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# International education Management: Implications of relational perspectives and ethnographic insights to nurture international students' academic experience

S. M. Riad Shams

## Abstract

### *Purpose and approach*

International students, who have a non-English speaking background (NESB), encounter many difficulties, in comparison to their local fellows of an English speaking country. Literature demonstrates that leveraging various relational perspectives in a multicultural teaching environment has favourable implications to manage the NESB international students' academic experience. Based on the observation and introspection approaches and a relevant literature review in relationship management, an ethnographic analysis is conducted to realise how such relational perspectives can be nurtured, in a way that the NESB international students expect and accept in a foreign country.

### *Findings*

Findings show that universities could assist the NESB international students by designing, delivering and monitoring innovative teaching and learning approaches and taking care of the associated academic and non-academic issues of the students, while leveraging the social, psychological and academic relational perspective(s).

### *Implications and Value*

Leveraging relational perspectives offers global implications. Since, the implications of relational perspectives can be utilised from any setting. However, the relational appeal should be focused on the presented circumstances of a targeted setting only (e.g. the issues of a particular multicultural classroom).

## Keywords

International students, academic experience, relationship management, non-English speaking background, ethnography, multi-cultural classroom.

## Introduction

The increasing interest of international students from non-English speaking background (NESB) to undertake a higher study in the universities of English speaking countries engenders new challenges, in terms of managing the quality of higher education, especially in a domestic and international cohort teaching environment (Shams and Gide, 2011). Based on a concise literature review, first, this study acknowledges the key challenges in a domestic

and international cohort teaching environment, relevant to the NESB international students' academic experience. Second, this study also recognises that leveraging relevant relational perspectives among the NESB international students, local students, academic and non-academic staff members and other associated stakeholders will have significant implications to nurture the overall academic and non-academic experience of the NESB international students. Based on these two understandings, this study aims to develop insights on what would be the particular relational perspectives that would have implications to nurture NESB international students' academic experience. A second concern of this study is to develop further insights on how such specific relational perspectives could be exploited to enhance this group of students' academic experience.

Centred on a qualitative ethnographic approach (observation and intuitive introspection), the findings demonstrate eleven specific relational perspectives to overcome/minimise the challenges in a multicultural classroom, in order to nurture academic experience of the NESB international students. This study argues that educators and education administrators could assist the NESB international students by designing, delivering and monitoring innovative teaching and learning approaches, and looking after the other associated academic and non-academic issues, with an attempt to leverage these eleven relational perspective(s) to enhance the students' overall academic experience. However, this ethnographic review has been conducted from a particular background, based on the relevant relational issues; the findings have pertinent implications from the global perspectives to nurture the academic experience of NESB international students in an English speaking country. Since, the implications of relational perspectives can be utilised from any setting. However, the relational appeal should pursue only the presented circumstances of the targeted setting, which are the specific relational issues of a particular multicultural classroom for the purpose of this study

(Gummesson, 2002). From this context, the findings outline leveraging such relational perspectives among the NESB international students and their stakeholders in a way that the students and the associated stakeholders expect and accept.

### **Research problem and relevant literature**

Globally, more NESB international students have been undertaking a higher education in an English speaking country since early 90s of the twentieth century (Vrontis et al., 2007; Rienties et al., 2012). The growing number of movements of NESB international students between education systems, and “growing opportunities (and challenges) for intercultural encounters in the classroom” (Payan et al., 2010, p. 275) means that academics need to think about the learning and teaching outcomes and implications of the increased number of international students in university classes (Shams, 2016a). Most importantly, international students, who have a non-English speaking background, face many difficulties in the university class rooms, compared to the native students of an English speaking country. Zhai (2004) demonstrated that international NESB students found in difficulties to adapt with three major issues, which are new academic stress from a different education system, cultural differences, and language challenges in an international and domestic cohort teaching environment of an English speaking country. While considerable research available to familiarise with the key challenges of international students since as early as 1963 (e.g. Selltiz et al., 1963), more recently (since early 90s of the twentieth century) researchers have started to adapt with that early findings and extend that knowledge base relevant to the issues, challenges and impact of NESB international students in a domestic and international cohort teaching environment, associated with their learning experience in the higher education institutions of English speaking countries. The key challenges of NESB international students

in the international and domestic cohort teaching environment are identified as (Zhai, 2004; Andrade, 2006; Teaching and Learning Unit, 2010; Gide and Wu, 2010):

- social-cultural adjustment;
- language;
- educational expectations;
- new ways of academic practice;
- different teaching style.

