was 'your conclusion is not a follow-up of my literary review it could be better'* (Rashid:10:2).

Disagreement between markers, especially when there are differences in classifications, can be extremely frustrating for all students as there is scope for questioning the validity of academic judgement of the assessment.

The increased stress of having to do re-sits mirrored the conclusions of Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005):

> '*the causes of learning shock tend to be mutually reinforcing*' whereby one problem feeds another and another; often resulting in '*exhaustion, performance anxieties and failure*' (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2004, p.295).

Brown's (2007) study indicates that other issues such as pastoral and financial concerns also re-emerge as stress levels relating to successful completion become paramount.

The final challenge discussed in the next section relates to financial difficulties experienced by self-financing students including those whose completion period was extended due to re-sits.

C. Financial Constraints

The majority of international students travelling from developing to developed countries face financial hardships mainly due to the unfavourable exchange rates of developing economy (Bangladesh, India) currencies against the currencies of developed economies such as the UK and USA. Secondly, only a small minority of students are sponsored by their employers or in receipt of a scholarship as the vast majority are privately funded either by parents or personal savings. Thirdly, the cost of living in the developed countries is far higher than the developing countries. Finally, employment restrictions (20 hours per week in the UK and Australia) create additional difficulties:

> '*we are struggling for jobs as well, because anyone from Nepal, Sri Lanka or Iceland so that they can have a job but as a Bangladeshi international student we are not allowed to do more than 20 hours, so what happened, employers they don't like, they would prefer them rather than any Bangladeshi student so that's a problem*' (Zakir:19:2).

These reasons are well documented in reports such as United Kingdom Council for Overseas Students Affairs (UKCOSA, 2004) and United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA, 2008). In order to subsidise their living expenses many students accept low-paid part-time jobs while studying.

Zakir struggled to combine studies with part-time work to subsidise his living expenses:

> '*but when I started my assignments, then it was more hard because after finishing the class I have had to go for work over there, I will work*

145

like 12 or 12:30 and back home at 1 o'clock and then I had to do my

assignments and sometimes maybe I didn't sleep at all; maybe half

night passed doing assignments and in the morning I came directly

here for my next class' (Zakir: 38:1).

A study of American international students, in an Irish university, by O'Reilly, Hickey and Ryan (2015) concluded that:

'*Financial stressors can distract international students from their academic studies, adversely affect their stability, and threaten the status that students have become accustomed to in their home country*' (O'Reilly, Hickey and Ryan, 2015, p.89).

Rashid stated that most students from Bangladesh faced financial difficulties as their parents could only subsidise 50 to 60% of their tuition fees. They had to start earning a living virtually from day one:

'*the rest 40% we are expected to earn and pay ourselves. But it is difficult to do so, considering the time and effort we have to put towards studying*' (Rashid:13:1).

Students such as Zakir, Farhan and Rashid, who did not receive full funding for their studies had no option but to work alongside their studies even when they were registered as full-time students. This study shows that the only students who did not face financial difficulties were those in receipt of scholarships such as Nizam, Mohsin and Kaisar or who could be fully supported by parents such as Tazeen.

'*Another thing is that we went there during recession period. This did not affect us as we were on scholarship and had a good amount of money with us. But people who were not on scholarship, but self-financed, and would work and study, faced a huge challenge. It was difficult to take the whole tuition fee from home. For us, there were no problems as such. Actually we studied very smoothly. Personally we didn't face any hazard or any sort of problem*' (Kaisar:49:2).

Of these four, three received merit awards for their degree and it could be argued that as they did not experience the additional financial stressors, time and energies could be devoted to achieving better grades. In their study of international students at a UK university, Adeoye-Agboola and Evans (2015) concluded that it is important to appreciate that combining study and work could impact negatively on performance.

The findings from my research demonstrate that the holistic challenges arise from psychological, cultural, financial and academic issues and are inextricably linked to and impact upon each other, as also confirmed by Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005). The next theme analyses the coping strategies of the participants.

4.2.1.3 *Coping Strategies*

Figure 3

Coping Strategies (super-ordinate and subordinate themes)
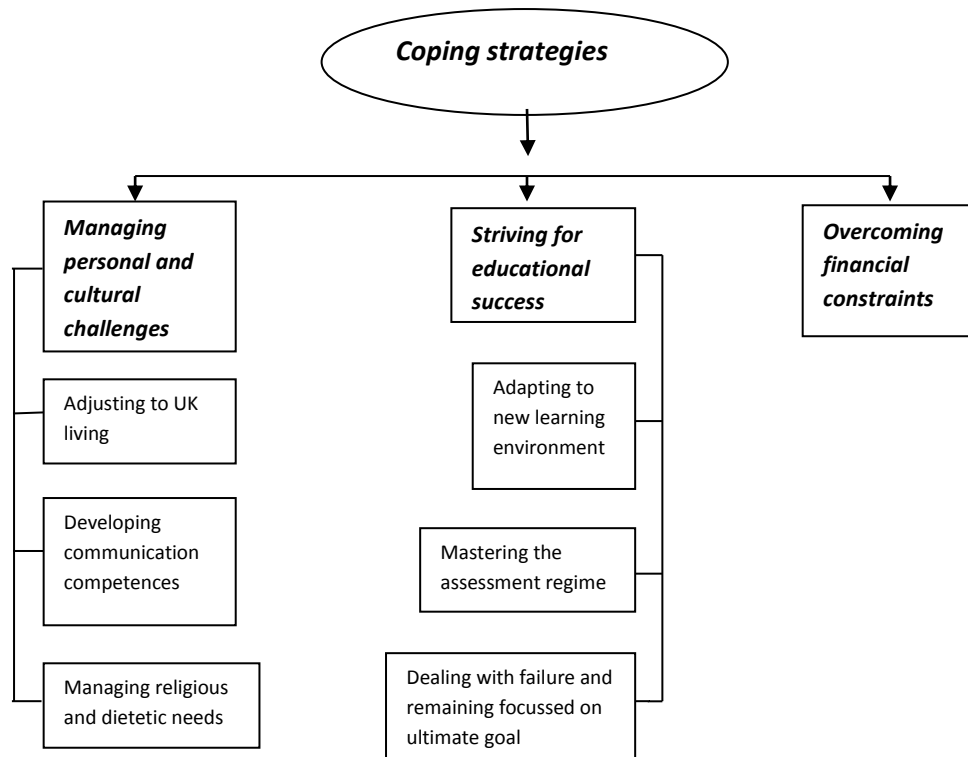
While a study of challenges is important in understanding international students' experiences, it is equally important to be informed of the various coping strategies employed to address these challenges as this enables a fuller understanding of the sojourn.

This super-ordinate theme addresses the following sub-question:

How are the challenges dealt with?

How is successful completion of studies ensured?

The theme focuses on the participants' readiness and ability to deal with the challenges by formulating various coping strategies. There are only a few

studies that focus entirely on the coping strategies of international students (Sicat, 2011; Mak and Kim, 2011) while others refer to the coping strategies within their wider research framework of either cultural and / or educational investigations (Constantine *et al.*, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2006; Shapiro, Ozanne, and Saatcioglu, 2007).

The following subordinate themes and sub-sections address the coping strategies adopted by each of the participants. The discussion is framed within a 'Ways of Coping' model of four different types of coping strategies proposed by Folkman *et al.*, (1986),

- Active emotional coping – actively coping in an emotional manner

- Passive emotional coping – coping but in a more passive manner

- Active problem coping – actively consider various options for resolving the problem

- Passive problem coping – procrastinating or avoiding solving.

Emotional coping essentially focuses on enduring the situation whilst problem coping is a constructive approach to resolving the situation. This model has been applied by a number of researchers such as Redwan *et al.*, (2009), Li, Chen and Duanmu (2010) and Zawawi and Jye (2012). The next subordinate theme explores the strategies for addressing the psycho-cultural challenges discussed under the previous section.

A. Managing Personal and Cultural Challenges

International students have to rely on different mechanisms for dealing with the psycho-cultural challenges as an inability to do so can impact negatively on the academic progression. Each of the participants had faced many

common as well as unique challenges such as Tazeen facing a major challenge resulting from her divorce:

'*I thought that the only way to overcome the situation because I didn't want to fall back – was to move on with life'* (Tazeen:10:1).

Luzio-Lockett (1998) argued that the level of change and adjustment that was required on the part of the student forced the student to squeeze the original identity into one that could fit in the new academic and social community and became the 'third culture' identity. The participants in my study confirmed that generally the intensity of the challenges decreased as they adjusted to living and studying in the UK. This experience was mirrored in studies by Wong in the USA (2004) and Wu and Hammond's (2011) ethnographic study of Asian postgraduate students in a UK university. The coping strategies are discussed further in the following sub-sections.

A.1 Adjusting to UK Living

Many studies have identified the challenges related to first arriving in a foreign country but this is not followed up, to the same extent, by literature on coping strategies. Brown and Aktas (2012) reported that Turkish students indicated that receipt of specific university and course information eased pre-arrival and first arrival anxieties. Brown and Holloway (2008) also identify the importance of word-of-mouth and together with dedicated websites for new students, as crucial in addressing early arrival anxieties.

Kaisar, Mohsin and Nizam were met at the airport by a university representative:

'*So we were all happy with the reception'* (Kaisar:16:1).

The presence of the representative released the anxiety and fear of being in unknown territory and enabled 'passive emotional coping.'

Soon after arrival the majority of international students gravitate towards co-nationals or other international students, confirming Byrne's (1969) 'similarity attraction' hypothesis such as Far Eastern students developed strong bonds with other co-nationals or with students from the same geographic region. Equally home (UK) students sought support and friendship from other home students (Seymour and Constanti, 2002). The attraction towards co-nationals or other international students from a similar culture is confirmed in studies by Wu and Hammond (2006,) Savicki et al., (2007), Huang (2008) Shafaei *et al.*, (2015) and Shafaei and Razak (2016). These studies also confirm Ward, Bochner and Furnham's (2001) '*cultural distance'* hypothesis that the bigger the cultural distance between individuals the more difficult it is to interact positively.

My study concurs with the '*Similarity Attraction'* theory and the literature (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006; Yue and Le, 2009) as Mohsin, Kaisar, Nizam and Farhan actively chose to live, study and socialise (active emotional coping) mainly with each other:

> '*I must say that most Bangladeshi students lead a fairly self-concentrated existence and tend to shy away from cultural integration. So we interacted mostly with other Bangladeshi students, be it at TVU or at our residence; we Bangladeshi students lived together'* (Mohsin: 78 and 79: 1).

Farhan identified a similarity with other international students related to cultural distance from the host nation. A large number of students in the class were from the countries of the Indian sub-continent:

> '*again in our class it was many Indian, Bangladeshi students so that was another thing, there was more of the culture gap'* (Farhan:19:2).

This supports the '*Cultural Distance*' hypothesis. The four participants did not avail the opportunities presented by the multi-cultural environment in London. This strategy was mirrored by the majority of international students in studies in the UK by Wu and Hammond (2011) and Brown (2008). The course duration for postgraduate programmes is far less than that of undergraduate programmes. It could be argued that the shorter length and intensive curriculum allowed for little time to expend on becoming acquainted with host country or other country nationals.

In contrast, Zakir and Tazeen's active emotional coping approach included friendships with a wider group of international students including co-nationals:

> '*I got like so many friends from my professional side and my colleagues and my friends in university and I got one community as a Bengali community from East side and I think I got emotional support from them'* (Zakir:27:2).

Zakir had been able to adjust to the multi-cultural environment of London and made friends in all the environments where he interacted with other individuals. These friends formed his support groups.

Similarly, Tazeeen's main focus for easing her early anxieties was to locate other students from her study programme:

> *'when I went to the Café I got introduced to two of my MBA friends and I was a little relieved to think that now I could start interacting with them'* (Tazeen:59:1).

The experiences of Zakir and Tazeen mirrored the findings of Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006), Savicki *et al.*, (2007) and Huang (2008) whose students were comfortable with inter-cultural contact thereby challenging the '*Similarity Attraction'* theory.

The differences in the coping strategies of the participants indicate that even though the research evidence balances heavily on the side of the 'Cultural Distance' and 'Similarity Attraction' theories, it is not a given that this is always the case. Individual personality differences influence the choice of the coping strategy adopted. According to Hirai, Frazier and Syed (2015) certain personality factors such as extraversion, openness and neuroticism are significant in predicting the coping abilities of international students. The former two are linked with actively seeking out others and welcoming new experiences, leading to better psychological adjustment whilst neuroticism results in poor adjustment.and high levels of stress. Tazeen and Zakir were more open to intercultural contact than Mohsin, Nizam and Kaisar.

A number of participants had been challenged by their inability to communicate competently due to language difficulties. The next section considers their coping strategies.

A.2 Developing Communication Competences

Developing communication competence is crucial for successful navigation of the challenges faced as the inability to communicate effectively impinges on progress in both social and educational situations (Wu and Hammond, 2011, Caĝatay, 2015, McKinley, 2015, Pham and Tran, 2015).

Mohsin, Kaisar, Nizam and Rashid had struggled for weeks to overcome their communication difficulties. As Mohsin, Nizam, Kaisar and Farhan were living together they adopted a pro-active approach to alleviating the problem:

> *'but later on we were four Bangladeshi students lived in the same residence in the UK and we have maintained a rule that is, after evening we would not use our Mother language which is Bengali, rather we would use English'* (Mohsin:5:2)

> *'and I think it helped a lot to us actually to enrich our listening ability and at the same time it helped develop some of my speaking ability as well'* (Mohsin:6:2).

This approach resonates with that of Brown's (2008) postgraduate students at a UK university who, despite the stress of speaking in a foreign language, consciously sought to improve their English language and communication skills by mixing with UK and other international students.

Both Kaisar and Nizam needed time to acclimatise:

> '*we did manage to overcome this phase and afterwards we found that ...... we may not be able to speak very well but we are able to follow any*

kind of lecture, our conversation skills have also really improved' (Kaisar:28 and 29:1).

