

**Title:**                    **Understanding international student adjustment issues: successful support interventions and implications for practice**

**Presenter:**            **John Bostock**  
Edge Hill University

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Explore adjustment challenges which are primarily attributable to English language proficiency and culture.
- Consider international student adjustment issues and their implications for education
- Discuss how intervention and support can enable international students to be recognised as legitimate and competent members of their classroom communities.

### **Session Outline**

Internationalising the curriculum involves providing students with global perspectives of their discipline and giving them a broader knowledge base for their future careers. They can be provided with a set of values and skills to operate in diverse cultural environments; skills often labelled 'intercultural competencies' or 'cross-cultural capabilities'. These values, skills and knowledge are related to graduate attributes and global citizenship with an acknowledgement that graduates today will need the resilience and competencies to communicate and compete in a rapidly changing, complex global workforce and world.

International students in institutions of higher education in English-speaking countries make valuable educational and economic contributions. For these benefits to continue, universities must become more knowledgeable about the adjustment issues these students face and implement appropriate support services (Tran and Swierczek, 2009). This presentation and discussion identifies factors that influence the adjustment and academic achievement of international students (Ryan, 2013). Adjustment challenges are primarily attributable to English language proficiency and culture (Katyal and King, 2014). Achievement is affected by English proficiency, academic skills and educational background. Understanding international student adjustment issues has global implications for intercultural education (Saravanamuthu and Yap, 2014).

Research into successful support interventions and implications for practice employed at Edge Hill University in two aspects will be explored:

- Linguistic support
- Cultural support

It was found that students faced a major challenge, linguistically and culturally, in negotiating identities and power relations necessary for them to participate and be recognised as legitimate and competent members of their classroom communities.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

(5 minutes Intro and Overview)

Linguistic support- how has this been organised and implemented? Were the international students empowered to contribute and to suggest how this support should look?

(10 minutes Presentation of Findings)

Cultural support: Students may come from a very different learning environment, e.g. China, USA, other parts of Europe and Asia. Tran and Swierczek (2009) note that some teaching styles mean learners:

- depend on memory
- study dependently
- often faithfully reproduce what the teacher has told them

(5 minutes Presentation)

How might we act to support cultural adjustment in the classroom and beyond?

(10 minutes) Activity/Discussion

Participants will be invited to list what issues they feel students might have to deal with when they arrive in a new country and write these up using coloured cards. Participants then discuss their links to cultural and pedagogical issues with a particular focus on the issues around language.

(10 minutes) Activity

Participants will be invited to look at examples of the small group support work undertaken at EHU where authentic course materials were adapted in order to help students focus on specific language elements.

(5 minutes) Plenary

## References

Katyal, K and King, M (2014) "Non-Chinese researchers conducting research in Chinese cultures: critical reflections" in *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 37 (1), 44-62.

Ryan, J (2013) Comparing Learning Characteristics in Chinese and Anglophone Cultures in Cortazzi, M and Jin, L Editors (2013) *Researching Cultures of Learning International Perspectives on Language Learning and Education*.

Saravanamuthu, K and Yap, C (2014) Pedagogy to empower Chinese Learners to adapt to western learning circumstances: a longitudinal case-study in *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44 (3), 361-384.

Tran, Q.T., & Swierczek, F.W. (2009) "Skills development in higher education in Vietnam" in *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 565-586.

Other recommended texts:

- Eaves, M (2011) The Relevance of Learning Styles for International Pedagogy in Higher Education in *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 17:6, 677-691.
- Greenholtz, J (2003) "Socratic Teachers and Confucian Learners: Examining the Benefits and Pitfalls of a Year Abroad," in *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 3 (2), 122-130.
- Yuefang Zhou, Jindal-Snape D, Topping, K & Todman, J (2008) "Theoretical Models of Culture Shock and Adaptation in International Students in Higher Education" in *Studies in Higher Education Vol. 33 (1), February 2008*, 63-75.