Therefore, realising the relevant issues and accordingly integrating international students from NESB into the mainstream classroom of an English speaking country or vice-versa is becoming a sweltering issue in global higher education management (Shams, 2011a). In fact, the efforts in the internationalisation of education are fewer than required (Wingenbach *et al.*, 2006). A relevant research (Hope and Chamberlain, 2003) suggests that NESB international students normally look for academic relation and try to get in touch with local students and educators, and such favourable social, psychological and academic associations can accumulate as a constructive result. Therefore, leveraging NESB international students' social, psychological and academic contact and relationship with local students and educators is being considered as a key issue, where educators could impose additional attention to nurture and improve academic experience of NESB international students. From this context and based on the ethnographic understandings, eleven relationship perspectives from the existing relationship building literature in business management are discussed that could enhance NESB international students' desire to get into contact with the local students and educators. However, the key role should be played here by the educators and the administrators, especially to smoothen the relationship perspectives in between the NESB international students, local students, educators and the administrative staff members.

The key advantage of such relational perspectives is these eleven perspectives keep a keen eye on the needs of the target audiences and identify, establish, maintain, enhance, regulate and sustain diverse ways of service (in this case teaching and learning service) development

and delivery options, in a way that the target audiences and other associated stakeholders expect and accept (Shams, 2013a; 2013b; 2016b). These specific eleven relational perspectives are identified from the existing relationship building literature in business management, as a basis of the key relationship issues among the associated stakeholders. Educators could impose additional attention to transform the business management centred implications of these eleven relational perspectives to quality assurance in higher education management, in order to exploit such relational perspectives in between the academic stakeholders to enhance NESB international students' learning experience. The relationship perspectives are:

- proving advantage through students' experience (Kurtz, 2009; Gide and Shams, 2011a; 2011b; Shams, 2013a; 2015a);
- quality is the concern of all (Stavros, 2005; Kurtz, 2009; Gide and Shams, 2011a; Shams, 2013b);
- adaptation (Gummesson, 2002; Gide and Shams, 2011a; Shams, 2013c);
- student commitment, contact and service (Stavros, 2005; Kurtz, 2009);
- orientation on benefits (Gummesson, 2002, Rajaobelina and Bergeron, 2009);
- individualisation (Little and Marandi, 2003; Kurtz, 2009; Shams, 2011b);
- understanding students' contemporary and latent needs (Ian, 2005; Kurtz, 2009, Buttle, 2009);
- innovative teaching (service offering) (Donaldson and O'Toole; 2007);
- relationship and service values instead of bureaucratic legal values (Gummesson, 2002);
- share of dependency, risk and uncertainty (Gummesson, 2002; Kurtz, 2009; Shams and Lombardi, 2016);
- cherishing barren meadow (Kurtz, 2009).

Based on these specific relationship building perspectives, this study analyses the influences of these relational perspectives on leveraging NESB international students' social, psychological and academic contact and especially the relationship and interaction with local students and educators, in order to nurture the NESB students' academic experience.

### **Aim and methodology**

The initial aim of this study is to realise the challenges (described in the research problem and relevant literature section of this paper) of the NESB international students in a domestic and international teaching environment of the higher education institutions of English speaking

counties. Following the inductive constructive analysis approach (Shams, 2016c; 2016d), a literature review, as an inclusive research method (Friedman, 2006) has been undertaken in the secondary research (Evangelista et al., 2015) here to:

- realise the challenges of the NESB international students in a domestic and international teaching environment;
- ascertain various key relational perspectives from existing relationship building literature that could help service (in this case teaching and learning service) development and delivery options, in order to nurture the academic experience of the NESB international students.

The primary aim of this study is to recognise how these challenges can be managed by improving the learning experience of NESB international students in a domestic and international cohort teaching environment. Following the literature review, an ethnographic study, comprising observation and especially intuitive introspection (Maanen, 1996) as a qualitative approach has been utilised to analyse the relevant relational perspectives.