'it took more than a month, because after a month I could get set in my academic life and I could understand the accent of the British people, not fully – but I was confident enough that I could continue with my course' (Nizam:29:2).

Both had been fearful at the start but slowly acquired enough competence and confidence to cope with the immediate challenges. This gradual development of competence and confidence concur with the findings in the study by Gill (2007) whose students gained in confidence as they became more accustomed to communicating in a different environment.

It took Rashid much longer to overcome the communication problems:

'*So the initial 6 to 7 months are going rather difficult'* (Rashid:14:2). and '*I started watching English movies and going to the theatre. You Tube also helped me a lot. Now I can communicate more or less'* (Rashid: 18:1).

This was an example of active problem solving. What is evident is that even though the participants adopted different strategies they all made progress in overcoming their communication problems.

The next section considers the coping strategies employed by three of the participants who faced major challenges around their religious needs.

155

A.3 Managing Dietetic and Religious Needs

Dietetic and religious challenges are on the increase as international student numbers rise and individuals are becoming less willing to compromise their dietetic and religious requirements (Brown, Edwards and Hartwell, 2010; Brittin and Obeidat, 2011; Alakaam *et al.*, 2015). As some of the participants in my research were challenged by the requirements of Islam, this discussion essentially focuses on Islamic dietetic and religious needs.

After the pork incident at the YMCA, Mohsin, Kaisar and Nizam developed a strong desire to live in a Muslim area. In addition, as both Mohsin and Kaisar were unable to adjust (passive problem-solving):

> *'obviously for food habits as I was not able to take non-Bangladeshi food and that is the main reason why I liked to live in close proximity with them'* (Mohsin:19:2).

> '*yes, because we wanted our own food, namaz (prayer) and community also'* (Kaisar:18:2)

they secured their next accommodation in East London, an area populated by Bangladeshis:

> '*The Bangladeshi Muslim community is the most concentrated and ethnically segregated Muslim community in England with 24 per cent of the total Bangladeshi Muslim population living in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and a further 19 per cent of the total population living in surrounding boroughs'* (Change Institute, 2009, p.6).

156

The findings from the literature indicate that this 'similarity attraction' theory was also prevalent in Mostafa's (2006) study of Arab Muslims in a Canadian university who chose to interact with other Muslims.

Food shock was also experienced by Turkish students in a UK university Brown and Aktas, (2012). Dislike of local food resulted in following the home diet. Eating habits are difficult to change as evidenced in my study as well as in the studies conducted by Brown, Edwards and Hartwell (2010), Brittin and Obeidat, (2011), Brown and Aktas (2012) and Alakaam *et al.*, (2015). According to Kaisar, lack of access to native food was a common experience:

> *'Everyone faced problems adjusting to food because it was no one's native food...None of us was comfortable with things, we all had to adjust here'* (Kaisar:80:2).

Food is a source of comfort and if there is a lack of appropriate food then the experience of eating 'different' food may result in psychological and physiological discomfort (McLachlan and Justice, 2009). However, Nizam's Muslim upbringing made him feel different from other international students:

> '*as I am Muslim and I had a mission to go in search of food and I think other people did not have that problem'* (Nizam:39:2).

Sicat's (2006) study of cultural adjustment and coping strategies of foreign students in a university in the Philippines indicates that the Buddhist students compromised by attending the religious services of other religions as there were no Buddhist services. However, in direct contrast, the participants in my

157

study were unwilling to make any religious compromises (passive problem solving):

> '*there were few halal shops and there was a mosque and it was so far that we didn't realise how difficult the commute would be and this struggle continued throughout our course from the first day to the last*' (Kaisar:21:1).

This demonstrates the influence of deeply ingrained religious beliefs and practices on every day experiences. Kaisar and his colleagues made a conscious decision not to return closer to campus as they wanted to live in their own community, comfortable that by doing so their dietetic, social and religious needs were being met.

Religion was a perceived difference with other international students:

> '*the other issue was that we were from a Muslim country and we were really conservative. Other international students could adapt themselves quickly there, but we were conservative from the very core, so we couldn't mingle easily with the other students there, but we felt we were there for a very short time.*' (Kaisar: 72:1).

Kaisar perceived his conservative upbringing to be a major difference with other international students. This is reiterated in Brown, Brown and Richard's (2014, p.57) study of Muslim students at two UK universities where the Muslim students are perceived as being *'religiously conservative'* by the media. In addition, as stated earlier, the pressure to change behaviour is directly related to length of stay and postgraduate students have a shorter

length of stay than undergraduate students. As a result, more of the 'home cultural and religious identity' is retained by postgraduate students. From the findings of a questionnaire survey of over 1000 international postgraduate students across Malaysia universities, Shafaei and Razak (2015) concluded that the focus on retaining own cultural values and identity prevented the international students from interacting and communicating with the host Malaysian nationals. This resulted in less stress and anxiety as mixing with nationals from the host country involves additional effort in learning the cultural values of the host country.

Seul (1999), one of the original scholars on 'religious identity,' argues that religion is often at the core of 'individual identity' which refers to:

> '*the relatively stable elements of an individual's sense of self*' (Seul, 1999, p.554).

The maintenance of religious beliefs and practices ensures the stability of the 'religious identity' as:

> '*fidelity to religious norms produces a person who is* 'stronger...' (Seul, 1999, p.561).

Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) argue that the international experience necessitates a certain degree of identity change. This may be true for changes in other aspects of identity such as cultural but, what is clearly evident in my study is that three of the participants were unwilling to change their religious identity thereby ensuring the stability of the self as proposed by Seul (1999).

The next section considers the coping strategies applied to overcome learning and assessment challenges.

6.0 Striving for Educational Success

All of the participants faced a number of educational challenges with the majority, resulting from a different previous learning experience. These challenges resulted in the additional challenge of identifying and implementing successful coping strategies and practices.

B.1 Adapting to New Learning Environment

Due to the shorter course duration Masters' students need to adjust fairly quickly to the challenges (Brown and Holloway, 2008). Just as students had to develop personal, social and cultural coping strategies, they also had to formulate strategies related to overcoming the educational challenges discussed in the following sections.

B.1.1 Coping with a Different Study Discipline

The challenge of coping with a different discipline is not exclusive to international students but to all students who change disciplines. Tazeen relied on support from her tutors:

'*I did somehow manage and thanks to my tutors they have really helped me out*' (Tazeen:7:2)

while for Nizam the challenge was dual – studying a new discipline from first principles in a new learning environment and his strategy was:

'*I tried to study, study and study to accommodate with the business courses which were very new to me and by this way I was very – I was determined that I had to do the courses'* (Nizam:51:2).

It can be argued that as a government official, Nizam's determination to succeed was driven by underlying fears of failing in front of the employer, family and friends. Maintaining his professional and social identities and status was crucial for Nizam. Similarly, resilience, concentrated effort and gradual adjustment to the new disciplines led to improved performance for Rashid.

There are very few studies that focus on the coping strategies of studying a new discipline at Masters level. Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) UK study indicates that students from a science background learnt reading skills as opposed to memorising formulae. Similarly, Tran's (2008) international students coped by understanding the writing guidelines and relying on academics for support. However, academic support was not always clearly manifested and forced the students to rise to the challenge of more independent study.

B.1.2 Overcoming an Intensive and Ethnocentric Curriculum

The UK Masters is often a 12 to 18 month programme and as such, results in intensity in content and delivery. The postgraduate students in the studies conducted by Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) and Wu and Hammond (2011) were primarily mature students with very clear goals and as such rose to the challenge by planning, rationalising and thinking through the requirements of their respective courses. The Chinese students in Gill's

161

(2007) study in a UK university coped by living and studying together. An identical approach was demonstrated by Mohsin, Kaisar and Nizam as each realised that he was struggling with the intensive content of each module. They devised a joint coping strategy:

'*we just fragmented the data and gave the responsibility to an individual to contextualize the whole materials'* (Mohsin: 11:2).

This worked well in creating a degree of synergy and effective time management:

'it reduced the overall load and labour on contextualizing on those issues' (Mohsin: 12:2)

and proved to be a very successful strategy resulting in merit passes for all three participants.

The challenges of Western pedagogies were experienced by international students in the studies by Campbell and Li (2008), Durkin (2008) and Kingston and Forland (2008) who found it easier once they became acclimatised to the ethnocentric curriculum. Similarly, Mohsin struggled in the beginning as he had to analyse the UK car industry of which he had no prior knowledge. However, he rose to the challenge:

'after groping our way through it, we prepared a report just for the sake of it' (Mohsin: 58:1).

Mohsin achieved a good pass grade for his assessment which had an immediate positive impact:

'I considered this an achievement, considering that I had written a report with practically no knowledge about the business environment. I was damn satisfied with this' (Mohsin: 61:1).

In comparison, other international students have a distinct advantage:

'*some of them are living in London and working in London for the last three or four years, so they were far more advanced.'* (Mohsin: 69 and 70:2).

Mohsin and others who were new to the UK did not have any prior knowledge of UK businesses and as such felt disadvantaged as they could not make informed contributions in class. The tutors had assumed prior knowledge of UK retail outlets and based their lectures on these assumptions.

However, Mohsin's success confirms Song's (2016) argument that international students are competent and successful in combining their non-western approach to learning with the western approach whilst studying in a western environment.

The next section concentrates on the strategies for ensuring passes in all modules and successful completion of the studies.

B.2 Mastering the Assessment Regime

Learning to cope with a different assessment regime continues to be one of the major learning challenges for international students (Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel, 2005; Wong, 2004; Wang and Shan, 2007; Campbell and Li, 2008; Adeoya-Agboola and Evans, 2015). However, even though the

students in these studies struggled, they coped by seeking clarity from tutors, other students, by looking at samples of other assessments and also by relying on prior skills of passing assessments in their home countries. Similar strategies were adopted by the participants in my study. Kaisar's education in Bangladesh had provided a sound base from which to respond to the challenges of the UK education system. However:

> '*we discovered that the educational system here completely releases the poison from within. It teaches how to analyse a subject, how to apply a theory in practical life'* (Kaisar: 54:1).

Poison was the metaphor used to describe learning that was based on memorising. The UK education system released this poison and Kaisar expunged the poison from within by embracing the new learning environment. However, my interpretation was that Kaisar failed to acknowledge and appreciate that it was the so called poisonous prior learning environment that had equipped him with the knowledge, skills and attitude to rise to and overcome the various challenges of the new learning environment in the UK. The legitimacy of prior learning in the new learning environment has begun to be recognised in studies on international students (Wong, 2004 and Tran, 2008.)

Mohsin scored a good pass in his first assessment and this resulted in re-establishing his self-esteem and confidence:

> '*after getting the marks of the first Accounting module assessment, I became comfortable with the situation because... I am not inferior to the other international students and that I am equal to them'* (Mohsin: 61:2).

It can be argued that his poor listening ability as well as his diffidence relating to his verbal competence had undermined his self-esteem to such an extent that he had begun to feel inferior to the other international students. The good score restored the positive self-perception.

All the participants used active problem solving coping strategies as they moved away from a didactic exam based environment to a dialogic one where knowledge was assessed via the ability to construct and present arguments.

The next section focuses on the participants' abilities to come to terms with failing and having to re-sit a number of modules.

B.3 Dealing with Failure

Dealing with failure is difficult at any point in time but becomes more stressful as the stakes are raised by the level of study (Masters) and the costs (international students pay very high fees). The implications of failing may result in loss of face in front of family, peers and employer as it inevitably results in a delay in final completion of studies. Therefore, it is crucial for students to remain focussed and overcome the failure by successfully availing the next opportunity for passing the module. Coping strategies used in the studies by Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) and Wu and Hammond (2011) included talking to senior students, seeking help from tutors, working with peers or withdrawing and going into denial. Fortunately, none of the participants in my study withdrew, in particular Rashid, who was most challenged by a number of re-sits over a forty month period. The other

approaches used in the studies mentioned are mirrored by the participants in my study.

When Zakir had to resubmit two of his assignments he resorted to external help

> '*the first time I didn't get the way how to go on, I collect another report with friends like other classmates and they showed me okay this is the way..... Afterwards we were getting the right direction*' (Zakir: 55:1).

This strategy was effective as he then began to pass the remaining modules.

Similarly, Tazeen was able to identify the weaknesses in her work and felt confident in her ability to address them. The repeated rejections of the research proposal impacted negatively on her confidence but also made her more determined:

> '*and it was quite difficult but each time – I don't know whether it was funny or weird or whatever – but each time it got rejected it was kind of………there was this anger inside me that no I have to do something about it*' (Tazeen: 13:2).

She passed – after a number of attempts. Her active problem solving approach was very much in evidence as there was a degree of frustration and annoyance with her own inability to pass the module and this was the trigger in her determination to pass. So she channelled the self annoyance into better performance and persevered until she was successful.

After failing his first attempt at passing his dissertation research proposal Mohsin realised that it was crucial to change strategy:

166

'but it gave me an idea that the research – on the technical issue, on the topic which you can command, you cannot keep your subject area or your research then it would be difficult for you to carry on in the long run' (Mohsin: 40:2).

He learnt quickly that pragmatism and subject knowledge were essential for successful completion of the dissertation that would be based on the proposal.

Farhan had performed well in his first semester and had passed all his modules. However, in the second semester he failed two of his modules and became very despondent. He relied on peer support:

'*but people encouraged me throughout…….people said don't give up, there's a chance.'* (Farhan: 8:2).

Similar to Zakir, Rashid benchmarked the work of other students against his own and overcame the weaknesses in his own module resits. However, when re-working on his dissertation, Rashid used a different strategy:

'*So next time I kept in touch with my supervisor, and he knows that Rashid do hard work every time he is pushing me, and every time I got a feedback from my supervisor then last submission I got a pass'* (Rashid: 12:2).

Regular feedback and responding to the direction provided is crucial for succeeding in independent research such as is involved in the dissertation.

The determination to succeed was common for all international students as their financial and other investments are very high:

'all of us were from middle class or lower middle class families. No matter what country we came from, we all had the same target' (Kaisar: 79:2).

