Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

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Cross-cultural adaptation in blended learning environment in UK HEIs

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Research Domain: International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract: Cross-cultural adaptation refers to the process of internal change in individuals to be able to function in an unfamiliar culture (Kim 2011). Ward (2005) argues that expatriates or immigrants may need to assimilate into the new environment as their stay may be longer, however, students' sojourners are likely to return to their respective countries once they have achieved their short-term motive of obtaining a university degree. Irrespective of whether the sojourn is long or short, research suggests that expatriates as well as students who move to work or study in a new cultural environment undergo a high level of anxiety and stress in most cases; when they interact with individuals from the host country or when they try to "fit in" the new environment (Black 1991). Although the current literature has identified various factors that may affect a students' cross-cultural adaption, no studies have been conducted to explore how these factors influence the students' cross-cultural adaptation in a blended teaching environment within a UK university. This research looks into factors that affect international students' sociocultural as well as psychological adaptation in a blended learning environment within UK universities.

Paper: Cross-cultural adaptation refers to the process of internal change in individuals to be able to function in an unfamiliar culture (Kim 2011). The process of adaptive change involves letting go of some of the original cultural habits and the acculturation of new ones. Both processes occur through communicative engagements between the individual and the host environment. Ward (2005) argues that expatriates or immigrants may need to assimilate into the new environment as their stay may be longer, however, students' sojourners are likely to return to their respective countries once they have achieved their short-term motive of obtaining a university degree. Irrespective of whether the sojourn is long or short, research suggests that expatriates as well as students who move to work or study in a new cultural environment undergo a high level of anxiety and stress in most cases; when they interact with individuals from the host country or when they try to "fit in" the new environment (Black 1991).Although the current literature has identified various factors that may affect a students' cross-cultural adaption when they move to a new country to study at a Higher Education institute, no studies have been conducted to explore how these factors influence the students' cross-cultural adaptation in contemporary university environment that delivers teaching and learning in a dual-mode i.e. offline and online which is often referred to as blended learning

Research purpose:

The purpose of the research is to develop a framework that will guide UK HEIs on how to provide effective support to international students who are first time learners on a blended course at a UK university.

Research aim:

To identify and examine the factors that influence the cross-cultural adaptation of international students in a blended mode of study in UK HEIs.

Research objectives:

- To critically analyse the literature on cross-cultural adaptation and explore the concept of blended learning and draw correlation between the two concepts.
- To critically evaluate factors that affect international students' cross-cultural adaptation in a blended learning environment in UK Higher education
- To develop a hypothesis between variables derived from blended learning and cross-cultural adaptation literature and assess their relationship
- To assess the impact of the mediating variables on international students' cross-cultural adaption in blended learning environment in UK
- To provide recommendation to UK HEIs by developing a framework on how best to support international students during their first learning experience at a UK university.

Research methodology:

The nature of this study is quantitative, investigating the factors that affect the cross-cultural adaptation of international students on a blended learning programme in a UK university. A survey strategy was adopted, and a questionnaire was utilised to collect responses for factors identified in the literature as important in relation to cross-cultural adaptation of international students. This study is considered a correlational study where the researcher investigated the relationships between the variables affecting students' adaptation. The target population that form part of this study would be any international students studying for the first time at a UK university on a blended learning course. To choose an accurate sample frame that was representative of the target population, the researcher ensured that students from various international countries studying in different universities within the UK were included as part of the study. More so, students studying various subjects at different levels of study were chosen to ensure the output could be generalised. Two key factors accounted for were that all students participating in the study would be attending a UK university for the first time, more so on a blended learning course. These students would have also been provided between 0-8 weeks of blended teaching and learning from the time they started their course. The researcher ensured the above criteria were addressed through questions in the survey.

