

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 18 (2011) 575–584

Procedia
 Social and Behavioral Sciences

Kongres Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran UKM, 2010

Internationalisation and Its Implications for Intercultural Maturity among Academic Staff: A Case Study.

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Abstract

The process of internationalisation can in many ways assist staff in being interculturally matured through prolong and accumulative intercultural communication experiences. Staff may undergo a gradual transformation towards being interculturally matured – thus the emergence of an intercultural personhood. Intercultural personhood coined by Kim (2008), describes individuals who move beyond the bounds of their own cultural beings and heritage to accept both their formal cultural identity and host identity. This paper explores an internationalisation project between two universities namely Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) in Germany and how this project has internationalised staff and altogether making them more interculturally matured. The findings explain the cycle of staff who initially practice only one culture, communicates with the environment, co-evolves in the new environment thus illustrating identity changes through their live experiences to become persons with multicultural traits.

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Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Kongres Pengajaran & Pembelajaran UKM, 2010

Keywords: Internationalisation; intercultural maturity; intercultural personhood; transformation; cultural identity;

1. Introduction

Academic pursuit for knowledge has always been an international endeavour. As far back as the 1970s, the Malaysian government and higher learning institutions in Malaysia as well as other third world countries have supported scholars for studies abroad where access to the most recent knowledge or innovation and up-to-date practices and curricula were supposed to be. Internationalisation of higher education then could be seen as arrogant,

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sustaining worldviews in a one-way flow where the idea that ‘they can learn from us, and we have little to learn from them’ is the order of the day and reflects western cultural imperialism (Stier, 2006). The motivation for internationalisation then was to generate a new source of income. Many institutions in the west adopt an internationalisation strategy for financial gains, thus failing to acknowledge cultural differences (Tange, 2008). International classrooms suffer from problems of ‘ethnocentric pedagogy’ (Tange, 2008) a tendency for lecturers to impose their own pedagogical beliefs and perceive international students as empty vessels to ‘be filled with Euro-American knowledge’ (Singh, 2005 cited in Tange, 2008). However, the practices of internationalisation have now taken a new perspective where more concern is shown towards understanding differences from both sides of the world even though it still remains a money making endeavour. Higher learning institutions are now concentrating on the best way to produce global citizens and professionals (Jackson, 2008) to meet the challenges of globalisation and the need for globalised societies, economy and labour markets (Kälvermark and van der Wende, 1997, cited in Jackson, 2008). The idea of internationalisation today tries to see ‘global conditions as local concerns and local actions as having global repercussions’ (Stier, 2006) and many universities around the world are reassessing their mission, visions and responsibilities to enable sustainable development in human resource and knowledge (Giddens, 1996, Appudurai, 1996, Beck, 1998, Bauman 2000, Castells 2002 cited in Stier, 2006). In Europe, the Bologna Declaration emphasises on the need to educate a future labour force with enough intercultural competencies as one of its strategies to enhance ‘social and human growth as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face challenges of the new millennium, together with an aware of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space’ (Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, cited in Stier, 2006). The need to educate and develop future labour force with intercultural competencies was also stressed upon by the European Union (Stier, 2006). With this new perspective on internationalisation many universities seek to collaborate with other universities abroad. Education in these universities is accessible to anyone who meets the criteria set by each. These may be in the form of studies abroad, faculty or staff exchange, research collaborations, and sharing or twinning programmes. Thus there has been an increase in the flow of foreign students all over the world. The students are either seeking to pursue their postgraduate or undergraduate studies. The increase in the flow of foreign students have not been easy for most universities involved as they faced increasing demands from students, academic as well as administrative staff as they have to deal with different needs and/or demands of the students either personal or cultural. The diversity of education as a result of internationalisation can also be quite a challenge. Most of those involved (foreign or local students, and staff) may not be ready for the ‘cultural strangeness’ in their work place even though some may have exposure studying abroad. When new people come into their lives it becomes a new experience. However, given the fact that internationalisation has taken a different meaning, more emphasis was given to students and attending to their needs rather than staff who may experience challenges that are comparable to that of students (international or local). Thus, this study attempts to investigate how staff who are involved in internationalisation projects transform, evolve from a mono culture into persons with multicultural traits with the maturity to deal with staff and students both local and international. The background to this study is the internationalisation project undertaken by University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and University of Duisberg-Essen (UDE) in Germany which has been in progress for the last seven years. This study aims to explore intercultural competences of staff (academics and administrative) involved in the Double Degree Programme mentioned. It traces the development of staff as intercultural personhoods who are able to face challenges of internationalisation that came with the programme and how their lived experiences being in international environments help them matured as intercultural personhoods.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Internationalisation as an integration process : Implication on institutions of higher learning*