They were together on the study journey and they all had a common goal – successful completion of the course.

The next section considers coping strategies of the students who had to combine study and work as they had to partially self-finance their studies.

7.0 Overcoming Financial Constraints

For the past three decades, the vast majority of international students have had to self-finance their studies as grants and scholarships for international students have become virtually non-existent. Much has been written about the financial challenges faced by these students, especially those originating from developing countries and studying in developed countries (Adeoye-Agboola and Evans, 2015; O'Reilly, Hickey and Ryan, 2015). The international students in Huang and Klinger's (2006) study in a Canadian university coped with their financial challenges by working in low grade jobs and controlling spending. Similarly, Zawawi and Jye's (2012) international MBA students at a Malaysian university coped by combining work and study. Both these approaches were mirrored in the experiences of some of the participants in this study. In order to meet his financial obligations, Farhan worked full-time during his holidays and part-time during term time. This made it difficult to balance his time between studies and work but Farhan's financial situation did not allow for any other option.

Similarly, Zakir had to work part-time after classes to subsidise his living expenses, resulting in long hours of study and work:

'*it was a little bit tough to manage my study and work both together ...So it was like in some weeks I didn't sleep for two or three days*' (Zakir:37 and 38:1).

The strain of combining the two took its toll on his intellectual and physical health.

As Rashid's parents had only been able to provide a percentage of the tuition fees, he had no option but to work and study simultaneously. The financial challenge was inexorably linked to Rashid's academic performance:

'*if my parents gave me the full money £10,250….then what can I do? I give more concentration on my study, I can go out – but I have to work, so financial is a major factor*' (Rashid:71:2).

It took him much longer than his peers to complete.

Farhan identified the need for employment as a major common objective of international students as they have to fund their own studies by relying on getting part-time jobs to subsidise their day-to-day living. It took Farhan a long time to find a job:

'*I was looking for a job but I did not get a job for four months*' (Farhan:31:2).

The above analysis and discussion confirm that international students may initially appear to be dependent and unable to cope with the challenges of

the new learning environment, but over time, acquire the requisite skills, knowledge and techniques needed for successful completion of their studies. The longitudinal studies, identified in the discussion, were able to demonstrate the varying coping strategies and their impact on student morale, motivation and eventual progression at different stages of the study period. All of the participants in my study experienced many taxing challenges and yet all of them completed successfully, albeit not all completed on schedule. Three of the participants who had voiced many concerns relating to not understanding lectures, to an inability to participate in class or to understand the assessment requirements were awarded merit passes, thus demonstrating that the international students do rise to the many challenges and do achieve very good results.

The final theme is discussed in the next section and focuses on the first few weeks after completion of the study journey.

POST- COMPLETION

4.2.1.4 *Appraisal of post-completion status*

This section considers the emotional as well as career status of the

participants after completion of the courses.

Figure 4

Appraisal of post-completion status (super-ordinate and subordinate themes).
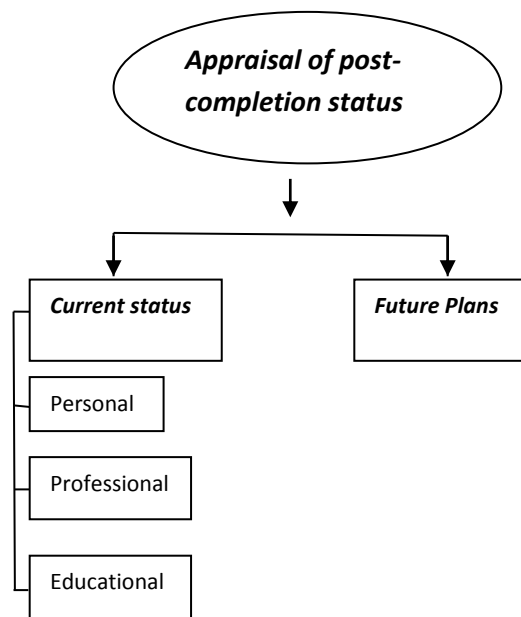
A. Current Status

As my study was an exploration of the entire study period the final interviews

took place soon after confirmation of the results. The data contributes to a

deeper understanding of the changes and developments in the participants

during the journey. My study also explores whether the participants remained

in the UK or returned to Bangladesh. Professional and economic reasons

became the 'pull' factors for returning to the home country for six of the

seven participants, with Tazeen being the only exception. She was 'pulled'

by the professional opportunities in the host country, UK.

171

The opportunity to conduct the final interview soon after successful completion of the course provides a complete picture of the entire experience and its impact on the participants. One of the underlying constructs of my research was to chart the change and developments in the participants during and on completion of studies. These changes are discussed under the following sub-sections: personal, professional and educational.

A.1 Personal

Some of the changes relating to personal development centre round open-mindedness, ability to think independently and network, better proficiency in English and higher social status in home country. Zakir recognised the impact of the exposure to a multi-cultural environment:

> '*I got friend from Peru and some friends from China – that's from different countries, even from Nigeria, so it will change from friend circle or their living style over there, like everything will impact on my personal life well and definitely what I have experienced here, living in the UK will change me* (Zakir:93:1).

Even though Zakir returned to his previous mono-cultural environment he became more open minded like the students in the studies conducted by Hadis (2005) and Urban and Palmer (2015).

This exposure had impacted positively on his self-esteem:

> '*first thing that now I can manage any meetings. I think I can any meetings with anyone. That's a great thing for my professional life*' (Zakir:95:1).

Interestingly, he credited his stay in the UK as being the major contributor to his increased confidence:

'*actually it's the MBA it's okay, that is not the big point. The main point is the multi-cultural living style and experience, that's the main thing*' (Zakir:97:1).

There was a new composure and confidence emanating from Zakir as he spoke – he had been able to transfer the learning from his experiences of interacting with different nationalities to being able to meet and interact with any individual in his work context.

Tazeen had not only been on an educational journey but also an emotional one:

'*these two years life has been - there have been ups and downs obviously but I've finally managed to complete it; and I think yes I would say at this point that I have actually been successful in both personally and educationally*' (Tazeen:6:2).

Similarly, Rashid successfully completed his studies after a long and hard struggle of over three years:

'*this decision was beneficial for me in the long run*' (Rashid:6:1).

He required nearly 40 months for completion of an 18 month course. He had not expected to be on this journey for more than double the expected time frame. The personal and academic success of the participants in my study resonate with the experiences of the international students in Tant's (2009) study. Similarly, Shaftel, Shaftel and Ahluwalia (2007) and Urban and Palmer

(2015) confirm the development of emotional resilience, amongst their international students, as a result of international study

Nizam's self-reflection scrutinised his erstwhile behaviour towards the general public in Bangladesh:

'*so in some cases, or in a significant cases, I had lose my temper regarding providing the service'* (Nizam:96:1)... *I have to change my behaviour with the service-seekers because the service-seekers do have all right to ask me and I do have all the responsibilities to provide them with best sorts of services'* (Nizam:98:1).

As a civil servant, Nizam had hitherto not taken into consideration that even though being an official encompassed a certain degree of status in the employment, all government employees work for the rest of the population. Therefore, it could be argued that the status of the service seekers is higher than the service provider. This development of emotional intelligence via self-reflection resulted in the recognition of the new status of the service seeker and a positive change in behaviour.

This change was informed by his observation of individuals in the UK in low level jobs:

'*they're very much confident with his job and they feel honoured whatever the type of job here'* (Nizam:100:1).

The absence of an overt class divide was evidenced by travel on public transport:

'*and I have found that the people with a dress – with his working dress, that is full of paints and everything, mud –they usually without any hesitation, they're going with the bus, they're going with the trams and underground trains*' (Nizam:101:1).

Nizam confronted his personal prejudices:

'*so in that case we have to respect the people who do the lower job, lower job in our sense. It is not actually the lower job, not actually the bad job ...so from my perspective, I would respect more than I do have earlier with that people*' (Nizam: 106 & 107:1).

The new found humility in Nizam and the change in his behaviour indicated that learning takes place in many different situations. Nizam became more self-accountable mirroring the changes in Tant's (2009) study of Vietnamese students returning from study in Australia.

In terms of personal changes, like Nizam, Farhan learnt to appreciate his privileged position in Bangladesh:

'*the experience – it taught me that nothing in life can be taken for granted, like in Bangladesh I don't have to worry about my accommodation. When I was in the UK, it was like if I don't work for 20 hours this week, how am I going to manage my transport costs for next week*' (Farhan:55:2).

His exposure to financial challenges in the UK had made him a stronger and more confident individual.

Mohsin articulated the most obvious personal change in him – at the first interview he was too diffident to speak in English but in the final interview:

> *'definitely, there are differences because when you get my interview the first time, I was a little bit shy to speak English perhaps, but now I am trying to speak in English because this gives me some confidence that I can speak and express myself in English'* (Mohsin:110:2).

The enormity of the change is magnified by the fact that the second and final interview took place in Bangladesh where it would have been more natural for him to converse in Bengali. Mohsin's confidence in his ability to express himself in English had been evident throughout the interview. In comparison to his erstwhile feelings of being excommunicated he now had full confidence in his communication competence. Greater proficiency in English and increased confidence had also been demonstrated by the international students in Tant's (2009) study.

The concept of 'reverse culture shock' (being uncomfortable with one's own culture on return to home country) was evident in the articulations of Tazeen and Rashid. Tazeen wanted to continue living in the UK because when she returned to Bangladesh during her studies, she stated:

> *'you feel the difference when you go back – you feel good to be with family and friends but at the end of the day you feel that okay, when can I go back to London'* (Tazeen:74:2).

Tazeen was aware that the change that had occurred within her had made her very comfortable in the UK environment but:

'*I don't know whether its good or bad'* (Tazeen:78:2).

Rashid experienced a similar change in himself:

> *I feel happy and I am going to Bangladesh; so I am a little bit anxious my Bangladeshi students because it's a mix – I know how to mix, I've already had a mixed culture – I know how to cope with different situations so I think I am a little bit far from my Bangladeshi friends'* (Rashid: 60 and 61:2).

Both Tazeen and Rashid had acquired the 'third culture identity' as coined by Luzio-Lockett (1998), where international students retain some home culture attributes while acquiring some host culture ones and creating a third culture identity. This third culture identity appears to be more culturally distant from their first culture (home country) identity and closer to their second culture (host country) identity thus evidencing identity changes within the two participants. In addition, in agreement with Levy (2000) as both Tazeen and Rashid became more comfortable in the host culture the more difficult the transition to home.

Tazeen was very clear about the positive aspects of the change:

> *'all I know is that I have moved on and I'm happy with whatever life I have right now and I'll try to maintain this life'* (Tazeen:78:2).

The educational journey had allowed Tazeen enough time, space and a different focus - to reflect upon the personal and professional aspects of her life in a positive and pro-active manner. Similarly, even though Rashid's long sojourn had resulted in many humiliations in the form of resits, he had

emerged at the other end of the journey – a stronger and more resilient human being:

> '*Bangladesh Rashid is inexperienced, not too practical….emotional but this Rashid is much more practical, most experienced, most fortunate'* (Rashid:67:2).

The next section considers the educational influences of the study experience.

A.2 Educational

The MBA has gained a reputation for enabling career enhancement or career change (GMAC-USA, 2012). The popularity of the MBA has continued to increase over a number of years (Zawawi and Jye, 2012). However, both Mohsin and Kaisar had been sceptical in relation to the value of the MBA but on completion:

> '*yes, basically the MBA is multi-discipline.... We have the ability to think of an issue through different perspectives. I think the MBA ......gives me better strength to take the right decision in my day-to-day business'* (Mohsin: 115:2).

> '*tremendous positive impact. I think my decision was justified and rational to do the MBA'* (Kaisar: 113 and 115:2).

The appreciation of the value of the qualification was clearly evident as they assessed their newly acquired problem-solving and decision-making knowledge and skills.

Prior to studying the MBA, Kaisar had been a student of Soil Science and hence had had no understanding of leading and managing people in the workplace. However, as a team leader of a large team, Kaisar became very aware of the need for effective communication:

'if I didn't have communication skills and had a communication gap with my bosses or subordinates, I would never be able to do teamwork. And if there was no teamwork I would not achieve the outcomes I wanted from my tasks.' (Kaisar: 6:2).

Kaisar emphasised the improvement in his 'soft' and 'hard' skills:

'*this approach to learning brought about some change in my attitude, my interpersonal and communication skills. There has been a positive change in me'* (Kaisar: 107:2) ...*'report writing which we are doing everyday in different aspects… previously, I did not have that quality but now I can write a report systematically about anything'* (Kaisar: 109:2).

The MBA learning environment had created a specific communication problem and yet it was the same environment that developed his problem resolution abilities. In addition, Kaisar had learnt the art of critical analysis. During the early stages of his study Kaisar had been unable to comprehend much of what was being taught but by the time he completed his course he became well versed in critical comprehension and application. A similar development is also confirmed by international students in studies by Comrie (2015) and Urban and Palmer (2015).

Similarly, even though Farhan had been extremely critical of various aspects of the MBA course during his study journey his post-completion stance was very different:

> '*I think we know as much as a Cambridge graduate....... at the end of the day it did allow us to push ourselves to get to the limit because if things were marked easy like do anything and you get 50, I would not be going to my village for my dissertation*' (Farhan:57:2).

Farhan appreciated the depth of his newly acquired knowledge to such an extent that he was willing to experience the discomforts of rudimentary living conditions in a village, if it resulted in being able to acquire robust data for his dissertation.

Prior to studying the MBA, Farhan had studied Law and:

> '*you'll hate it at the beginning but then once you get a degree you'll reflect back and you'll realise how much I've learnt in these 18 months, how many subjects I know and things like that*' (Farhan: 57:2).

This was another example of not always being able to appreciate the real 'value of an experience during that experience' and only appreciating its value as a result of reflecting, by re-living the experience. He also recognised the synergy between Law and the MBA:

> '*its like having two different parts but when they come together the result was much better than I would expect because I can answer something in Law and I can answer something in Business*' (Farhan:51:2).

