

The Adaptability of Postgraduate Students to a Foreign Environment with Particular Reference to the Japanese Cultural Context

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Abstract

Since higher education has now become internationalised, many students expect to enrol in prestigious foreign universities, which they believe will give them competitive advantages in their careers. These advantages include higher social status, professional careers, and networking opportunities. The large number of international students enrolling in foreign universities has caused various issues and challenges to them in adapting to overseas studies and the environments of foreign countries. This study focuses primarily on identifying the adaptability to a foreign environment by foreign postgraduate students, with special reference to the Japanese cultural context. The study was carried out as a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with individuals and group discussions. Thirty respondents were selected as the sample based on the judgmental sampling method, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the gathered data. Based on the results of the interviews, four main factors that challenged foreign students, when adjusting to the foreign environment, were identified. Difficulties in adapting to academic life, Japanese language proficiency, socio-cultural difficulties, personal psychology and general living issues were the main outcomes of the study. This study has also raised certain cultural, social and managerial implications that can be used to overcome the identified issues. In conclusion, the study emphasised the importance of adjusting to the foreign environment by being aware of the potential challenges, and handling the issues effectively by preparing for them in advance.

Keywords: Foreign students, Adaptability, Academic life, Japanese language, Socio-cultural context, Psychological and general living issues.

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