Internationalisation of higher education is a process that comes in response to globalisation (Knight, 1999). It has become the mission and vision of universities around the world to prepare students to become global citizens and professionals who are able to survive in a complex globalised environment. There are two sides to this process: integrating process and the other a learning process.

Internationalisation of higher institutions for learning is seen as an integrating process whereby technology, people, knowledge and values are brought together. However, most of the time, this is done and finalised at the top level management. They may have internationalised the visions, missions and responsibilities yet there are still inadequacies in the area of human potential. Most of the time decisions to internationalise the learning environment is made at the management level without much consideration for the academics, administrative staff as well as the students. They are left to learn all the differences ‘hands on’ and through, in some cases, chaotic experiences. More often than not institutions of higher education fail to acknowledge the cultural differences which in education may result in an ‘asymmetrical relationship between staff and students’ (Tange, 2008). Thus, internationalisation should be seen as an integrating process of institutions, people, pedagogical practices as well as values. Knight defines internationalisation as ‘the process of integrating an international/ intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution’ (Knight, 1997). Internationalisation of higher education adopts several strategies such as study abroad student and faculty exchange, study and residence abroad, internship, double degree programs, staff exchange, foreign language education etc.. She further modified her definitions to include globalisation and technology. ‘...the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education’ (Knight 2004). According to Knight (2004) internationalisation is demonstrated through international, intercultural and global flows of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas. Knight’s definition of internationalisation includes almost every dimension. However, it is pointed out that Knight’s remodelled definition of internationalisation has given less emphasis to individual academics who ‘want to pursue the aim of internationalisation in their teaching practices, curricula and delivery of courses (Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2003 cited in Sanderson, 2008).

Whilst Knight’s schema may provide a useful way of scaffolding broad programs and practices in the university policy documents, it has a number of limitations of applicability to specific curricula content. First, it does not provide concrete examples of how educators, focusing on interculturality, implement the internationalisation of the curriculum. Second, it does not specify learning aims. Third, it gives no suggestion to the kind of learning tools that might be involved in specific programs. Fourth, it ignores the importance of communication as crucial to the process of internationalisation, particularly in relation to student interactions.

(Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2003 cited in Sanderson, 2008)

The issues mentioned by Eisenchlas and Trevaskes are important to the process of internationalisation particularly in the dimensions of staff and communication as these are the main interest of this paper. Internationalisation could bring psychological as well as emotional responses in individuals exposed to cultural diversity (Tange, 2008). The internal conflicts that may arise could result in imbalance of emotion, uncertainty, confusion and anxiety. People may handle changes in many ways such avoidance, denial, withdrawal or even regression into old habits. Academicians may tend to take for granted their pedagogical philosophies and practices and may imposed them on students. Of equal importance is the language issue as both staff and students could be equally constrained by linguistic inadequacies. At the same time staff are expected to accept cultural differences and embrace their pedagogical practices and curricula. They are also expected to deliver the repercussions that are not only on students but other staff as well. Staff may have to adjust psychologically and culturally in their encounter with international students. The repercussions of this would be that international classes may suffer from the problem of ‘ethnocentric pedagogy’ i.e. the tendency for staff to take for granted the superiority of their own pedagogical philosophy and practice. (Tange, 2008). They may dismiss alternative educational methods and opt for local classroom methods. Tange goes on to say that academic and administrative staff may use their position of cultural and professional authority to control interactions.