The next section explores the impact of the educational experiences on the professional lives of the participants.

A.3 Professional

Six of the seven participants were 'pulled' by the professional factors of the home country and returned to Bangladesh. Mohsin, Nizam and Kaisar returned to government service in Bangladesh. Mohsin and Nizam articulated the academic developments that had transferred to workplace competence:

> *as I have started the MBA I got in touch with some subjects like strategy, change management .....and when I discuss anything in my office meeting it gives me some confidence that I have studied these issues and I can deal with and express my views in a more theoretical way'* (Mohsin:111:2).

> '*in my job in Bangladesh, in every moment I have to take a decision, ... I think I am now more able than earlier to analyse the situation and take the proper decision'* (Nizam:112:1).

In the early stages of his study, Nizam had educationally struggled to such an extent that he had become fearful of not being able to complete the course. He persevered and secured a merit pass and was applying the knowledge to address his work challenges.

There was also a change in how Mohsin was perceived by his staff after returning from his studies in the UK:

'there is the practical way as well. My fellows become very delightful to me to look at me, that our boss knows more than us, something like that' (Mohsin:112:2).

Similarly, the returning international students in Iredale, Guo and Rozario's (2003) study had experienced an increase in social status in their home countries.

Farhan obtained employment as a Business Studies Lecturer where he combined his legal and business knowledge in the classroom and Rashid had been offered a job as a Business Marketing Officer:

'*my initial is very low – 35000 but I know if I join there within 6 or 9 years I will have reached my roof'* (Rashid:75:2).

He had full confidence in his ability to progress to the top of the organisation.

Tazeen was working as a manager in a doctor's surgery in the UK. Her long term plans involved a longer stay in the UK as she felt very comfortable in the UK environment.

'*You feel the difference now when you go back - you feel good to be with family and friends but at the end of the day you feel that okay when can I go back to London'* (Tazeen: 73:2).

Shafaei and Razak (2016) propose that when international students stay back in the host country, they become more comfortable with the host culture.

Some of the participants had changed disciplines and were now in gainful employment. The post-completion professional status of the participants in this study confirms that:

> *'regardless of where a student is located it is a safe bet that he or she will enhance their employability prospects through participation in international education'* (GMAC, 2011, p.21).

The next subordinate theme briefly explores the future plans of the participants.

B. Future Plans

The following section explores the degree to which the completion of the MBA met the aspirations of the participants as well as its impact on future aspirations.

Both Mohsin and Nizam had successfully completed their MBAs and were now working in senior positions for their employer.

Zakir was still experiencing mixed emotions:

> '*right now no one will remember what situation I gone through but I know, so I think okay I have done enough... I have plans for a PhD as well if I have a chance for teaching provision so I think yes, I have the ability to carry on in any situation so I should go further*' (Zakir:88:2).

Even though he had not been able to fully put aside his negative experiences he was able to recognise the positive changes within himself.

During her MBA study Tazeen decided that even though she had changed her study discipline to Business she did not want to change her sector:

> '*I was thinking that why not try to get a UK chemist's licence – at least in that way I'll be heading somewhere*' (Tazeen:62:2)... *I am working as a staff manager using my MBA degree and I don't want to waste my chemistry degree... that's what I'm hoping right now so that I can use both my degrees and achieve something*' (Tazeen:64:2).

She joined the doctor's surgery as a part-time receptionist and had now been promoted to staff manager. The reason for seeking better employment opportunities was mirrored by the international students in Paile and Fatoki's (2014) study in South Africa.

Kaisar's team was due to be promoted and:

> '*in the next month or two, my team will be responsible for a particular 'Upozila' (part of a district) of Bangladesh.... That means I will be in charge of an entire Upozila. ... So I feel if I apply my interpersonal skills in my current field of work it will increase my efficiency and every day I am using this in my work*' (Kaisar:8:2).

Kaisar also recognised the long term benefits of his learning:

> '*to develop my career further, if I work in the Ministry of Finance ...or Commerce Ministry, I will be able to directly apply the analytical aspects of Strategic Analysis, Strategic for Organisation for Strategy and Context*' (Kaisar:10:2).

The confidence that Farhan had gained from the MBA enabled him to set new goals with fresh horizons for further studies:

>'*I do want to go forward and I want to do a PhD and things like that*' (Farhan:55:2).

Success breeds confidence and in Farhan's case this confidence was reflected in his desire to aim for a higher level of study.

All seven participants were well settled and progressing on their new journey. The final theme has allowed for an end to the journey. Most of the literature on international student experiences focuses on some aspects of the experiences as well as at specific journey points and not the entire journey, thereby, often providing an incomplete and skewed conclusion on the experiences and challenges of international students. My study plugs this gap by providing a complete picture of the entire study journey as well as incorporating all of the holistic challenges as well as coping strategies of the participants.

4.3 Summary

This longitudinal study has been able to demonstrate the importance of exploring the experiences of international students within three time periods, pre-arrival, actual study period and post-completion, thereby providing a complete picture of the study journey. The four super-ordinate themes (reasons for study abroad, challenges, coping strategies and post-completion status) confirm that there are personal, educational and professional aspirations that prompt students to study overseas and that there are certain 'push' factors like scarce resources or discrimination in the home country that

trigger the search for study overseas. In addition, the attraction or the 'pull' factors of the host countries include academic reputation, historical ties as well as safe study environments. Students faced a combination of psychological, academic and financial challenges relating to anxieties of adjusting to a new culture, language difficulties, new ways of learning and assessment, of not passing at first attempt and having to work alongside their studies. The study also maps the different approaches used for addressing the challenges and working towards successful completion of the studies. The participants chose to live together as they adjusted to the new culture, spoke in English with each other, sought support from colleagues and tutors to pass the failed modules and worked part-time to subsidise their living expenses. The post-completion super-ordinate theme demonstrated the growth and development of the participants during the study experience as well as the transfer of their overall learning to their new work and life contexts.

There were more similarities (as perceived by the participants) than differences between the Bangladeshi participants and other international students. Just as Tran's (2009) Vietnamese students had been able to adjust during their study in Australia and then re-adjust upon their return to Vietnam, the participants in my research also demonstrated similar adjusting attitudes and abilities by constantly re-constructing their multiple-identities. The next chapter concludes the thesis with some recommendations.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the purpose of the study, the methodology, main findings, original contributions, implications and recommendations for practice, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Purpose of the Study

A study abroad experience is a life changing experience for students as it exposes them to various cultural, educational and personal challenges and results in impacting on their identity and view of the world. Even though there is a proliferation of research on the varying experiences and challenges of international students in developed and developing countries (Al-Hazmi and Nyland, 2010; Zheng, 2013; Cağatay 2015; Liu *et al.,*2016) confirming the commitment of the educational sector to seeking and applying new knowledge to the enhancement of the international students' experiences in the educational institutions, there is no bespoke research on Bangladeshi students studying overseas.

The purpose of this study is to explore the unique and holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at the University of West London throughout their entire period of study, in order to provide a complete picture of all the challenges and coping strategies that occurred at different stages of the study sojourn.

In addition, the Doctorate in Education requires the investigation of an issue that is relevant in the workplace. The Doctorate in Education has enabled the bringing together of experiential knowledge and research findings into a coherent conduit for dissemination of the combined, within the work

environment as well as the wider audience. Pertinent examples include incorporating the findings into geo-centric curriculum design and delivery, transparency in marking and feedback and recognition of the cultural capital of international students to the overall learning experience of all students.

5.2 Methodology and Method

The phenomenological methodology, Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), first developed by Jonathan Smith in the 1990s, was used to explore the holistic experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university. IPA draws from the philosophical thinking of Husserl and Heidegger and explores the lived experiences of the participants by recognising that the participants are the experts who are best able to describe the experiences that are being explored. The in-depth interviews in IPA allow for in-depth and detailed probing of these experiences.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that a phenomenological study of the experiences of international students is better informed when it contains data on pre-arrival experiences associated with the application process, the actual experiences during the study period as well as the immediate post completion experiences as it is my belief that these three periods provide a complete picture of what the international study experience really means to the student.

Four main themes and ten sub-themes were identified and summarised below:

5.3.1. Reasons for study abroad and choosing the MBA

An understanding of the reasons for study abroad allow home country governments as well as educational establishments to create better study opportunities in the home countries by becoming more competitive with the foreign providers. It also enables host country governments and educational providers to be better informed of the motivations of international students. The main findings are:

> *A desire for study abroad is the result of educational or personal or professional reasons or a combination.*

> *The decision making process is either rational or emotional or a combination of both.*

> *Recruiting agents play a significant role in the final choice of country, institution and course.*

> *The MBA was not necessarily the first choice for the majority of the participants and the findings did not necessarily agree with the extant literature (Zawawi and Jye, 2012; GMAC, 2012) which argues that the MBA is the most sought after postgraduate qualification in the Business and Management disciplines.*

> *The findings concur with the literature (OECD, 2013); UIS, 2013) that the UK continues to be a very popular destination for study abroad.*

5.3.2 Challenges

Upon embarking on their study abroad sojourn almost all international students experience many challenges in their personal or educational encounters. These challenges can sometimes result in positive experiences but, more often than not, are negative in nature. The main findings are:

> *The majority of participants experienced a combination of anxiety and excitement in anticipation of the study abroad experience.*

> *Some of the participants felt the need to protect their religious identity.*

> *It became difficult to follow an appropriate diet especially in terms of 'halal' food.*

> *In spite of meeting the English language requirements for the course of study, a number of the participants were diffident about communicating in English either in class or in their daily social interactions.*

> *The learning environment in most developed countries encourages discussion, debate and disagreement in the classroom. This supposedly confrontational approach caused discomfort to some of the participants who were taught to accept the knowledge imparted by the tutor without question.*

> *Adjusting to a curriculum that often does not incorporate any prior knowledge for the students and only focuses on 'western' knowledge becomes problematic as students also have to learn the western context, such as knowledge about UK organisations.*

> *The different modes of assessment also require the development and demonstration of new knowledge and competence such as the ability to analyse, synthesise, present orally or write a business report, work in groups, create posters and conduct independent research. These requirements are very different to memorising for exam based assessments.*

> *Failing modules and then having to re-sit them, resulting in erosion of confidence, longer completion period and additional financial pressures in addition to the 'loss of face' associated with failure. The majority of participants had to do re-sits.*

> *More and more students are being forced to work during their studies and this has a negative impact on their physical and intellectual health as there is very little time left for leisure activities. Three of the participants struggled to balance studies with work.*

5.3.3 Coping Strategies

The third theme emerging from the study is linked to the coping strategies of the students. The longitudinal nature of the research made it feasible to gather data on the challenges experienced as well as the coping strategies adopted at different stages of the study period. The main findings are

> *Personal anxieties were reduced when some of the participants experienced the 'Meet and greet' services offered by the University. It was a very important de-stressor for the participants in my study.*

192

➢ *Fidelity to religious identity and norms can be extremely strong and guided some of my student sample.*

➢ *Seeking out co-nationals or other international students was a coping strategy chosen by almost all of the participants. Cultural and religious affinity helped them to cope with the challenges of the new environment.*

➢ *Some students sought out home country nationals to improve their communication skills. Some of the participants in my study shared a house and made a rule to speak only in English in the evenings. This helped in overcoming the diffidence and also improved competence in spoken English. One participant watched a lot of television and visited the theatre.*

➢ *Dietetic needs forced them to move to an area where their religious dietetic requirements could be met.*

➢ *The inter-disciplinary and ethnocentric challenges were met by 'studying, studying and studying'* (Nizam, 52:2).

➢ *The different assessment regime is a challenge that can be quite exciting as one of the participants felt that by being exposed to different ways of demonstrating his knowledge set him free to explore new ways of applying knowledge to practice.*

➢ *Participants who failed their modules analysed the weaknesses in their work, sought help from others, looked at assessments that gained a pass mark, sought clarification from their tutors and most of all, persevered till they passed all the modules.*

> *Financial challenges were overcome by working as many hours as they could, living frugally and sharing costs.*

The above findings concur with much of the extant literature in the field of international students' experiences in various higher education institutions in different parts of the developed world (Krahe *et al.*, 2005; Bamford *et al.*, 2006; Durkin, 2008; Grayson, 2008 and Arkoudis and Tran, 2010).

5.3.4 Appraisal of post-completion status

An insight into the post completion status of international students allows us to be informed of the changes and development that took place during the course of study. Research indicates that students either return to their home country or stay back in the host country or seek employment in a third country. All except one of the participants returned to their home country, Bangladesh. The main findings are:

> *Identity change occurred in almost all of the participants as the international exposure resulted in more open-mindedness, better proficiency in English and higher status at home.*

> *Self-esteem and self-reliance increased in all of the participants in the study.*

> *Increased tolerance of other cultures, religions and social class was also evident in the participants of this research.*

> *Some degree of 'reverse culture shock' was experienced upon return to home country due to the identity change (Tazeen: 74:2; Rashid: 60 and 61:2).*

> *Career enhancement in home country occurred upon return as an overseas qualification aids career progression.*

> *All of the participants in the study had clear career and study plans for the future.*

There are very few studies (Iredale, Guo and Rozario, 2003; Tant, 2009; Pritchard, 2011; Archer and Cheng, 2012) that have researched into post-completion status of international students. However, the findings from my study mainly concur with the research in this area, especially on identity change, enhanced career prospects, higher self-esteem and a more global world view.

5.4   Original Contributions to Knowledge and Practice

As far as the literature search for this study has indicated, I believe that this study is the only phenomenological research on the lived experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students at a UK university. As such, it enables potential Bangladeshi students to gain a detailed and very useful insight into the experiences of the participants of this study. It positions itself amongst the phenomenological and longitudinal studies that focus on a homogenous group of students, both in respect of country of origin as well as programme of study, in this case Bangladeshi MBA students. The findings from this research add to the knowledge relating to the various experiences of the students from the beginning to the end of the study period.