Following the literature review and utilising the observation and intuitive introspection methods, the identified relational perspectives are analysed and synthesised based on the author's seven years of experience of studying in international and domestic cohort teaching and learning environment in an English speaking country. The findings of the observation and intuitive introspection have been outlined based on the input of the author's direct participation, observation and introspection as a postgraduate coursework and research work NESB international student in Australia. The chosen methodology helps the author to understand and discuss the challenges of NESB international students, because, the author himself has developed seven years of experience as an NESB international student, "who lives with and lives like those who are studied, usually for a year or more" (Maanen, 1996, as cited in Struthers, n.d., p. 3). From this context, this experience helps the author to carefully analyse the process of his own feelings, motives, thoughts and ideas as a NESB international student. Such an observation and introspection method guides the author (Owens, 2008) to:

- participate and observe as a NESB international student with other co-students of NESB and native English speakers, who are studied in order to realise and confront the challenges;
- balance the extent of participation with the targeted immersion as a participant, as well as a spectator;
- share as intimately as possible in the life and activities of the NESB international students, in order to develop an insider's (author as an NESB international student) view of what is happening;
- realise relevant challenges, issues and areas of improvements as an insider of the targeted sample of the NESB international students;
- analyse, synthesis and articulate the findings to the outsiders (here the educators and administrative staff, who have an English speaking background).

### **The observation and intuitive introspective review**

The different sub-sections of this section attempt to develop insights from the observation and introspection, with an aim to demonstrate the implications of the eleven relationship perspectives to nurture the academic experience of NESB international students. Each of the sub-sections here is titled after one of the relationship perspectives and relies on the following analytical issues:

- significance of the described relational perspectives in stakeholder relationship building;
- implications of the described relational perspectives to nurture the relationship between NESB international students, local students and educators, in order to enhance the international students' academic experience;
- relevance of the described relational perspectives with other existing education literature to further justify the influences of the discussed relational perspectives on an academic setting.

#### *Proving advantage through students' experience*

Relationship building exercises help to prove advantage through target audiences' own experience (Kurtz, 2009; Shams, 2015b). Therefore, educators should impose additional concentration on demonstrating the advantage of new or different academic system, based on understanding the NESB international students' own academic experience, underlying various relationship building exercises between NESB international students, local students and educators. For example, encouraging students to make study group with the mix of local



and NESB international students would help NESB international students to feel that they are the part of the local society. Such a relationship building exercise could impact on NESB international students' academic perception from an encouraging viewpoint that would help to enhance their academic enthusiasm by realising the advantage of the learning method, as well as being associated with the local culture.

According to some other researchers (Ryan, 2005; Arkoudis, 2006) and based on the realisation through the observation and intuitive introspection, one of the most important ways to improve teaching quality of international students by promoting the advantage through their own experience is to 'get to know them' very well. From this perspective, Gide (2009, as cited in Gide and Wu, 2010) described a traditional relational approach, in order to ensure that educators have adequate understanding about individual student's needs and expectations.

Teachers should introduce themselves by providing information on their background and explaining how they see their role and responsibilities towards them. The teachers then should endeavour to get the same kind of information from each student through a friendly, flexible and professional approach. The aim is to recognise the teaching technique required for each particular student (p. 4796).

Such an orientation would be helpful for educators to plan further course of actions, in order to nurture students learning experience, based on realising their academic needs and expectations. Consequently, NESB international students would have a favourable academic experience through their own realisation, once their individual academic needs and wants will be delivered and satisfied. Moreover, Gide and Wu (2010) added that alongside the local case studies and examples, presenting examples and case studies in the course material from various global markets would be helpful for NESB international students to realise the theoretical context of the course from a unified global perspectives too. Such a strategy could inspire students to contribute in the classroom activities not only physically, but also mentally and stimulate them to be more interactive with local students and educators. Since, it excites

students to be competitive in a domestic and NESB international cohort teaching environment from global perspective rather than the local perspective only.

*Quality is the concern of all*

Delivering, maintaining and enhancing quality academic experience to NESB international students should be the concern of all associated service providers. From classroom lecturers/tutors to administrative staff-members and other stakeholders in the tertiary institutions should keep in mind that it is particularly difficult for NESB international students compared to the local students to cope up with the local circumstances. From this perspective, it is the responsibility of all employees of a university to promote the quality academic experience to NESB international students. Relationship centred work environment is not just concerned with relationships administered by a specific service provider (here classroom lecturer/tutor) within an organisation, but with all departments of an organisation (Stavros, 2005; Gide and Shams, 2011c). Therefore, enhancing prolific relationship and contact with the NESB international students from all aspects of their academic and associated issues would have a promising impact on their continuing academic experience. For example, alongside the classroom/academic effort by a lecturer/tutor, universities could extend their best care to the NESB international students from every perspectives of their academic interaction, such as professional, friendly and informative care from learning skill unit, library staff, administrative staff, career coaching staff, local student association, further higher education/research staff, sports and cultural activity staff and so forth in order to make sure a comfortable, favourable and interesting academic experience for NESB international students. From this perspective, Malaklolunthu and Selan stated that “clearly, awareness by staff is very important. Advanced awareness of (all) staff enables them to actively assist (international) students to adjust” (2011, pp. 836-837).