On the other hand, internationalisation may mean an intercultural learning process for staff. The presence of ‘cultural strangers’ (Tange, 2008) in the work place would prompt staff of higher education to accept and search for similarities and understanding and therefore learn to internationalise their personal and professional outlooks (Sanderson, 2008). Staff need to develop in themselves a cultural awareness by reflecting upon their ‘own cultural norms and values’ (Sanderson, 2008) and in doing so develop and shape their own social identities.

Behaviour is an important cultural aspect and this is determined by an individual’s lived experience such as values, habits, customs and lifestyles which are embedded within the self and thus determine his or her own

worldviews. ‘The way we make meaning out of experiences determines our habitual expectations and our habits of mind – our assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives’ (Cranton, 2001). It is in this developmental area that the study situates itself. As internationalisation progresses, universities become ‘contact zones’ (Singh, 2005) where people meet, communicate, cross cultural exchange and interact between international students, local students and local staff.

The pivot for internationalisation at the level of individual staff is knowing something of other cultures (Cranton, 2001). According to Cranton (2001) and Sanderson (2008) a foundation for this would be for them to appreciate how the home culture produces and supports their personal social world views. First of all, cultural awareness involves processes of promoting the reflection upon one’s own cultural norms and values and how these shape social identities of individuals and groups (Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2003). Kim (2008) argues that through prolong and cumulative intercultural communication experiences, individual around the world can, and do, undergo a gradual process of intercultural evolution. This transformation involves a person going beyond his lived experiences, being open to ‘cultural others’ (Kim, 2008), with a willingness to negotiate differences to reach intercultural agreements and to integrate diverse cultural elements as well as being able to transform identities towards mutual growth (Kim, 2008, p 359). This emergent of the intercultural personhood shows an intercultural maturity in an individual. Before the transformation into the intercultural personhood is discussed, it is important first of all to understand the concept of intercultural maturity. The following section discusses this.

2.2 *Intercultural maturity and identity*

This paper subscribes to a particular view that intercultural maturity is quite difficult to attain but rather it should be looked at as a process of continuous construction and reconstruction of identities. Identity construction is a basic dimension of intercultural communication. A person’s ability to ‘achieve mutual understanding or reciprocal intercultural relationship is determined by their identity orientation’ (Dai, 2009 p. 1) where a person is able to construct his or her identity to suit the environment.

Being intercultural is a way of being. The process of being interculturally skilled depends very much on an individual’s experience. Experience plays an important role in the way we see the world as that would determine our habitual expectations, our assumptions, beliefs, values and perspectives (Cranton in Sanderson, 2008). ‘As one’s experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one’s potential competence in intercultural relations increases’ (Hammer et al, 2003). Culture, according to Pederson is located within a person and thus is flexible and changes from ‘time to time, situation to situation and person to person’ (Pederson, 1988). She posits that behaviour such as values, habits, customs and lifestyles that make up his or her lived experience is an important aspect of culture. No one person can be said that he/she is intercultural competent but rather matured over time as strategies to cope with the changes may be different between individuals depending on the amount of their lived experience. Thus, a person with potential intercultural maturity should also have potential to adjust intercultural. According to Matsumoto et al (2001) a person with high potential to adjust well is emotionally stabled and not impulsive, open minded, able to generate new responses about people and events in the new culture and is aware of and be able to reflect on their experiences both about the new and the home culture. In other words this person possesses a multicultural identity.

Identity is interpreted as qualities that a person possesses which distinguishes one from the other and expresses specific memberships. There are two kinds of identity namely individual and collective. Individual identity refers to the self that is different from other people in terms of specific relationships with other individuals; collective identity refers to commonalities of people within a group and differences between people in different groups. Both individual and collective identities are socially constructed. Kim (1992) defines intercultural identity as individuals who have the potential to grow beyond their original culture to encompass a new culture and having insights into both home and the new culture in the process. Kim likens the concept of intercultural identity to ‘multicultural man, universal man, cosmopolitan and international man’ (2001,). Dai sees intercultural identity the same as that of intercultural personhood whose identity is as someone who has ‘internalised different cultural elements’ and ‘possesses internal attributes that are not defined rigidly by a single culture’ (Dai, 2009). The intercultural personhood seems like the ultimate person with a perfect identity and able to communicate flawlessly with others who are from different cultures. He or she seems a person with no cultural boundaries and differences and that his or her actions is socially constructed and depends very much on his or her lived experiences which may be different

when faced with different situations. Thus, it should be ‘an unfinished and open-ended process’ as pointed out by Dai (2009).