The study does not restrict itself to any one aspect of the student experience and its findings are the result of what the students considered to be important aspects of their varying experiences. This study incorporates the psycho-

cultural, educational and financial challenges. In doing so, it provides a holistic analysis of the totality of the journey for the students from becoming interested in studying overseas to the completion and returning home or staying on in the UK. Such an approach is recognised in Comrie's (2015) report that advocates studies that incorporate all the stages from pre-arrival through to alumni stage.

The methodological approach of IPA has allowed the participants to include other pertinent issues such as the underlying influence of religious practices and beliefs on the study experience. Due to its longitudinal nature, it has also been able to demonstrate the identity changes in each of the participants as it clearly charts the growth in each individual as s/he encounters and addresses various challenges.

Even though the findings are specific to this group of participants, the nature of the findings is such that much of it can be used to inform future Bangladeshi or other international students on what to expect during their study abroad journey. Similarly, the findings provide information that can be used by higher educational institutions to revisit their curriculum or support services or assessment regimes so that there is optimisation of satisfaction for the key stakeholders – students and staff.

The 'Engagement, Influence and Impact' domain of the Researcher Development Framework (2010) focuses on communicating with the wider community of stakeholders and impacting on their thinking and practices. It also recognises the context and contribution of one's own research at local, national and international levels.

The overall contribution of my study to knowledge meets the requirements of the Professional Doctorate in the following ways:

- I am currently working with Academic Press and Publishers Library (APPL), a publisher in Bangladesh to convert the thesis into a book for potential Bangladeshi students travelling abroad. The book will also provide guidance notes at the end of each chapter, for students travelling for overseas study.

- I have disseminated my findings at the World Council and Assembly on Co-operative Education (WACE) conference in Sweden in June 2014.

- The findings from my study contribute to the debate on the international student experience and all its associated challenges for the students, higher education providers and quasi- government and government departments by adding to the body of extensive knowledge already present in the sector by highlighting the importance of enhancing the experiences of international students across all educational institutions. This dissemination of knowledge occurs in the institutions where I work, am external examiner and advisor.

With regards to contribution to practice, my doctoral studies have informed practice in the following ways:

- Peer review of teaching across all schools at the London School of Business and Finance (LSBF)

- Induction session on 'Challenges and Coping Strategies' of international students at LSBF Business School.

- Curriculum design of Masters course at the Business School of the London School of Business and Finance

- Staff development workshops at the Business School (LSBF) on challenges of teaching international students, teaching a geocentric curriculum, transparency in marking whereby the feedback comments are commensurate with the grades.

- Contribution to LSBF student handbook on guidance to international students.

- Contribution to framing the self-evaluation document for LSBF 2015 QAA review within the internationalisation of higher education framework

- Contribution to designing an LSBF framework for the reflective practitioner / continuing professional development for all staff.

- In addition, I am working on designing various on-line support mechanisms for Bangladeshi students already studying overseas as well as face-to-face workshops for Bangladeshi students planning for overseas study, prior to departure; with Gradconnect, an organisation in Bangladesh that provides support to Bangladeshi students from application through to alumni stage. This will ensure currency and application of the findings to support future Bangladeshi students travelling for overseas study.

To summarise, this study has demonstrated that the challenges of international students are varied and complex occurring at different stages of the study period. It also confirms that the students rise to the challenges and many complete their programmes successfully, within their normal registration periods. The study has also evidenced the development and change in the individuals as well as their immediate post-completion status in terms of careers and re-settling in the home country.

5.5 Recommendations for Practice

This study has direct implications for practice and, as a result, this section considers the recommendations for practice. The findings show that the students face a variety of challenges with some of these challenges arising directly from the learning environment. In addition, certain good practices identified should be maintained and benefit all international and local students.

It is recommended that

- Higher educational institutions provide detailed information on country, institution, course and social and cultural norms prior to arrival in the country as this reduces the pre-arrival anxieties.

- The 'meet and greet' service should be offered to all incoming international students as it is a great de-stressor for newly arriving students especially those who are travelling away from home for the first time.

- A 'buddy system' should be introduced with new students being paired with existing students. The buddy may be international or

local. Having a 'buddy' helps in navigating through the cultural, social and educational differences, especially during the early days after arrival.

- Higher educational institutions should provide 'religious sensitive' food for the major religions in their canteens.

- They should also offer spaces for the practice of the religious faith.

- Tutors should be trained to broaden their own knowledge horizons by moving away from an ethnocentric to a geo-centric approach to curriculum design and delivery.

- If the curriculum is intensive then additional support relating to study skills, working in groups and time management should be provided.

- Additional tutor guidance should be provided to all re-sit students.

- As employability is high on the agenda of most higher education institutions in the UK, the universities should provide support and training in gaining employment in the home country, as the current government policy on international students is becoming strict in granting work visas.

- To reduce the financial burden, small bursaries can be offered in exchange for teaching / marking for the lower level courses. This might result in savings for the institution as students are paid much less than fully qualified staff.

- Some training should be provided for 'preparation for returning home' to reduce reverse culture shock.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study relate to the sample size which was seven. On the one hand, even though the two interviews per participant generated detailed and in-depth data, it would be difficult to generalise the findings. Another limitation of the study was that it took over two years to complete all the interviews as one student took longer than the rest to complete his studies, thereby delaying the completion of my study.

Finally, as a first time IPA researcher, it was difficult to know how best to deal with three of the participants who became very emotional during the interviews. Fortunately, I had been exposed to similar situations in my roles as a programme leader and personal tutor. The experiences had enabled me to develop the 'soft skills' and sensitivity required in such situations.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

This study has shown that IPA is a very useful methodology for studying the lived experiences of international students and should be used more in educational research. An extension of this study could be to explore the experiences of bespoke groups of students in the private higher educational institutions as the original research took place in a public sector university. More bespoke research is needed on Bangladeshi students as is the need to identify students groups from other countries whose experiences have not been studied. Similarly, it is important to follow the students' challenges throughout the study period otherwise the knowledge gained might be skewed and biased. Longitudinal studies also show the change and development in the students.

5.8 Conclusion

This study has not only followed the journeys of seven Bangladeshi MBA students but has also been a humbling learning experience for me as it has confirmed the complexity of the international student journey and also reiterated the resilience of the students in ensuring successful completion. The research has allowed me to gather very useful data that can be disseminated to future Bangladeshi students travelling for overseas study, as well as to academic and administrative colleagues in the UK HEIs that I am currently involved with in my roles as employee, external examiner and student. Finally, the use of IPA enabled access to the inner most thoughts, feelings and traumas of the participants thereby, making the study truly phenomenological. It has been a privilege to be allowed such access and I am grateful to the participants for their candour and time.

APPENDICES

IMPLEMENTING ESRC PRINCIPLES of RESEARCH ETHICS FRAMEWORK (2015)

The study has been underpinned by adherence to the six principles of the ESRC Research Ethics Framework (2015) which are:

• *Research participants should take part voluntarily, free from any coercion or undue influence, and their rights, dignity and (when possible) autonomy should be respected and appropriately protected.*

• *Research should be worthwhile and provide value that outweighs any risk or harm. Researchers should aim to maximise the benefit of the research and minimise potential risk of harm to participants and researchers. All potential risk and harm should be mitigated by robust precautions.*

• *Research staff and participants should be given appropriate information about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks and benefits, if any, are involved.*

• *Individual research participant and group preferences regarding anonymity should be respected and participant requirements concerning the confidential nature of information and personal data should be respected.*

• *Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure recognised standards of integrity are met, and quality and transparency are assured.*

• *The independence of research should be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality should be explicit.*

The following actions were undertaken to ensure adherence to the six principles.

A. Participation will be voluntary

All potential participants were briefed about the research, its aims and the degree of involvement and time expected from the participant. Participants were also briefed on how the research data would be used to inform the research. Consent was sought and obtained by signing of a consent form (Appendix 2). The participants were informed that their consent was voluntary and they must be under no obligation to participate. This assurance was essential as there may have been a degree of anxiety related to my role as the Programme Leader of their course of study. The power imbalance between the student and the Programme Leader could have contributed to the assent. However, I assured the students that refusal to participate in the research would, in no way, impact negatively on their experiences as students on the MBA.

In addition, the participants were provided with a participant information sheet (Appendix 3) that included answers to the following questions:

4   Doctorate in Education. What is it?

5   *What is the purpose of the study?*
6   *Why have I been chosen?*
7   *Do I have to take part?*
8   *What will I be asked to do if I take part?*
9   *What will happen to the results of the research study?*

The sheet also provided the students with contact details of the researcher's supervisors in case they wished to register any concerns or complaints relating to the conduct of the research. Once the students had read the participant information sheet they asked for further clarification relating to when the data would be collected.

The consent form (Appendix 2) was circulated with the participant information sheet and contained the following four statements in addition to title of project, name of researcher, name of participant, name of person taking consent (in this case it was the researcher), date and signature of participant:

1. *I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 30th November 2009 for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.*

2. *I understand that my response will be recorded.*

3. *I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.*

4. *I agree to take part in the above study.*

B. Withdrawing from the research will be allowed at any stage of the research

All participants were made aware that they could withdraw at any stage of the research. However, the commitment of the participants to contribute to the research is commendable as two of them travelled all night in a ferry and

bus to reach me in Dhaka, (capital of Bangladesh) to complete the second round interview. All 14 interviews were completed with no withdrawal from any participant.

C. Anonymity unless the participant wishes to be identified

All of the participants wished to be identified in the research via the use of their own names. They wanted their contribution to be transparent and easily recognisable. IPA allows that as each participant's contribution is clearly visible in the analysis and discussion. However, as the thesis will become a public document the anonymity of the participants has been ensured by changing their names, previous study institution as well as any reference to any well known organisation in Bangladesh through which the identity of the participant could be revealed.

D. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is guaranteed at all junctures of the research.

There was no link between participating in the research and the student's learning experience and performance. All participants were re-assured that none of the interview data would be discussed with or made available to any of the course teaching team, during the duration of their study period.

E. Integrity of data presentation.

I have attempted to present and analyse the data with total integrity. Data has been returned to each participant for validation of the initial understanding of the articulation. When and if the participant has indicated

any misunderstanding, I have incorporated the change prior to undertaking the analysis of the data.

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) developed a Research Ethics Framework (REF) in 2005 to develop and sustain good ethical practice in social science research. In any research there is an expectation of interaction between data and methodology. In the same way it is expected that a dynamic will exist between methodology and ethics. In response, and in liaison with the supervisory team, regular review of emerging ethical considerations will be scheduled and has been reported on in the annual progress report to Research Degree Committee.

CONSENT FORM   **Appendix 2**

Title of Project:

Preparing for study in the UK: a phenomenological action research exploration of the transitional experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students in UK with a view to improving the management of transition.

Name of Researcher:

Naushaba Singh

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand

    the information sheet dated 30th November

    2009 for the above study and have had the

    opportunity to ask questions.

2   I understand that my response will be recorded

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary

    and that I am free to withdraw at any time,

    without giving any reason

 4.   I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

Name of person taking   Date   Signature

consent

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – 30th November 2009

1. Doctorate in Education. What is it?

You are being invited to take part in an action research Doctorate in Education. Action research aims to go beyond describing, analysing and theorising. It attempts to intervene in current practices by reconstructing and transforming those practices. Somekh (2006). The Doctorate in Education is recognised as 'contributing to the development of professional practice rather than research conducted primarily as a contribution to academic knowledge.' Walker (1998) cited in Maxwell (2009).

2. What is the purpose of the study?

The United Kingdom is the second most popular destination for overseas students. The number of Bangladeshi students arriving in the UK, for further and higher studies, is increasing on a yearly basis. Studying abroad requires large investments of finance, time and commitment. Therefore, it is essential to gain knowledge of the experiences of international students so that their stay is successful. There is considerable research on the experiences of students from China and other countries but there is no research on the experiences of Bangladeshi students. The purpose of this study is to focus on the experiences of a particular group of Bangladeshi students, namely the MBA students.

3. Why have I been chosen?

You have been asked to participate because you are an overseas student from Bangladesh studying the MBA in the United Kingdom.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

5. What will I be asked to do if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview which will be recorded. It is essential to record the interview so as to ensure accuracy in the recording and analysis of information. The researcher will only use first names during the discussion and no names will be attached to comments that may be used in the writing of the thesis. The researcher may request a follow-up interview to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's understanding of your statements as well as probe areas that could benefit from more detailed information.

6. What will happen to the results of the research study?

It is anticipated that the results from the interviews will raise awareness of the experiences of Bangladeshi MBA students in the UK. The information will be used to improve practices in the participating institutions. It is also envisaged that the findings will be disseminated via publications in academic journals and / or at conferences.

Researcher : Naushaba Singh - e-mail naushaba.singh@tvu.ac.uk

        School of Business

        Faculty of Professional Studies

        Thames Valley University

        Ealing W5 5RF

If you have any complaints about the conduct of this research project and you wish to discuss with someone other than the researcher, please contact:

Researcher's Supervisors

Dr. Mike Mortimer

Deputy Director

Institute for Teaching, Innovation and Learning

Thames Valley University

Professor David Jones

Dean of Faculty

Thames Valley University

Thank you for your co-operation

Naushaba Singh

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adeoye – Agboola, D.I. and Evans, H. (2015) The Relationship Between Anxiety and Academic Performance of Postgraduate International Students in a British University: A Cross-Sectional Quantitative Design. *Science Journal of Public Health,* Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 331-338

Alhazmi, A. and Nyland, B. (2010) Saudi International Students in Australia and Intercultural Engagement: A Study of Transitioning from a Gender Segregated Culture to a Mixed Gender Environment*. PhD research paper for RMIT University,* Melbourne, Australia. pp.1-11

Al-Zubaidi, K. O. and Rechards, C. (2010) Arab Postgraduate Students in Malaysia: Identifying and overcoming the cultural and language barriers. *Arab World English Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.107-129.