### *Adaptation*

Relationship centred service environment keeps an eye on changes so that service providers (here academic and non-academic staff members) can adapt easily with any transforming circumstances (Gummeson, 2002). As a result, in all phases of academic service delivery, from course design phase to course evaluation phase, educators should understand and integrate the target audiences' (here NESB international students) learning perception and anticipation from their relational perspectives. Since, plagiarism is found as a common academic practice of students (Broeckelman-Post, 2008), especially the business students (McCabe and Trevino, 1995), because of the increasing number of NESB international and multicultural students in tertiary institutions, including in the business faculty (Lupton, Chapman, and Weiss, 2000; Clarke and Flaherty, 2002); managing academic plagiarism becomes more complicated, especially for business students. From this context, Payan et al. (2010, p. 276) described that

research shows that students from different countries, and presumably different cultures, report different frequencies of cheating and have different perceptions about cheating (Cizek, 1999). It is critical that academics understand any cultural differences that exist to mitigate the growth of these questionable behaviors concerning academic honesty.

As a result, adapting anti-plagiarism campaigns or lessons in a multicultural cohort business school through a standardised and informative format by including different perceptive influence about plagiarism from culture to culture, and relevant preventive actions against plagiarism from all major cultural perspectives would be worthwhile in order to proactively manage plagiarism in a multicultural business faculty. Payan et al. (2010) reported twelve cross-national responses/insights about academic dishonesty. Such cross-cultural understandings could be utilised as a framework/demo to develop a standardised and informative format to fight against plagiarism in a domestic and NESB international cohort business faculty, in order to concurrently respond to the plagiarism issues from various cultural perspectives. Moreover, based on the students' enrolment from the number of

different cultural background, a particular university could include and adapt a particular culture's perception about plagiarism in their standardised format to prevent plagiarism.

#### *Student commitment, contact and service*

If a favourable academic experience is a pre-requisite for profound skill development of NESB international students, then high student service, student commitment and student contact would be another pre-requisite to deliver a favourable academic experience. Stavros (2005) demonstrated that these are one of the key concerns of relationship management in service design and delivery. Again, Kurtz (2009) described that relationship centred environment positions service as a key concern, and fosters stakeholder's commitment. As a result, a reflective student commitment, contact and service would make a difference in NESB international students' academic experience.

Furthermore, a profound academic interaction among educators and students is an imperative issue in the students' learning process (Chickering and Gamson, 1987). Gide and Wu (2010) recommended that

teachers should also strongly encourage their international students to communicate with them by e-mail or telephone calls as this will improve international students' written and verbal communication skills and therefore help them achieve better results during presentation assessments and written examinations (p. 4797).

Indeed, a passionate academic is not a nine-to-five academic, but is accessible to his/her students at all times (Gide and Wu, 2010) through other contemporary high-tech medium, such as email, blog, twitter, online research forum and so forth.

#### *Orientation on benefits*

A constructive attitude is anticipated as part of the relationship process (Shams, 2013d). The relationship should be significant through stakeholders' (here students) adequate knowledge about the detailed service offerings (Gummesson, 2002), such as about the tertiary education institution or about the academic and other relevant non-academic benefits, provided by the

institution. Furthermore, Rajaobelina and Bergeron (2009) advocate that the target audience's (here student) knowledge about their desired services (in this case the academic institution and its academic quality and so forth) is vibrantly related to relationship quality. Consequently, relationship management emphasises on students' orientation on benefits about the academic activities of the institution, which may encourage NESB international students to get intimate with various internal and external stakeholders of their institution. Moreover, "orientation (on benefit) is a continuous process requiring contact with students before they arrive and during their stay" (Pedersen, 1991, as cited in Zhai, 2004, p. 102). Therefore, if NESB international students have profound ongoing knowledge and understanding about the working procedure of their academic institution, quality of their education and future prospects, they could effectively enhance their academic efforts, with respect to their institution's available facilities, which could facilitate a positive academic experience for themselves. In support of this view, Zhai (2004) described that

a well-organized orientation can help international students become aware of aspects of university life and then make better adjustments. In planning orientation programs for international students, university personnel should recognize that academic achievement is the highest priority for most international students (p. 102).