Data Analysis & Results

This study investigated predicted variables, and indirect influence variables, or latent variables, through a mathematical model represented by the antecedents and experiences of student sojourners. To analyze variable relations and data, a partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) software Warp PLS 7.0 was used. The researcher conducted primary analysis of survey responses and data screening post which a sample size of 293 was selected. The inferential

statistical results were obtained for the measurement model (cross loading, convergent and discriminant validity and reliability analysis) and structural model (R^2, effect size, and goodness of fit (GoF).The descriptive analysis of the data, using mean and standard deviation, was used to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs i.e. to confirm that the measurements used for the latent constructs are sufficiently reliable and valid. Then the SEM analysis was conducted to examine the proposed model and to provide the statistical evidence to support the proposed relationships between constructs.

The conceptual model and hypothesised results have been presented in the figures section of this paper.

References:
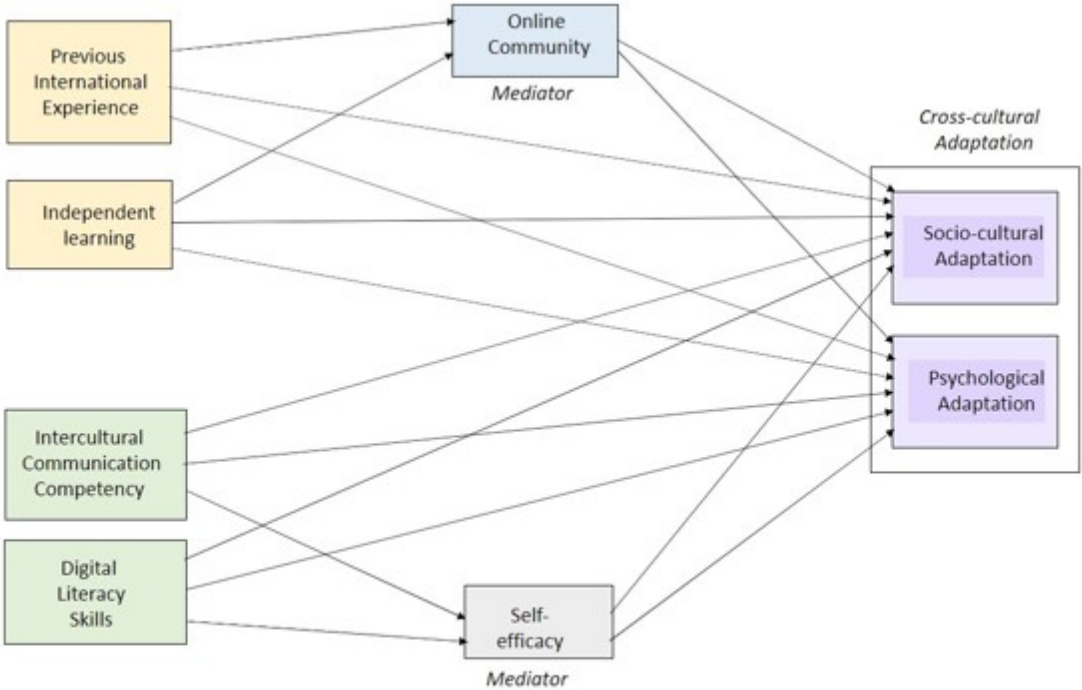
Conceptual model (Mody, 2021)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path coefficient	T-value	Decision
H1	OC mediates relationship between PIE and SCA	0.025	0.951	Not supported
H2	OC mediates relationship between PIE and PCA	0.039	0.957	Not supported
H3	OC mediates relationship between IL and SCA	0.070	3.270***	Supported
H4	OC mediates relationship between IL and PCA	0.111	3.135**	Supported
H5	SE mediates relationship between ICC and SCA	0.086	3.244***	Supported
H6	SE mediates relationship between ICC and PCA	0.036	0.533	Not supported
H7	SE mediates relationship between DLS and SCA	0.068	3.219***	Supported
H8	SE mediates relationship between DLS and PCA	0.029	0.542	Not supported

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