Allport, G.W. (1979) *The Nature of Prejudice.* Reading, Massachusetts and New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Altbach, P.G. (2011) Agents and Third-Party Recruiters in International Higher Education*. International Higher Education,* No. 62, pp.11-14

Andre de Araujo, A. (2011) Adjustment Issues of International Students Enrolled in American Colleges and Universities: A review of the Literature. *Higher Education Studies,* Vol.1, No.1, pp. 2-8

Anthias, P. (2007) Student Migration from Bangladesh to the UK. *Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).*

Arkoudis, S. and Tran, L. (2010) Writing Blah, Blah, Blah: Lecturers' Approaches and Challenges in Supporting International Students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Vol.22, No. 2, pp. 169-178

Arthur, N. and Flynn, S. (2013) International Students' Views of Transition to Employment and Immigration. *The Canadian Journal of Career Development,* Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 28-37

Asgari, M. and Borzooei, M. (2014) Effects of service quality and price on satisfaction and the consequent learning outcomes of international students. *International Journal of Information, Business and Management,* Vol. 6, No.3, pp. 132-145

Asmar, C. (2005) Internationalising students: reassessing diasporic and local student difference. *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol.30, No.3, pp. 291-309

Baggini, J. (2002) *Philosophy – Key texts*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baggini, J. (2002) *Philosophy – Key themes*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baharun, R., Awang, Z. and Padlee, S.F. (2011) International students' choice criteria for selection higher learning in Malaysian private universities. *African Journal of Business Management,* Vol. 5 No.12, pp. 4704-4714

Bamford, J. (2008) Strategies for the improvement of International Students' Academic and Cultural Experiences of Studying in the UK. *The Higher Education Academy. Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Network: Enhancing Series: Internationalisation,* pp.1-10

Bartram, B. (2008) Supporting international students in higher education: constructions, cultures and clashes. *Teaching in Higher Education*, Vol. 13, No. 6, pp. 657- 668.

Bell, J. (2007) Indian and Bangladeshi Perspectives: Use of Metacognition and Framing in Postgraduate Study. *Language Awareness*, Vol.16, No.2, pp. 81-98

Bell, J. (2008) *Doing your Research Project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Bell, M. (2006) Internationalising the curriculum for students from Singapore: A field study in the Australian bush. *Critical Visions,* pp. 35-42

Bennell, P. and Pearce, T. (1999) The Internationalisation of Higher education: Exporting Education to Developing and Transitional Economies. *Institute of Development Studies Working Paper,* No. 75, pp.1-25

Bennett, M.J. (1993) Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of inter-cultural sensitivity. In M. Paige (Ed), *Education for the Intercultural Experience.* pp.1-11 (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press).

Berry, J.W. (1997) Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An international Review*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 5-34

Bhatta, D.N. (2013) Moral Dimensions of Research Ethics: Ethical Dilemmas and Challenges in human Participants' Research among Different Settings. *Journal of Preventive Medicine,* Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 19-21

Biggerstaff, D. and Thompson, A.R. (2008) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): A Qualitative Methodology of Choice in Healthcare Research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp.173-183

Birnbaum, M., Cardona, B., Milian, M. and Gonzalez, M. (2012) Strangers in a Strange Land: How Non-Traditional International Students See a United States University. *Journal of International Education and Leadership.* Vol. 2, No. 2, pp.1-16

BIS (2011) *Amplifying the Voice of Muslim Students: findings from Literature Review.* BIS Research Paper No. 55. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

BIS (2012) *Tracking International Graduate Outcomes. I-graduate International Insight* BIS Research Paper No. 62. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

BIS (2013) *The Wider Benefits of international Education in the UK.* BIS Research Paper No.128. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Blackmore, J., Gribble, C., Farrell, L., Rahimi, M., Arber, R. and Devlin, M. (2014) Australian International Graduates and the Transition to Employment. *Final Report.* Deakin University Worldly

Bochner, S., Hutnik, H. and Furnham, A. (2001) The Friendship Patterns of Overseas and Host Students in an Oxford Student Residence*. The Journal of Social Psychology,* Vol.125, No.6, pp. 689-694

Bodenhorn, N., Jackson, A.D. and Farrell, R. (2005) Increasing Personal Cultural Awareness through Discussions with International Students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Vol.17, No.1, pp. 63-68

Bone, D. (2008) Internationalisation of HE: A Ten-Year View*. DIUS Report on International Issues in Higher Education.* London: Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. pp. 1-19

British Future and Universities UK (2014) *International students and the UK immigration debate. Migration Statistics Quarterly Report.* London: Office for National Statistics. pp. 1-36

Brown, L. (2007) A consideration of the challenges involved in supervising international Masters students. *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* Vol.31, No.3, pp. 239-248

Brown, L. (2008) Language and Anxiety: An Ethnographic Study of International Postgraduate Students*. Evaluation and Research in Education,* Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 75-95

Brown, L. (2009) The Transformative Power of the International Sojourn: An Ethnographic Study of the International Student Experience*. Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 502-521

Brown, L. and Aktas, G. (2012) Turkish university students' hopes and fears about travel to the west. *Journal of Research in International Education,* Vol. 11, No. 3, pp.3-18

Brown, L., Brown, J. and Richards, B. (2014) Media representations of Islam and international Muslim student well-being. *International Journal of Educational Research,* Vol. 69, pp.50-58

Brown, L., Edwards, J. and Hartwell, H. (2010) A taste of the unfamiliar: Understanding the meanings attached to food by international postgraduate students in England. *Appetite,* Vol. 54, No. 1, pp.202-207

Brown, L. and Holloway, I. (2008) The initial stage of the international sojourn: excitement or culture shock? *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* Vol. 36, No.1, pp.33-49

Bryla, P. and Ciabiada, B. (2014) Obstacles to International Student Mobility: the Case of Poland. *Trends Journal of Sciences Research,* Vol.1, No.1, pp. 12-16

Butcher, A., McGrath, T. and Stock, P. (2008) Once Returned, Twice Forgotten? Asian Students Returning Home After Studying in New Zealand. *New Zealand Population Review*, No. 33 and 34, pp. 235-248

Byrne, D. (1997) An Overview (and Underview) of Research and Theory within the Attraction Paradigm. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, No.14, pp.417-431

Caelli, K., Ray, L. and Mill, J. (2003) 'Clear as Mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 2, No.2 pp. 1-23

Cağatay, S.O. (2015) Examining EFL students' foreign language speaking anxiety: The case at a Turkish state university. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences,* Vol. 199, pp. 648-656

Cameron, S. (2005) *The MBA Handbook: Skills for Mastering Management.* London, New York: Pearson Education Limited.

Campbell, J. and Li, M. (2008) Asian Students' Voices: An Empirical Study of Asian Students' Learning Experiences at a New Zealand University. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* Vol.12, No.4, pp. 375-396

Cantwell, B., Luca, S.G. and Lee, J.J. (2009) Exploring the orientations of international students in Mexico: differences by region of origin. *Higher Education,* Vol. 57, pp. 335-354

Caruna, V. and Hanstock, J. (2003) Internationalising the Curriculum: From Policy to Practice. *Extract from Education in a Changing Environment, University of Salford Conference* 17th – 18th September 2003, Conference Proceedings, pp.1-11

Carver, C.S., Scheier, M.F. and Weintraub, J.K. (1989) Assessing Coping Strategies: A Theoretically Based Approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.56, No. 2, pp. 267-283

Çelic, G. and Snoubar, Y. (2013) Cultural Differences of International Students in Turkey and Problems They Experience. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural.* Vol. 106, pp. 759-766

Cerna, L. (2014) The Internationalisation of Higher Education: Three European Universities in Comparative Perspective. *Centre on Migration, Policy and Society,* Working Paper No.114, University of Oxford, pp. 1-26

Change Institute (2009) Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities. *Summary Report,* April 2009*.* London: Queen's Printer and Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary office.

Choo, K.L. (2007) The implications of introducing critical management education to Chinese students studying in UK business schools: Some empirical evidence. *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* Vol.31, No.2, pp. 145-158

Clifford, V. and Joseph, C. (2005) Theoretical Approaches to IoC*. Report on the Internationalisation of the Curriculum Project,* Higher Education Development Unit, Monash University, Melbourne, pp.1-11

Cole, D. and Ahmadi, S. (2010) Reconsidering Campus Diversity: An Examination of Muslim Students' Experiences. *The Journal of Higher Education,* Vol.81, No.2, pp. 121-139

Comrie, C. (2015) International Student Experience Report. *Project Report,* Bristol, University of the West of England.

Constantine, M.G., Anderson, G.M., Berkel, L.A., Caldwell, L.D. and Utsey, S.O. (2005) Examining the Cultural Adjustment Experiences of African international College Students: A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, Vol.52, No.1, pp.57-66

Cook-Sather, A. (2006) Sound, Presence, and Power: 'Student Voice' in Educational Research and Reform. *Curriculum Inquiry,* Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 359-390

Court, D. and Abbas, R. (2013) Whose Interview Is It, anyway? Methodological and Ethical Challenges of Insider-Outsider Research, multiple Languages, and Dual- Researcher Cooperation. *Qualitative Inquiry,* Vol.19, No.6, pp. 480-488

Crabtree, B.F. and Miller, W.L. (1999) *Doing Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Cresswell, J.W. (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* Thousand Oaks and London: Sage Publications.

Cubillo, J.M., Sanchez, J. and Cervino, J. (2006) International Students Decision-Making Process. *International Journal of Education Management,* Vol.20, No.2, pp. 101-115

Currie, G. (2007) 'Beyond our imagination': The voice of international students on the MBA. *Management learning*, Vol. 38, No. 5, pp. 539-556

Darlaston-Jones, D. (2007) Making connections: The relationship between epistemology and research methods. *The Australian Community Psychologist,* Vol. 19, No. 1 pp. 19-27

Davies, H. (2008) Reflexivity in Research Practice: informed Consent with Children at School and at Home. *Sociological Research Online*, July 2008.

Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. and Giardina, M.D. (2006) Disciplining qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol.19, No.6, pp.769-782

DES (1985) Education for All. *The Swann Report.* Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups. Department of Education and Science. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

De Vita, G. and Case, P. (2003) Rethinking the Internationalisation Agenda in UK Higher Education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 383-398

De Wit, H. (2013) Internationalisation of higher education: An introduction on the why, how and what. In H. de Wit (ed.), *An Introduction to Higher Education Internationalisation*, (pp.13-46) 'Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation' Universita Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, (Milan).

Drake, P. (2010) Grasping at Methodological Understanding: a cautionary tale from insider research. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education,* Vol. 33, pp. 85-99

Durkin, K. (2008) The adaptation of East Asian masters students to western norms of critical thinking and argumentation in the UK. *Intercultural Education* Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 15-27

Durkin, K. (2008) The middle way: East Asian Master's Students' Perceptions of Critical Argumentation in U.K Universities. *Journal of International Studies Education,* Vol.12, No. 1, pp. 38-55

Dwyer, S.C. and Buckle, J.L. (2009) The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 54-63

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P.R. (2008) *Management Research.* Los Angeles, London: Sage Publications.

ESRC (2015) *Framework for Research Ethics.* London: Economics and Social Research Council.

EUA (2013) *Internationalisation in European higher education: European policies, institutional strategies and EUA support.* EUA Membership Consultation. Brussels: European University Association. pp. 1-24

Fade, S. (2004) Using interpretative phenomenological analysis for public health nutrition and dietetic research: a practical guide*. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society,* Vol.63, No. 4, pp. 647-653.

Faleel, S.F., Tam, C.L., Lee, T.H., Har, W.M. and Foo, Y.C. (2012) Stress, Perceived Social Support, Coping Capability and Depression: A Study of Local and Foreign Students in the Malaysian Context. *International Journal of Social, Management, Economics and Business Engineering,* Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-7

Fan, S. (2010) Language Shock: A Challenge to Language Learning*. The International Journal: Language Society and Culture,* No. 31, pp. 42-51

Fantini, A.E. (1995) Language: its cultural and Intercultural Dimensions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, No. 19, pp.143-153

Finlay, L. (2009) Debating Phenomenological Research Methods. *Phenomenology and Practice,* Vol. 3, No.1, pp.6-25

Floyd, A. and Arthur, L. (2012) Researching from within: external and internal ethical engagement. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, Vol.35, No. 2, pp. 171-180

Folkman, S., Lazarus, R.S., Dunkel-Schetter, C., DeLongis, A. and Gruen, R.J. (1986) The dynamics of a stressful encounter: Cognitive appraisal, coping and encounter outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* Vol. 50, No. 5, pp. 992-1003

Forbush, E. and Foucault-Welles, B. (2016) Social media use and adaptation among Chinese students beginning to study in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* Vol. 50, pp. 1-12

Fuller, T.L. (2007) Study abroad experiences and intercultural sensitivity among graduate theological students: A preliminary and exploratory investigation. *Christian Higher Education,* No. 6, pp. 321-332

Gadamer, H.G. (1977) *Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Garcia, H.A. and Villarreal, M.D.L. (2014) The 'Redirecting' of International Students: American Higher Education Policy Hindrances and Implications. *Journal of International Students*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 126-136.

Ghobrial, S. (2006) The Safety of our International Students: A Proactive Approach. *17th Annual ISANA Conference Paper,* University of Queensland, pp. 1-7

Gill, S. (2007) Overseas students' intercultural adaptation as intercultural learning: A transformative framework. *Compare*, Vol. 37, No.2, pp.167-183.

GMAC (2007) Satisfied MBAs: Career Switchers and Career Enhancers from Around the World. *Research Report,* RR-07-11 June 2007, Reston, Virginia: Graduate Management Admission Council.

GMAC (2012) MBA Prospective Students. *Survey Report.* Reston, Virginia: Graduate Management Admission Council.

GMAC (2013) Application Trends*. Survey Report.* Reston, Virginia: Graduate Management Admission Council.

Goffman, E. (1959) *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York, London: Anchor Books.