### *Individualisation*

In today's global academia, educators should be committed to be individualised care for their students, eyeing on benchmark academic support, especially to nurture academic experience of the NESB international students. More specifically, as NESB international students encounter more difficulties, compared to the local students in a domestic and international cohort teaching environment of an English speaking country; individualised support and care should be available against their specific needs, wants and demands. From this perspective, fostering individualised support through enhanced relationship would be able to enhance NESB international students' academic experience, as relationship support centred academic service providers could gain a better knowledge of the student's requirements and needs. This

knowledge can then be mutually utilised with social bond built over a number of (academic) service encounters to adapt and individualise the (education) service to the target audience's (here students') specifications (LITTLE and Marandi, 2003).

Teachers should build bridges of communication between themselves and each individual international student. For this purpose, teachers should treat their students as a 'unique person', encourage individual excellence in their students and increase their self-esteem through the development of 'can-do' attitudes (Gide and Wu, 2010, p. 4797).

Individual counselling, as another crucial support is comprehensively valuable for NESB international students to adjust. From this perspective, it is essential that the university student counsellors should be proactive towards international students' needs, wants and expectations, in order to ensure a favourable academic experience for them, as Zhai (2004, p. 102) commented that "it is important that the counsellors take initiative to find out if international students need any help, and make better connections to help international students".

#### *Understanding students' contemporary and latent needs*

Understanding target audiences' contemporary and latent needs becomes the key of their satisfaction (Kurtz, 2009; Buttle 2009) through delighting their anticipation, based on meeting and serving beyond their contemporary and latent needs (Gide and Shams, 2011d). Again, Ian (2005) suggested that listening to the target audience (here students) and collecting feedback from them helps to understand their needs. Consequently, relationship building exercises should be based on identifying international students' contemporary and latent academic needs (e.g. enhancing language skill), so that the teaching and learning environment and other support services could proactively focus, deliver and satisfy those needs of the students. As a result, international students could minutely concentrate to their studies.

Furthermore, in order to extend a flawless uninterrupted academic experience for NESB international students, universities should also pay attention to the non-academic needs of these students (Shams, 2013e). Such a support from the education providers can be worthwhile for the NESB international students to concentrate to their study without further anxiety about their living in an unfamiliar environment, especially during the transition period. Since, more or less all NESB international students endeavour to cope up with the following academic and non-academic needs in a foreign country before and during their study (Wang and Tseng, 2011, p. 440):

- education;
- social orientation;
- economic considerations, such as cost of living, casual jobs and so forth;
- safety;
- access to the technology and other relevant services;
- accommodation;
- further education and career prospect from global perspective;
- esteem needs.

In this regard, student counselling and making available and accessible all pertinent information and opportunities to the NESB international students would be really significant to satisfy their non-academic needs. A smooth transition of international students to a new culture, system and life-style would eventually be helpful for them to focus on their academic activities, without any possible unexpected anxiety about their stay in a foreign country.

#### *Innovative teaching (service)*

Donaldson and O'Toole (2007) described that a relationship centred approach impact upon innovative service development practice through the interaction of user (here student). Since, premeditated relationship can persuade the innovation and service development process. Donaldson and O'Toole (2007) further added that a relationship building approach can offer new and existing ways to develop services and can find out substitute direction for improvement. The interaction between local students, educators and NESB international

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students and understanding of their interest promotes innovative academic experience from the opportunity identification phase to the design and delivery phase of teaching material and approach.

Here, one of the key aspects of the contemporary business classroom is it is progressively becoming more international and more multicultural (Budde-Sung, 2011). Alongside the increasing challenges of teaching and learning pedagogy, such a multicultural classroom also evolves numerous opportunities to synthesise innovative teaching material, while unifying existing and new ways of teaching strategies through the interaction of local and NESB international students in a multicultural setting. For example, a cross-cultural exercise such as business case development for the course of Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (ESMSE) from various continental/sub-continental/regional ESMSE practices instead of the homogeneous global context (Kaufmann and Shams, 2015) would be precious for all students in order to expand their knowledge-base and experience from diversified business cases. Such an exercise of business case development can be designed in many ways. For example, a tutor/lecturer could ask students to make groups among themselves, possibly comprising all different available cultures in each of the groups. In order to describe the importance of the cross-cultural interactions in a multicultural academic setting, Wingenbach et al. (2006) described:

Myles and Cheng (2003) promoted the importance of cultural mixing for critical learning. In their study, foreign nationals who embraced opportunities to communicate and interact with host nationals adapted more easily to their new environment. By making friends with host students, international students improve their foreign language skills, and their knowledge of the culture. Fewer problems arose with cultural, academic, and social adjustments after spending leisure time with host students (p. 81).