There are many aspects of becoming a global citizen, and one of the most important areas of becoming a global citizen is awareness and understanding of the variety and relevance of all cultures. People need to understand different cultures. Understanding different cultures helps people adjust to unfamiliar environments in which they meet, work and live with other people who have different cultures. Adjustment and positive attitudes toward different cultures prompts people to take active roles in the diverse society. From a constructivist’s perspective it is not enough to only have a mere exposure to differences rather it is how one perceives and conceptualises those events that determine developmental cultural competence. Constructivism implies that we are active participants in creating our own knowing and meaning. Learning is an active process and knowledge is socially constructed, primarily from experience (Murphy, 1997 in Pederson, 2009). And experience helps shape a person’s worldviews. Thus, through prolonged cumulative intercultural experiences, individuals can undergo a gradual process of psychological evolution beyond the perimeters of the original culture. This emergent ‘‘intercultural personhood’’ is a gradual developmental process in which an individual’s identity orientation becomes increasingly individuated and universalized. Kim proposes intercultural personhood as a constructive way of orienting oneself to cultural strangers, and a model for human development for greater psychological and functional fitness in the globalizing world (Kim, 2008). An intercultural person, according to Kim, is someone who has internalized different cultural elements, whose identity becomes broader than the original, and is open to further transformation.

2.3 The intercultural personhood: an interculturally matured person

The intercultural personhood is not a fix identity but one with a fluidity that transforms when needed. This negotiation of identity is an on-going process as they negotiate in confrontation of the new environment. The intercultural identity of a person is dynamic and integrative. The intercultural personhood according to Dai (2009) possess an ‘openness to cultural others,’ with a ‘willingness to negotiate differences’ has ‘the ability to reach intercultural agreements’ and ‘the ability to integrate diverse cultural elements, as well as the potential to achieve identity extension and mutual growth’. A person who possesses attributes as mentioned would be more suitably described as interculturally matured. An interculturally matured person is a personhood that is able to play the role of ‘cultural bridge’ that could interact between and among cultures. He/she is flexible and fluid as he/she constructs and reconstructs his/her identity as extensions of his/her cultural self.

Thus an interculturally matured person would have the following traits:

- awareness of self-others and this includes knowledge of one’s own culture and the knowledge of the context in which the interaction occurs as communication is contextual and not developed in a vacuum – the situation and cultural context are indispensable.
- experience – lived experiences that may help in the process of identity constructions and reconstructions. This includes the international sojourn
- understanding – how one perceives or conceptualise events or situations
- personality – being open-minded, able to accept and adapt as well as being flexible, able to empathise
- pedagogical practices – in the context of higher learning, the interculturally matured person is able to negotiate practices to accommodate to different learning cultures.
- language – should possess knowledge of more than one language of which one should be international

(Kim, 2008; Dai, 2009)

However, context is a contributing factor to identity construction as the situation permits it. In the case this study, it would be the campuses of UKM and UDE. This is to refrain from making generalisation because of the differences in the European and Asian cultures and the negotiated identity at the time of communication.

The discussions above sets the theory of the study that looks into the implications of internationalisation projects on the development of staff involved in the UKM-UDE Double Degree Programme between Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany. It presents traits that an interculturally matured person should possess, thus sets the framework for the analysis of the data. Data will be analysed according to traits identified by Kim (2008) and Dai (2009). Cultural identity is constructed through dynamic interplay of daily

discourses and cultural activities in specific social contexts. In other words, identity should be regarded not as a fixed abstraction, but as a result of ongoing processes of negotiation, in which past experiences and history of the “self” interact with present, everyday life.