Grayson, J.P. (2008) The experiences and outcomes of domestic and international students at four Canadian universities. *Higher Education Research and Development,* Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 215-230

Grayson, J.P. and Stowe, S. (2005) Language Problems of International and Domestic ESL Students at YBC, York, McGill and Dalhousie, and Academic Achievement. *Presented to the 2005 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, London Ontario,* pp. 1-21

Green, A. (2007) Washback to learning outcomes: a comparative study of IELTS preparation and university pre-sessional language course. *Assessment in Education,* Vol. 14, No 1, pp 75-97

Greene, M.J. (2014) On the Inside Looking IN: Methodological Insights and Challenges in Conducting Qualitative Insider Research. *The Qualitative Report,* Vol. 19, No. 15, pp. 1-13

Gresham, R. and Walsh, J. (2007) Building Bridges: Building understanding for Muslim students in social and learning environments. *International Conference 'Student Success in International Education',* 27-30 November, Samford Grand, Glenelg, Adelaide, Australia. pp. 1-7

Griffiths, D.S., Winstanley, D and Gabriel, Y. (2005) Learning Shock: The Trauma of Return to Formal Learning. *Management Learning,* Vol. 36, No. 3 pp. 275-297

Gu, Q. (2009) Maturity and Interculturality: Chinese students' experiences in UK higher education. *European Journal of Education*, Vol 44, No.1, Part 1 pp.37-52

Hadis, B.F. (2005) Why are They Better Students when They Come Back? Determinants of Academic Focusing Gains in the Study Abroad Experience. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad,* No. 11, pp.57-70

Haines, D. (2013) ''More Aware of Everything'': Exploring the Returnee Experience in American Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in international Education,* Vol. 17, No.1, pp. 19-38

Hanson, J. (2013) Educational developers as researcher: the contribution of insider research to enhancing understanding of role, identity and practice. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International,* Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 388-399.

Hart, C. (2008) *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination.* Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Hasan, R. (2013) Influential Factors in Selecting an Overseas University for Bangladeshi Undergraduate Students. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management,* Vol. 7, No. 6, pp. 27-31

Hawkes, L. (2014) The Development of the Social and Academic Identities of International Students in English speaking Higher Education Institutions. *BPP University Report.* Presented to York St John University, March 2014

Hazen, H.D. and Alberts, H.C. (2006) Visitors or immigrants? International Students in the United States. *Population, Space and Place* No. 12, pp.201-216

Heggins, W.J. and Jackson, F.L.J. (2003) *Understanding the collegiate experience of Asian international students at a Midwestern Research University.* College Student Journal, Vol, 37, No. 3, pp. 379-391

Heidegger, M. (1978) *Being and Time.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hellen, N. (2015) Religious sensitivity enters office fridge. *Sunday Times,* 4th October, pp. 13

Hellsten, M. (2002) Students in transition: Needs and Experiences of International Students in Australia. *Paper presented at the 16th Australian International Education Conference,* Hobart, Tasmania, pp. 1-13

Hellsten, M. and Prescott, A. (2004) Learning at University: The International Student Experience. *International Education Journal.* Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 344-351

HEPI (2015) What do prospective students think about international students? *Report No. 74.* Higher Education Policy Institute: Oxford.

Hirai, R., Farzier, P. and Syed, M. (2015) Psychological and Sociological Adjustment of first-Year International Students: Trajectories and Predictors. *Journal of Counselling Psychology,* Vol.62, No. 3, pp. 438-452

Hofstede, G. (1993) Cultural constraints in management theory. *The Executive,* Vol.7, No.1, pp. 81-94

Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organizations across nations.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Holliday, A. (2010) Complexity in Cultural Identity. *Language and Intercultural Communications,* Vol.10, No. 2, pp.165-177.

Hossler, D., Braxton, J., and Coopersmith, G. (1989) Understanding student college choice. In J.C. Smart (ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 231-288) (New York: Agathon Press).

Hossler, D. and Gallagher, K.S. (1987) Studying Student College Choice: A Three-Phase Model and the Implications for Policymakers. *College and University*, Vol.6, No.3, pp.207-221

Howitt, D. (2010) *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology.* London: Pearson.

Huang, J. And Klinger, D.A. (2006) Chinese Graduate Students at North American Universities: Learning Challenges and Coping Strategies. *Canadian and International Education,* Vol.35, No. 2, pp. 48-61

Huang, R. (2008) Mapping Educational Tourists' Experience in the UK: Understanding international students. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.29, No. 5, pp. 1003-1020

Hudzik, J.K. (2013) Changing paradigm and practice for higher education internationalisation. *An Introduction to Higher Education Internationalisation* (Edited by Hans de Wit), 'Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation' Universita Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milan. pp. 47-60

Hughes, H. (2010) International students' experiences of university libraries and librarians. *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp.77-89

Hughes, M. (2007) *Managing Change: A Critical Perspective.* London: Chartered Institute of Personnel Development.

Iredale, R., Guo, F. And Rozario, S. (2003) *Return Migration in the Asia Pacific.* (Cheltenham, UK, Northampton MA USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd).

Irwin, R. (2007) Culture shock: negotiating feelings in the field. *Anthropology Matters Journal,* Vol. 9, No. 1, pp.1-11

Jamsiah, M., Taher, S. and Taufik, A.J. (2014) Stress among international postgraduate students at Uninversiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre (UKMMC). *Malaysian Journal of Public Health Medicine,* Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 21-33

Kingston, E. and Forland, H. (2008) The international Student Learning Experience: bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality*. Journal of Studies in International Education,* Vol. 12, No. 2 pp. 204-221

Knight, J. (2004) Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* Vol.8, No. 5, pp.5-31

Knight, J. (2008) Higher Education in Turmoil: The Changing World of Internationalization*. Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, Vol. 13, pp. 1-37

Knowles, M.S., Holton, E.F., and Swanson, R.A. (2011) *The Adult Learner: the definitive classic in adult education and human resource development.* (Amsterdam, Boston:Elsevier).

Krahe, B., Charles, A., Felber, J. and Helbig, M.K. (2005) Perceived discrimination of international visitors to universities in Germany and the UK. *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 96, pp.263-281

Laing, C., Robinson, A. and Johnston, V. (2005) Managing the Transition into Higher Education: An on-line Spiral Induction Programme*. Active Learning in Higher Education* Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 243-255

Langdridge, D. (2007) *Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research and Method*. Harlow, England, London, New York: Pearson Education Limited.

Langthaler, M. (2010) Does Globalised Education Benefit Development? Introductory considerations on development and power in the context of internationalisation in tertiary education. *ÖFSE,* Vol.15, pp. 19-31

Laverty, S.M. (2003) Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of historical and Methodological Considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* Vol.2, No.3, pp. 21-35

Lee, J.J. (2010) Beyond Borders: International Student Pathways to the United States. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. X No. X, pp. 1-20

Lee, J.J. and Rice, C. (2007) Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education,* Vol.53, pp. 381-409

Leung, C. (2001) The psychological adaptation of overseas and migrant students in Australia, *International Journal of Psychology* Vol.36, No. 4, pp. 251–259

Liamputtong, P. (2011) International students in Australia: their challenges and implications for university courses. *International Journal of Students' Research*. Vol.1, No. 1, pp. 3-9

Li, G., Chen, W. and Duanmu, J.L. (2010) 'Determinants of International Students' Academic Performance: A Comparison between Chinese and Other International Students'. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* Vol.14, No. 4, pp. 389-405

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, California, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Liu, J. (2009). From learner passive to learner active? The case of Chinese postgraduate students studying marketing in the UK. *The International Journal of Management Education*, Vol.7, No.2, pp.33-40

Liu, X., Elston, F. and Zhou, P. (2013) Comparing Research on Chinese Students Study Abroad Decision-making: China-based versus Overseas-based Perspectives. *Proceedings of 23rd International Business Research Conference,* 18-20th November, pp. 1-13

Liu, X. and Furneaux, C. (2014) A Multidimensional comparison of discourse organisation in English and Chinese University students' argumentative writing. *International Journal of Applied Linguistic,* Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 1-23

Liu, Y., Chen, X., Li, S., Yu, B., Wang, Y. and Yan, H. (2016) Path Analysis of Acculturative Stress Components and Their Relationship with Depression Among International Students in China. *Stress and Health,* pp. 1-9. Wiley Online Library.

Lombard, C.A. (2014) Coping with anxiety and rebuilding identity: a psychosynthesis approach to culture shock. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly,* Vol.27, No.2, pp.174-199

Luxon, T. and Peelo, M. (2009) Internationalisation: its implications for curriculum design and course development in UK higher education. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International.* Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 51-60

Luzio-Lockett, A. (1998). The squeezing effect: The cross-cultural experience of international students. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 209-220

Mak, A.S. and Kim, I. (2011) Korean International Students' Coping Resources and Psychological Adjustment in Australia. *OMNES: The Journal of Multicultural Society,* Vol.2, No. 1, pp. 56-84

Marginson, S. (2015) UK international Education: Global position and national prospects. *UK Council for International Student Affairs Conference.* University of Sussex, 1-3 July 2015, pp. 1-18

Maringe, F. and Carter, S. (2007) International Students' Motivations for Studying in UK HE*. International Journal of Education Management*, Vol. 21, No. 6, pp. 459-475

Mazzarol, T. and Souter, G.N. (2001) Push-pull Factors influencing International Student Selection of Education Destination. *CEMI Discussion Paper 0105* Centre for Entrepreneurial Management and Innovation, pp. 1-14

McKinley, J. (2015) Critical Argument and writer Identity: Social Constructivism as a Theoretical Framework for EFL Academic Writing. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies,* Vol.12, No.3, pp.184-207

McLachlan, D.A. and Justice, J. (2009). A Grounded Theory of International Student Well-being. *The Journal of Theory Construction and Testing*, Vol.13, No. 1, pp. 27-32

Middlehurst, R. and Woodfield, S. (2004) The Role of Transnational, Private, and For-profit Provision in Meeting Global Demand for tertiary Education: Mapping, Regulation and Impact. CASE STUDY – BANGLADESH. *Summary Report* commissioned by the Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO. (Vancouver: Commonwealth of Learning).

Migin, M.W., Falahat, M. and Khatibi, A. (2015) Conceptualizing the Decision Making Process of International Students in Higher Education. *International Journal of Business and Social Science,* Vol.6, No. 1, pp. 119-126

Ming, J.S.K. (2010) Institutional Factors Influencing Students' College Choice Decision in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework *International Journal of Business and Social Science* Vol.1 No. 3, pp. 53-58

Mostafa, G.M.M. (2006) Learning and Cultural Experiences of Arab Muslim Graduate Students in a Canadian University, *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education,* Vol. 1, No. 1 pp. 36-53

Mubarak, H. (2007). How Muslim students negotiate their religious identity and practices in an undergraduate setting. *Report for Social Science Research Council.* Retrieved from http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Mubarak.pdf.

Mukminin, A., Yanto, F. and Yanto, H. (2013) Beyond the Classroom: Religious Stressors and Adjustment Among Indonesian Muslim Graduate

Students in an American Graduate School. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry,* Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 33-45

Mustafa, C.S. and Illyas, M. (2013) Relationship between Students Adjustment Factors and Cross Cultural Adjustment: A Survey at the Northern University of Malaysia, *Intercultural Communication Studies,* Vol. XXII, No. 1, pp. 279-300

Nga, T.T.H., Seet, P.S. and Jones, J (2015) Understanding re-expatriation intentions among overseas returnees – an emerging economy perspective. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Published online: 07 Oct 2015

Ngwira, F.F. and Mapoma, H.W.T. (2015) Intercultural Communication Competence and Acculturation among International Students in Central China. *Intercultural Communication Studies,* Vol. XXIV, No. 2, pp. 61-83

Novera, I.A. (2004) Indonesian Postgraduate Students studying in Australia: An Examination of their Academic, Social and Cultural Experiences. *International Education Journal,* Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 475-484

Nunes, S. and Arthur, N. (2013) International students' experiences of integrating into the workforce. *Journal of employment Counselling,* Vol. 50, pp. 34-45

Nyland, C. Forbes- Mewett, H. And Marginson, S. (2010) The International student safety debate: Moving beyond denial. *Higher education Research and Development,* Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 89-101

Oberg, K. (1960) Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Practical Anthropology*, Vol.7, pp. 177-182

OECD (2012) Approaches to internationalisation and Their Implications for Strategic Management and Institutional Practice. *A Guide for Higher Education Institutions*, OECD Higher Education Programme IMHE.

Opara, J. (2011) Rationales of Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe: Meaning and Approaches. *Journal of Educational and Social Research,* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 57-68

OPM (2009) The experiences of Muslim students in further and higher education in London, *Office for Public Management Report.* Greater London Authority: London.

Oppong, S.H. (2013) Religion and Identity. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research,* Vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 10-16

O'Reilly, Hickey, T.M. and Ryan, D.A. (2015) The Experiences of American International Students in a Large Irish University. *Journal of International Students,* Vol.5, No.1, pp. 87- 98

Osborne, D. (2012) Factors in International Student Identity Formation: Processes and Challenges. *Sino-US English Teaching,* Vol.9, No. 4, pp. 1035-1044

Outlook (2007) *Friends and Allies: The Impacts of returning Asian Students on New Zealand-Asia Relationships.* Asia: NZ Foundation

Ozer, S. (2015) Predictors of international students' psychological and sociocultural adjustment to the context of reception while studying at Aarhus University, Denmark. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology,* Vol. 56, pp. 717-725

Őzoğlu, M., Gűr, B.S. and Coskun, I. (2015) Factors influencing international students' choice to study in Turkey and challenges they experience in Turkey. *Research in Comparative and International Education,* Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 223-237

Paile, P. and Fatoki, O. (2014) The Determinants of return and Non-return Intentions of International Students in South Africa. *International Journal of Education and Science,* Vol. 6, No. 3. Pp. 369-373

Peelo, M. and Luxon, T. (2007). Designing embedded courses to support international students' cultural and academic adjustment in the UK. *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* Vol.31, No. 1, pp.65-76

Pham, L. and Tran, Ly. (2015) Understanding the symbolic capital of intercultural attractions: a case study of international students in Australia. *International Studies in Sociology of Education,* Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 204-224

Phelps, R., Fisher, K. and Ellis. A. (2007) *Organizing and Managing Your Research.* (London: Sage Publications).