Therefore, such multicultural student groups could develop their own business cases, consistent to their theoretical learning, where each of the groups could identify, discuss and consider different continental/sub-continental/regional ESMSE practices from each of the group member's own background in order to finally select and develop their group's business

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case to share with other students in the multicultural classroom. Here the tutor/lecturer should play the role as a moderator of the cross-cultural exercise, in order to make sure an enjoyable, while insightful experience for all students of the class. The key benefit for all of the students would be learning practical business experience from across the globe, as well as the NESB international students will find an alternative route to enhance their social, cultural, language, academic and other relevant skills through such interactions with the local students and educators in a multicultural setting.

### *Relationship and service values instead of bureaucratic legal values*

Relationship building exercises and relationship centred performance promote relationship and service values instead of bureaucratic legal values (Gummeson, 2002; Shams, 2011c). Therefore, promoting relationship and service values, instead of bureaucratic legal values through various relationship enhancing exercises among NESB international students, local students and educators would impact optimistically on NESB international students' academic experience. For example, facilitating and enhancing friendly interpersonal relationship among educators and students and favourable academic environment could increase NESB international students' active participation in academic activities. Promoting relationship and service values is particularly important, because in general, international students contribute less to classroom discussions, compared to their local fellows, as well as they display less independent and critical thought and that they do not interact well with their local peers (Hope and Chamberlain, 2003).

Alongside the academic purposes, the enhanced relationship and service values instead of bureaucratic legal values is also imperative from non-academic perspectives, in order to allow the NESB international students to concentrate to their study without any unforeseen anxiety. From non-academic perspective, one of the common key constraints of international

students is the bureaucratic lengthiness of visa/immigration procedure before and during their study in a foreign country. It took around eight months for the author to receive his initial student VISA to pursue higher study in a foreign country. Moreover, that conditional initial visa was not for the full duration of his programme. There was an option to renew the initial visa, which was subject to the successful completion of the initial stages of his programme. Such a visa condition may be a good initiative, in order to provide the student visa only to the genuine students, as well as keep them in pressure to timely complete their study. However, in general, it may be difficult to complete a research study within a strict timeframe. Since, a research study can be impeded due to research related issues, such as significant delays from the respondents of the research sample during data collection, external university examination of the research and so forth. Moreover, the author was encountered disappointing delays during and after his study, in order to submit necessary documents to the Immigration Department to renew his visa to complete his study and to attend the graduation ceremony; however the author completed the initial stages of his study and completed the total programme within the prescribed timeframe. A major despondent situation the author faced due to the bureaucratic delays during the renewal of his visa to attend the graduation ceremony. The author was awarded his degree by the Examination Committee, however the degree was yet to approve by the University Research Committee, which was scheduled to be approved in their next scheduled meeting. The author's visa was expiring prior to the date of that scheduled meeting. Therefore, he was in a despondent situation knowing that he has to leave the country without attending the graduation ceremony of his research degree. Finally, the issue was sorted out and the author was able to attend the graduation after decisive mental and additional, unnecessary financial loss, associated with the legal consultation regarding the extension of the visa to attend the graduation ceremony. As a result, such bureaucratic legal values impede a flawless academic experience of NESB international students.

Research (Zhai, 2004) shows that most of the international students seek counselling and support for their visa, legal, financial and other relevant administrative issues. Therefore, promoting relationship and service values instead of bureaucratic legal values is one of the keys to nurture NESB international students' overall academic experience. Since, perhaps many of these students have been facing or will be facing such bureaucratic delays sometimes of their academic life that might despondently affect their overall academic experience.