3. The UKM-UDE Double Degree (DD) Programme

The Double Degree Programme between UKM and UDE, was mooted in the year 2000 and set up in 2003 and has been in progress for the last seven years. It is a student exchange programme designed for engineering students in the discipline of computer science, communication engineering, civil and structural engineering and mechanical engineering. This programme was conceptualised as ‘recognition of the need for intercontinental academic exchange for engineering students’ (A. Muchtar et al, 2009) and preparing them to meet the challenges of a globalised working environment. At the moment there have been only 50 students from UKM taking part, out of which 34 have successfully graduated (A. Muchtar et al, 2009). However, the number of German students has not been encouraging as the programme hopes for as there were only about nine students who participated in the exchange programme out of which two were postgraduate students.

Besides student exchanges there were also staff from the two universities who participated in lectures and also visits and conducting workshops. Lecturers from UKM have had their short sojourn in Duisburg-Essen and vice-versa. The exposure of staff from both universities to ‘an international classroom’ would definitely influence their practices and may, caused anxiety and conflicts. This paper explores this situation to see the implications of this internationalisation project on staff intercultural maturity from both UKM and UDE in their encounter with the cultural diversity that they are exposed to. It is a well known fact that Asians and Europeans are poles apart especially the Germans – a definitely essentialist view which is not what this study proposes. Both personnel from the two institutions would have gone through the same process; the difference is their lived experiences that form the meanings they make at different times, circumstances and contexts.

Staff from both universities particularly from UDE is more exposed to foreign students compared to those from UKM. More Malaysian students go to UDE for the DD programme. Besides that in UDE the number of foreign students is plenty. Germany is known for their engineering ingenuity that attracts many to study there. The increased in foreign students has prompted the engineering faculty to set up the Support Center for International Engineering Students (SCIES) to look into the needs of foreign students. And in doing so perhaps lessen burdens that staff has to face in their interactions with students and it was precisely set up to do so.

This is something that UKM is presently trying her very best to do so as the number of foreign students increases. UKM like other universities in the new millennium needs to be internationally recognised and is internationalising her existence. However, she also needs to look at facilities to accommodate to foreign students’ and academics’ needs. There are many things UKM could learn from the UKM-UDE DD programme’s experiences such as facilities, staff development and intercultural knowledge and behaviour.

4. Research Method

The study takes the form of a case study of staff involved in the UKM-UDE Double Degree Programme. Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires. Interviews were conducted both in Duisburg-Essen as well as in UKM. The aim of the study is to explore intercultural competences of staff (academics and administrative) involved in the Double Degree Programme mentioned. It tries to trace the development of staff as intercultural personhoods who are able to face challenges of internationalisation that came with the programme and how their lived experiences being in international environments help them matured as intercultural personhoods. This is best fulfilled by asking those involved in the programme. Thus in-depth interviews were carried out with staff from both universities. Eleven UKM and sixteen UDE staff were interviewed. Approval for the interviews was sought from the German counterpart and this was easy because they being partners in the programme were also interested to see the progress of the programme. Beside that both parties think that there is a need to look into intercultural issues. For the purpose of this paper, only in-depth interviews were analysed as the respond to the questionnaire was not very encouraging, an interesting intercultural glitch. That was a truly intercultural learning experience and worth discussing as another paper.

The respondents interviewed were staff who are either involved in teaching and committee members who mooted and set up the programme (who are also academics); administrative staff such as personnel working in departments involved with foreign students as well as managers of hostels that housed foreign students.

5. Findings and Interpretations

This study aims to explore intercultural competences of staff (academics and administrative) involved in the Double Degree Programme thus looking at the development of staff as intercultural personhoods who are able to face challenges of internationalisation that came with the programme and how their lived experiences being in international environments help them matured as intercultural personhoods.

5.1 Cultural background and lived experiences across culture, Personhood and Awareness

5.1.1 The UDE staff

The staff, both academic and administrative from UDE is familiar with international students. There are about 30–35% from abroad. At the moment according to the dean they have about 400 students from China alone and that does not include those from India, Pakistan and the Middle East, etc.

I don't know if you know that we have about 30-35% of students in the engineering faculty from abroad. There are about 400 something from China, another from India and so on. And this is called the ISE program. The ISE program is a very big program and if we hear complaints from the lecturers about students, it's about 2 things.

