FIRST-HAND LEARNING PARTICIPATION: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES OF LONG STAYING MALAYSIAN STUDENTS IN JAPAN

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Studying in a foreign country is one of the ways to enhance students’ competencies in facing challenges of global competitiveness and in being marketable for future career choices. This research investigates the impact of cross-cultural adaptation among Malaysian students (N=245) who enrolled in various universities in Japan. Quantitative method was used to examine changes in the following five factors: personal changes, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural interaction, global mindedness and intellectual development. The findings demonstrate that studying abroad brings positive outcomes in students’ personal development. Hence, student mobility is an invaluable experience and administrators should support and encourage young people to explore ‘real life’ globally.

Keywords: personal changes, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural interactions, global mindedness, intellectual development, socio-cultural adaptation

Introduction

Culture is defined as “all that human beings learn to do, to use, to produce, to know, and to believe as they grow to maturity and live out their lives in the social groups to which they belong.”1 Culture is normally learned through social learning processes in a group or shared experiences which is directly transmitted from generation to generation and this affects behaviour, thinking and feeling towards people in different social environments.

Today, international mobility has become significant through increasing activities across national boundaries such as traveling, the promotion of international businesses and investments, global migration, and international education. Globalization intensifies social relations across time and space. 2 Therefore, the interconnected global world has influenced the changing marketplace where employees seek individuals with a global perspective on cross-cultural competence and flexibility. To be successful in the 21st century, young people must acquire the skills that allows them to compete globally. As Anderson remarks,

International travel has become more commonplace and as the economics of the world have become more interdependent, both students and faculties are recognizing the need to prepare for this new, shrinking world.3

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