#### *Share of dependency, risk and uncertainty*

Relationship building exercises share the dependency, risk and uncertainty among associated stakeholders (Gummesson, 2002), in order to overcome/minimise relevant inter-reliant issues, as well as to evolve alternative opportunities. Moreover, the relational influence fosters stakeholder interaction through cooperation and trust (Kurtz, 2009; Gide and Shams, 2011e). Such a relational perspective endeavours to minimise and overcome various mutually dependant issues for students and educators in NESB international and domestic cohort of education system. In general, on one hand, the NESB international students generally rely on their host institution's academic support to enhance their academic experience. On the other hand, due to the increasing competition in the global higher education markets, universities of the English speaking countries are progressively attracting NESB international students (Jhonson, 2010; Davis, 2010, as cited in Trounson and Healy, 2010; Smith, 2010, as cited in Indian Local, 2010; The Australian, 2010). Such a mutually dependent setting of the contemporary global higher education extends a reciprocally beneficial platform for the NESB international students and local academic and non-academic staff members to minimise/overcome associated challenges and to flourish alternative opportunities to nurture the academic experience of NESB international students. Since, all involved parties are somehow or in some extent rely on others to extend their future endeavour.

Moreover, in terms of the higher degree research, such a dependency of the universities of many English speaking countries is more intense, compared to the graduate and postgraduate coursework education. Universities Australia CEO Glenn Withers (2010, cited by Lane, 2010, n.p.) mentioned that the “domestic interest in an academic or research career is quite insufficient to meet national needs.” “Universities will increasingly rely upon international migration to staff its institutions” (Australian Technology Network, 2010, p. 3). Also, NESB international business students, particularly marketing research higher degree students may face cultural myopia, while researching on the local consumers, realising demand derivation perspectives from local (host country) context and numerous other relevant issues, where they may need specific guideline and support to realise the local social, cultural, psychological aspects, prior to initiate their academic marketing research on an unknown/new culture. Since, culture, ethnical background, life-style, socio-economic environment significantly influence marketing decision as they influence consumer behaviour or consumption patterns of consumers of a certain market (Aslam, 2006; Mullie et. al., 2009). Therefore, researching on a certain market, as a research student from another social, cultural, ethnical, life-style and socio-economic background may require an initial orientation about the characteristics of the population of the research target market. Curtin et al. (2012) described that NESB international research students in English speaking countries face challenges of a change in their cultural behaviour and thinking through contact with another culture. Therefore, an informative orientation for NESB international higher degree research students would be worthwhile, in order to receive an insight about the local (host country) culture, life-style, socio-economical and psychological issues and so forth, especially if they choose their research sample from the local market. In the long-run (three to four years duration of higher degree research), such an initial orientation would be favourable to avoid any risk and uncertainty in the research findings, associated with the cultural myopia.

Eventually, such a relationship building exercise through the described orientation programme of the NESB international higher degree research students with the local culture will minimise the risk and uncertainty with their research findings, as well as save time and additional effort for the local educators, in order to timely graduate their NESB international higher degree research students.

### *Cherishing Barren Meadow (CBM)*

The term CBM is associated with investing time, money, skills and other efforts even in the areas of prospective opportunity, which initially may look non-lucrative (Shams, 2013a). Relationship building exercises keep a deeper direction on opportunity evolution through various associated relational perspectives and less orientation on instant initial success (Kurtz, 2009).

From this perspective, international education providers should organise various events, associated with their NESB international students' culture, norms and values. For example, organising a Chinese New Year festival, or organising debate and discussion on various cultural issues and differences, other cultural and sports programmes and so forth would impact on NESB international students' learning motivation. As a cherishing barren meadow for the international education providers, such events would facilitate the feeling of NESB international students that they are studying in their own receptive environment. Therefore, such an initiative would encourage NESB international students' more participation in curricular, as well as extra-curricular activities in their alien study location. In turn, such exercises would enhance the academic experience of NESB international students in a domestic and international cohort academic environment of an English speaking country. Since, "Zhai (2004) identified (inter) cultural interaction as the underlying theme to creating cultural sensitivity and respect among students" (Wingenbach et al., 2006, p. 87). Therefore,

cultural presentations and events from the NESB international students' background, such as Chinese New Year festival and so forth would facilitate all students in a multicultural higher education setting to get to know each other more closely. In turn, such an initiative would nurture the self-esteem of the NESB international students, and impact on their overall academic life. Moreover, it should be a continuous effort to identify, establish, maintain and enhance new ways to promote relationship and development strategy centred initiatives (Shams, 2013a), in order to nurture the academic experience of the NESB international students. Among such initiatives, many of them may initially look like non-lucrative; however in the long run, many of such initiatives may corroborate as prolific service development effort (here, especially in order to enhance the self-esteem of the NESB international students), subsequent to superior value and alternative routes for development (Shams, 2013a).