This statistics given by the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering from UDE show the involvement with foreign students is something that they have been exposed to and has been part of their job. The hostel manager at UDE reflected on his experience being on the job:

Let me think, I've been doing this job now for 27 years now.

Yeah. I came here when it was built. And I don't really think I had. Maybe 1 or 2 problems yeah. But generally no. The good thing now is that I am the only person who getting older in this house. And all the students who come here, let's say around 20 to 28 roughly. And I am the only person who get older and older all the time. The students will go after 4 years of living here. And then the next one comes in yeah. And that's what I think for me that I am now older, and if I am also young, then they would not listen to me. And when people are a little bit older, they do listen to them I think.

The other factor is the background of most of the academic staff. Most of the staff is actually from different cultural background. The ones interviewed were three from Indonesia, a Russian, Hungarian and a Malaysian (who is also a PhD student there) and the rest are Germans. One of the Indonesian staff had an earlier sojourn in the USA for six years and the other did her Masters at UDE and is now doing her PhD there. The fact that she could speak four languages is an added advantage. The staff at SCIENS (an establishment set up for the welfare of foreign engineering students only) is well informed of students' needs and is used to difficulties faced by students. They ensure that students are well taken care of. One of the staff was married to an African is very much involved in the students' welfare and relates that:

Yeah. So they were my babies. Whenever there were difficulties, they came to me asking me what can I do now, there's a problem etc. this is something that I made up my mind. It's not they are completely lost. For instance, they have to sit for exams, but they don't know which room, something like that. Or they have to register for the next test but didn't know where. I didn't know because this was another office where the students have to register for their exams. But this has been reorganized and been moved. This was a bit confusing. But we managed of course.

Q: *Ok, besides the exam and the course registers, what sort of other problems do they have?*

A: *Of course the climate. Because they are not aware when they come in early April. This is spring season. If you are lucky, it's warm. If not it's cold. You may even face the snow. For somebody who comes from your climate, something like freezing ya. Just to tell them where to go*

to buy the cheap clothes considering their financial standing. I cannot go and expect young people going abroad that they have the money to go to Gucci or places like that. These are not prior problems, but when you have to face it, it is a problem. Like a mother, take them in hand, show them go to Kick, Aldi or whatever cheap places. And show them which are the expensive restaurants which can eat your money and at the end of the month you'll have nothing. To show them the places of where to go. Or to take them to my home and show how German people live and how it is. How they eat and how they behave. It was a very private base and to people who are very close to my heart.

The multicultural environment itself allows for the interaction 'between and among cultures' (Kim, 2008). Their lived experiences contributed to their being multiculturally aware. The respondent above herself had good experiences in her travels that have made her who she is now.

Their exposure and their knowledge about culture helped them in their daily interaction and dealing with students involved in the DD Programme. The fact that some of them are able to speak and understand other languages contribute to their international identity. Their academic activities and experiences of living abroad help create a new personhood, intercultural-personhood that could deal with other culture and situation. They have a very high awareness toward the DD Programme, academic system, language, culture shock, culture gap, students' difficulties in adapting with new culture etc.

Seven of the staff responded to the questionnaire distributed in UDE, Germany. According to the data collected from the questionnaire, staff from UDE does not have any problems in interacting with foreign students; and they are open minded when it comes to accepting a different culture.

The academic environment on the other hand specified the identity that each has to take. For the academic staff most of them prefer to keep their identity as lecturers and expect the students to adopt the independent learning culture at UDE. They expect students to be able to cope with studies and be able also to understand German. The administrative staff on the other hand has to construct and reconstruct themselves as 'mother', 'shopping guide', 'handyman', and most of all as a 'cultural bridge' (Kim, 2008) to ensure a conducive intercultural environment. The hostel manager not only manages the hostel but also acts as a handyman. As noted by a staff at UDE,

From the technical side, you have to use both hands. That's very important. 'because a lot of things that is happening in this house, that's not just for big house and small house as well. We do repairs on ourselves. We do everything ourselves. As much as possible. That's the first step here. You really have to be a handyman here.