Preissle, J. (2006) Envisioning qualitative inquiry: a view across four decades. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. Vol.19, No. 6, pp. 685-695

Pringle, G., Fischbacher, M., and Williams, A. (2008) Assisting International Students to Manage their Transition to UK Academic Culture*. Universitas 21 Teaching and Learning Conference,* 21-22 February 2008. Glasgow University. pp. 1-7

Pritchard, R. (2011) Re-entry Trauma: Asian Re-integration after Study in the West. *Journal of Studies in International Education* Vol. 15, No. 1 pp. 93-111

QS (2011) *QS Global Employer Survey Report 2011* – How Employers Value an international Study Experience (London: Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd) pp. 1-22

Quaye, S.J. and Harper, S.R. (ed) (2015) *Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Approaches for Diverse Populations.* Second Edition. New York, London: Routledge

Redwan, A., Sami, A.R., Karim, A.J., Chan, R. And Zaleha, M.I. (2009) Stress and Coping Strategies among Management and Science University Students: A Qualitative Study. *The International Medical Journal,* Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 11-15

Ridley, D. (2004) Puzzling experiences in higher education: critical moments for conversation. *Studies in Higher Education,* Vol.29, No.1, pp. 91-107

Rolfe, G. (2006) Validity, trustworthiness and rigour: quality and the idea of qualitative research*. Methodological Issues in Nursing Research.* pp. 304-310

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, T. (2003) *Research Methods for Business Students.* London, New York: Prentice Hall.

Savicki, V., Adams, I., Wilde, A. and Binder, F. (2007) Intercultural Development: Topics and Sequences. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad.* Vol. XV, pp. 111-126

Savvides, N., Al-Youssef, J., Colin, M. and Garrido, C. (2014) Journeys into Inner / Outer Space: reflections on the methodological challenges of negotiating insider / outsider status in international educational research. *Research in Comparative and International Education,* Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 412-425

Sawir, E. (2005) Language difficulties of international students in Australia: The effects of prior learning experience. *International Education Journal,* Vol. 6, No. 5, pp. 567-580

Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Deumert, A., Nyland, C., and Ramia, G. (2007) Loneliness and International Students: An Australian Study*. Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. XX No. X, pp. 1-33

Schartner, A. and Young, T. (2015) Towards an integrated conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation. *Rethinking Internationalisation in higher education: methodological and conceptual challenges'.* Conference at Newcastle University May 13-15. Power point presentation.

Schön, D. (2007) *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action.* London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Schweisfurth, M. and Gu, Q. (2009). Exploring the experiences of international students in UK higher education: possibilities and limits of interculturality in university life. *Intercultural Education.* Vol. 20, No. 5, pp. 463-473

Seul, J.R. (1999) *'Ours is the Way of God':* Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 36, No.5, pp. 553-569

Seymour, D. and Constanti, P. (2002) University Hospitality Education for International Management: A Case of wasted Opportunities? *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education.* Vol.1, No.2, pp. 3-13

Shafaei, A.' Nejati, M., Quazi, A. and Heidt, T.V.D. (2015) 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do' Do international students' acculturation attitudes impact their ethical academic conduct? *Higher Education,* pp. 1-16 Online Springer Science Business Media Dordrecht

Shafaei, A. and Razak, N.A. (2016) International Postgraduate Students' Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Malaysia: Antecedents and Outcomes. *Research in Higher Education. Journal of the Association for Institutional Research,* Vol.56, No.8, pp. 777- 802

Shafaei, A. and Razak, N.A. (2016 Examining the link among cross-cultural adaptation, academic satisfaction and word of mouth in the context of

international postgraduate students in Malaysia. *International Journal Management in Education,* Vol. 10, No. 1,

Shaftel, J., Shaftel, T. and Ahluwalia, R. (2007) International Educational Experience and Intercultural Competence. *International Journal of Business and Economics,* Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 25-34

Shapiro, J.M., Ozanne, J.L. and Saatcioglu, B. (2007) An interpretive examination of the development of cultural sensitivity in international business. *Journal of International Business Studies,* Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 71-87

Shaw, R.L (2010) Embedding reflexivity within experiential qualitative psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology.* Vol. 7, No.3, pp. 233-243.

Shipman, T. (2015) May demands ban on jobless EU migrants. Sunday Times, 30th August, pp. 1-2

Sibley, J., Hamilton, D. and Chugh, R. (2015) International Student Wellbeing and Academic Progress. *International Student Experience Journal,* Vol.3, No.2, pp. 14-21

Sicat, R.M. (2011) Foreign Students' Cultural Adjustment and Coping Strategies. *International Conference on Social Science and Humanity* IPEDR Vol.5, pp.338-341

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data.* London: Sage Publications.

Sima, Y. and Pugsley, P.C. (2010) The Rise of A 'Me Culture' in Postsocialist China – Youth, Individualism and Identity Creation in the Blogosphere. *International Communication Gazette.* April 2010. 72: pp. 287-306

Singh, K. and Armstrong, L. (2006) International Postgraduate Student Experience: How Can We Enhance Transition Management? EDU-COM

2006 *International Conference. Engagement and Empowerment: New Opportunities for Growth in Higher Education*, Edith Cowan University, Perth Western Australia, 22-24 November 2006, pp. 460-472

Smith, J.A. (ed) (2009). *Qualitative Psychology – A practical guide to research methods.* London: Sage Publications.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Song, X. (2016) Educating Asian International Students: Toward a Transcultural Paradigm. *East Asia,* pp. 1-8 Online Springer Science Business Media Dordrecht

Soon, J.J. (2009) When do students intend to return? Determinants of students' return intentions using a multinomial logit model. *Journal of Business and Society,* Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 17-32

Sovic, S. (2007) Coping with stress: the perspective of international students. *Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education,* Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 145-158

Spencer-Oatey, H. and Xiong, Z. (2006) Chinese Students' Psychological and Socio-cultural Adjustments to Britain: An Empirical Study. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* Vol.19, No.1, pp. 37-53

Stets, J.E. and Burke, P.J. (2000) Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly,* Vol. 63, No. 3, pp. 224-237

Stutchbury, K. and Fox, A. (2009) Ethics in educational research: introducing a methodological tool for effective ethical analysis. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol.39, No. 4, pp.489-504

Subhash (2013) Learning Difficulties faced by Indian International Students at Bangor Business School, Bangor University, North Wales, UK. *International Journal of Social Science and Education,* Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 835-839

Tant, K. (2009) *Returning Home:* The value of an Australian Business Degree in Vietnam*. Report to Monash University*. Australia. pp. 1-15

Taylor, J. (2004) Toward a Strategy for Internationalisation: Lessons and Practice from Four Universities*. Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. 8, pp.149-171

Thomson, G., Rosenthal, D. and Russell, J. (2006) Cultural Stress among International Students at an Australian University. *Australian International Education Conference Paper,* pp. 1-8

Tian, M. and Lowe, J. (2010) Existentialist internationalisation and the Chinese student experience in English universities. *Compare,* Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 659-676

Tomlinson, H. (2015) Modi challenges China's dominance in Africa with promise of $10bn. *Times,* 30th October, pp.41

Tran, L.T. (2008). Unpacking academic requirements: international students in Management and Education disciplines*. Higher Education Research and Development,* Vol. 27, No.3, pp. 245-256

Trotman, D. (2006) Interpreting imaginative life worlds: phenomenological approaches in imagination and the evaluation of educational practice. *Qualitative Research,* Vol. 6, pp. 245-264

Tsai, T. and Lawrence, N. (2011) The Relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Adaptation of International Students in Taiwan. *International Conference on Management*, pp. 569-583

Tsoukas, H. (1989) The validity of idiographic explanations. *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 551-561

Tuckett, A. (2005) Part II: Rigour in qualitative research: complexities and solutions. *Nurse Researcher,* Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 29-42

UIS (2006) Student Migration from Bangladesh to the UK. *Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) UNESCO Institute for Statistics.* www.unesco.org

UIS (2013) Global Flow of tertiary level students. *Report, UNESCO Institute for Statistics.* www.unesco.org

Ujitani, E. and Volet, S. (2008) Socio-emotional challenges in international education: Insight into reciprocal understanding and intercultural relational development. *Journal of Research in International Education*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 279-303

UKCISA (2008) Mobility matters – Forty years of international students: Forty years of UKCISA. London: UKCISA). www.ukcisa.org.uk

UKCISA (2011) PMI Student Experience Achievements 2006-2011. *Report* London: UKCISA. www.ukcisa.org.uk

UKCISA (2014)) International Student Statistics. London: UKCISA. www.ukcisa.org.uk

UKCOSA (2004) International Students in UK Universities and Colleges: Broadening our Horizons*. Report of the UKCOSA Survey.* London: UKCOSA.

UKCOSA (2007) Benchmarking the provision of services for International Students in Higher Education Institutions. *Report.* London: UKCOSA.

UK Higher Education International Unit. (2010) A UK guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience. *I-graduate International Insight, Research Series, No. 6.* London: UK Higher Education International Unit.

Universities UK (2012) Higher education: Analysing a Decade of Change. Patterns and Trends in UK Higher Education. *In Focus 2*. London: Universities UK.

Universities UK (2014) International students and the UK immigration debate. *British Future and Universities UK*. London: Universities UK.

Urban, E.L. and Palmer, L.B. (2014) International Students as a Resource for Internationalization of Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 305-324

Urban, E. and Palmer, L.B. (2016) International Students' Perceptions of the Value of U.S. Higher Education. *Journal of International Students* Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-17

Van Der Meid, J.S. (2003) Asian Americans: Factors influencing the decision to study abroad. Frontiers: *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, Vol. 9, No. 7, pp. 71-110

Van Manen, M. (2007) *Researching lived Experience: human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. Ontario: The Althouse Press.

Wainwright, D. and Sambrook, S. (2010) The ethics of data collection: unintended consequences? *Journal of Health Organization and Management,* Vol.24, No.3, pp.277-287

Ward, C and Masgoret, A.M. (2004) *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand,* Report on the National Survey, Ministry of Education, Australia. pp. 1-161

Ward, C., Bochner, S. and Furnham, A. (2001) *The Psychology of Culture Shock*. New York: Routledge.

Weller, P., Hooley, T. and Moore, N. (2011) Religion and Belief in Higher Education: The experiences of staff and students. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

West, C., Stewart, L., Foster, K. and Usher, K. (2013) Accidental insider: Living the PhD study. *SciVerse Science Direct,* Vol. 20, pp. 61-65

Wihlborg, M. (2009) The Pedagogical Dimension of Internationalisation? A Challenging Quality Issue in Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century. *European Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 117-131

Wilkes, L. and Halcomb, E. (2013) The challenges of being an insider in storytelling research. *Nurse Researcher,* Vol. 21, No. 1, 8-13

Wilkins, S., Balkrishnan, M.S. and Huisman, J. (2012) Student choice in higher education: Motivations for choosing to study at an international branch campus. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* Vol.16, No.5, pp. 413-433

Willig, C. (2001) *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method.* Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Wilton, L., and Constantine, M.G. (2003) Length of Residence, Cultural Adjustment Difficulties, and Psychological Distress Symptoms in Asian and Latin American International College Students. *Journal of College Counselling,* Vol. 6, No.2, pp. 177-186

Wisker, G. (2008) *The Postgraduate Research Handbook.* Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wong, J.K. (2004) Are the Learning Styles of Asian International Students Culturally or Contextually Based*? International Education Journal* Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 154-166

Worldfolio (2011) *Bangladesh: Accomplishment beyond expectation.* 19th December 2011, pp. 1-12 worldfolio.co.uk

Wright, H.K. (2006). Are we (t)here yet? Qualitative research in education's profuse and contested present. *International Journal Of Qualitative Studies in Education,* Vol.19, No. 6, pp. 793-802

Wu, W. and Hammond, M. (2011) Challenges of university adjustment in the UK: A study of East Asian Master's degree students. *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 423-438

Yamin, S. (20080 Understanding Religious Identity and the causes of Religious Violence (2008) *South Asian Journal of Peace building,* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1-21

Yan, Z. and FitzPatrick, K. (2015) Acculturation and health behaviours among international students: A qualitative approach. *Nursing and Health Sciences.* Wiley Publishing Asia Pty Ltd.

Yang, H., Harlow, S., Maddux, C. and Smaby, M. (2006) The Impact of Cross-Cultural Experiences on Worldviews of Chinese International Students. *Counselling and Values*, Vol.51, pp. 21-38

Yeh, C. J. and Inose, M. (2003) International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly,* Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 15-28

Yosso, T.J. (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education,* Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 69-91

Yue, Y. and Le, Q. (2012) From 'Cultural Shock' to 'ABC Framework' Development of Intercultural Contact Theory. *International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research,* No. 2, pp. 133-141

Zawawi, D. and Jye, K.S. (2012) Understanding The Stressors and Coping Strategies Among MBA Students in Malaysia*. The 2012 International Conference on Business and Management*, 6-7 September 2012, Phuket – Thailand. pp. 529-539

Zeeshan, M., Sabbar, D.S., Bashir, S. and Hussain, R.I. (2013) Foreign Students' Motivation for Studying in Malaysia. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 833-84

Zheng, C. (2013) A Structure Analysis of English Argumentative Writings Written by Chinese and Korean EFL Learners. *English Language Teaching,* Vol.6, No.9, pp.67-73

Zhou, G. and Zhang, Z. (2014) A Study of the First Year International Students at a Canadian university: Challenges and Experiences with Social Integration. *Canadian and International Education,* Vol.43, No.2, pp. 132-148

Zhou,Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping,K. and Todman, J. (2008) Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education.* Vol.33, No.1, pp. 63-75

Zhou, Y.R., Knoke, D. and Sakamoto, I. (2005). Rethinking silence in the classroom: Chinese students' experiences of sharing indigenous knowledge. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Vol.9, No.3, pp. 287-311