### **Implications, limitation and further research**

In one hand, in terms of the internationalisation of higher education, Warwick (2014) argues that “there is little shared understanding of what internationalisation is and its implications for individual stakeholders” (p. 94, as cited in Vrontis et al., 2016, np). On the other hand, “even when the products (or services, e.g. higher education services) offered are satisfactory, consumers (e.g. NESB international students) still exercise their right to go from one seller (e.g. the international education providers) to another” (Little and Marandi, 2003, p. 15, as cited in Shams, 2014, p. 156). It indicates the needs of further research in the field of the internationalisation of higher education focusing on the global education markets. From this context, this study discusses the relevant issues of teaching NESB international students in an international and domestic cohort higher education environment of an English speaking country, in order to further contribute to the internationalisation processes of higher education. The author's participation, observation and introspection as a NESB international

tertiary student of an English speaking country summarise the relevant relational issues from the insight of the usual perspectives of this group of students, in order to nurture their overall academic experience. Relevant literature and practice show that various relational perspectives of service (here teaching) innovation create mutually beneficial value among the associated stakeholders. Ultimately such relational appeal and value help to nurture the social, psychological and academic association and subsequent experience of the NESB international students in an English speaking country. This study summarises eleven relational perspectives, based on the experience of the author as a NESB international student, and further corroborates the implications of such relational perspectives, based on the extant literature of relationship management in business practices, as well as justifies the significance of academic practices, based on the extant education literature. From this perspective, this study provides recommendations of inclusive academic service development policy to satisfy highly demanding international students' expectations. Eleven key relational perspectives are discussed with examples. Leveraging these relational perspectives could enhance NESB international students' academic experience in an international and domestic cohort academic environment.

The key implication of the described relational perspectives is either any of them individually, some of them or all of them collectively can be utilised to confront with any of the initially identified challenges of the NESB international students, as well as to concurrently confront some of these challenges or all of these challenges. For example, in general, proving advantage through students' experience, individualisation of teaching or other associated academic services, or timely understanding, delivering and satisfying contemporary and latent needs of international students could individually or collectively contribute to the NESB international students' effort to cope up with the social, cultural, language, and academic issues in a unfamiliar/new academic environment of an English speaking country. A major

advantage of utilising such relational perspectives in order to identify, establish, maintain, enhance, regulate and sustain the target audiences' anticipation, perceived value and satisfaction against a particular service offering (here academic experience) is the service providers could be able to deliver the service in a way that the target audience expect and accept. Since, such relational perspectives help service providers to design and deliver services, based on the service providers' knowledge of the service receivers' needs and expectations (Shams and Kaufmann, 2016). Moreover, a further favourable approach of these relational perspectives is it steadily generates suitable platform to utilise a particular relational perspective, while a service provider (here academic and administrative staff members) utilises and gains advantage from another relational perspective. For example, share of dependency, risk and uncertainty or understanding students' contemporary and latent needs could assist to design, deliver and monitor innovative service (here teaching and learning), based on the identified needs and wants of the students. In general, such relational perspectives can be utilised in any country or in any culture to enhance international students' academic experience, as these are based on the relational issues, and such issues can be utilised to any culture and target audience, but the relational appeal should pursue only the given situation of the targeted audience (Gummesson, 2002).

This study utilises only the relevant literature on relationship management in business practices and its impact on academic practices, as well as observational and introspective methods to resolve the research problem. A wide range of established qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods could be utilised to further investigate the issue, in order to develop additional insight. Alternative, approaches of data collection and analysis could add further value into the findings of this study. This study articulates only the insider's (NESB international students) view about the issue through an ethnographic approach. Alternative methodologies could further justify the insider's view, in order to



reflect the outsiders' (academics and administrative staff) thought into the findings of this study. Moreover, the analysis of this study is based on the ethnographic experience from the Australian higher education context only. Additional study is encouraged in multiple English speaking countries, in order to add further diversified value in the NESB international students' overall academic experience. In order to expand the understandings of this study, it would also be beneficial to carry out additional studies to produce further correlations between the interconnected concepts and issues (Trequattrini et al., 2016) that are discussed in this study from the perspectives of stakeholder relationships. Such an approach of further studies would enable to recognise other relational perspectives to further enhance the NESB international students' academic experience in a foreign country.

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