UKM staff on the other hand experiences a different way to being interculturally matured compared to UDE staff.

5.1.2 UKM staff

UKM is still at its infancy stage where internationalisation of higher education is concerned. At the moment the number of foreign students is still considered minimal. Partnerships with international universities are now very much encouraged as local universities are competing to get international recognition and to attract more international students to study locally. The UKM-UDE DD programme is one such attempt and could be considered quite a successful endeavour as it has sustained for more than seven years now although the rate of students from UDE coming to UKM is low compared to those going there. The programme has benefitted the students as well as staff. Beside students going there during their third year, there have also been staff exchanges between UDE and UKM. Both UKM and UDE have set up offices (the Mercator office at the Faculty of Engineering caters for local students going to UDE; UKM too has set up an office in UDE to encouraged more German students to UKM to study).

Most UKM staff especially the academics developed their intercultural traits through their international sojourn as students. Most of them had between five to 10 years of studying abroad either at post graduate level or from their undergraduate till their PhD. Some of them studied in two different continents: undergraduate for example in Australia and the post graduate in the UK or the USA. This was revealed by some of the staff involved in the UKM-UDE DD Programme

...well it does have an influence, 10 years in my life are abroad. Into different countries, it has some influences in many of ... I mean I aware of people of many cultures

The lived experience of studying and staying abroad has created different levels of intercultural maturity among each of the staff in mingling and teaching international students or cooperating with international counterparts.

... Master, PhD because we are matured student, we have a family. We are very close with our supervisor, local person and that bring us to other and circle of friends, we are more comfortable, and over all my overseas experiences have changed my attitude.

Differences in personality and willingness of knowing other culture have given different values for each staff in facing a new culture when they are interacting with or visiting other countries.

...because I believe that intercultural communication in this kind of exchanged, when people go other side, or the students exchanged program is a very enriching experiences for anybody. And it will bring not only real genuine value to you personality and your capabilities, your competencies as a person in everything that now is global. It will also bring a positive image into to the institution. So by nature I am a person like that. For example I like to become host parent for foreign students. There were more than 10 foreign students staying in my house.

UKM staff is aware of difficulties that students may face when they are in a different country and exposed to different environments, however, they treat this as something that students may be able to cope with time. This is based on their own experience as students studying abroad where they learn to adjust and survive from seniors who were already there. Their international sojourn as students and as exchanged staff has contributed to their intercultural identity as they have gone beyond their original culture to encompass new cultures. In the same way as their counterpart in UDE staff in UKM has in some ways matured interculturally. However, where the administrative staff is concerned much has to be done to expose them to more interaction with foreign students.

12 staff responded to the questionnaire distributed. The data collected also helped to strengthen the qualitative data. It can also be seen that the UKM staff are enthusiastic when it comes to teaching the foreign students and also to work at UDE, Germany.

6. Conclusion

Internationalisation projects may have positive as well as negative implications depending on how much intercultural tolerance or acceptance takes place. Among the UKM staff, the length of time spent abroad was an added factor because their exposure to new cultures help transformed and increased their tolerance towards new cultures. They have learned acceptance through their lived experienced which have changed their perspectives as well as being aware of cultural others and at the same time keeping their own cultural identity. The same can be said for the UDE staff although the path taken towards intercultural maturity is different, given their multicultural background itself has transformed them into human cultural bridges. The fluidity of transformation into a human bridge between cultures and the willingness to accept other cultures and keep their own ethnic identity is the best development of intercultural competence (Brown, 2009).

In conclusion, it can be said that both UKM and UDE staff are quite inter-culturally competent as they themselves have experienced foreign sojourn. They have gone through the cycle of a staff who was initially practicing only one culture and learning to adapt to new cultures when they were studying or working abroad or the Double Degree Program. They learned about cultural differences and they also learned to adapt themselves and understand other cultures better when they were living abroad. These experiences have made them persons who have multicultural traits.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to extend immense gratitude to Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for the research grants without which this research may not be possible. Special thanks are due to the academic staff at both the Faculties of Engineering of UKM and UDE for taking their time to cooperate and respond to the interviews conducted for this research and their valuable suggestions.

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