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**Understanding the Trajectory of the Academic Progress of
International Students in the UK**

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Abstract

Purpose – The UK is a popular educational hub for international students from different parts of the world. These students often face different transitional challenges, which have a significant impact on the success or failure of their studies. This study systematically investigates the issues and challenges confronting international students in UK in their efforts to acquire academic knowledge and achieve personal development.

Design/Methodology/Approach – A total of 104 UK-based international students in five higher education institutes in London from 25 countries participated in this study. The study was undertaken qualitatively through 21 semi-structured and 13 focus group interviews.

Findings – The findings reveal that the process of transitional adjustment is affected by various issues, all of which determine the duration of the students' involvement in each stage of the transitional process. International students in the UK experience language/accent-related difficulties; impaired communication; and a difficult adjustment to the British education system and culture.

Research Limitations/Implications – The extent to which the findings of this research can be generalised is constrained by the limited scope of the research.

Practical Implications – In choosing to study in the UK, international students primarily seek to obtain a qualification, other life experiences, and cultural assimilation. The students' parents, institutions, and the UK authorities (such as the Department of Education) have an important role in ensuring that the students achieve success. While the roles of parents and the UK authorities are not the focus of this article, their supportive roles certainly allow students to complete the different stages of the process of transitional adjustment quickly and smoothly.

Originality/Value – The study offers valuable insight into understanding the challenges facing international students in acquiring knowledge in a foreign land. The article contributes to the pedagogic literature on this topic by proposing a three-stage scaffolding model.

Keywords: Learning, development, UK, higher education, international students, focus group

Introduction

Global higher education (HE) is attractive, and the need for the cross-cultural movement of learners in search of the highest quality HE will remain important for a long time. The UK education system is considered to be one of the best in the world (Lomer et al., 2016), hence the regular influx of international students from different parts of the world, who have turned the UK into a popular and important educational hub (see Figure 1). The international student often experiences the phenomenon of border crossing as they change from one cultural milieu to another, making the necessary adjustments to achieve success in the new domain.

These students must adjust to their new host cultures; however, they also bring with them the cultural values of their formative years. Although their main and ultimate consideration is often educational and qualifying attainment, the required socio-cultural adjustments transcend education. The lines between the definitions of education, culture, and values at the point of the transition are blurred and often indistinguishable as they all have a significant impact on the success or failure of their studies.

This article investigates the issues and challenges confronting international students in the UK in their efforts to acquire academic knowledge and personal development. We adopt the combined definition of an 'international student' as a student who is enrolled in a UK HE institution (HEI) undertaking an undergraduate or postgraduate course and is not a UK citizen, refugee, immigrant, member of an European Union (EU) state, or permanent UK resident (Al-Quhen, 2012; Lillyman and Bennett, 2014).

According to the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA, 2017), 80% of all students who studied in HE in the UK in 2015/2016 were from the UK (home students), 6% were from other EU countries, and 14% were from the rest of the world. Cumulatively, a total of 438,010 international students studied in the UK in that academic year (UKCISA, 2017), a significant increase compared with the previous academic year. While international students accounted for between 13.4% and 15% of the total UK HEIs' population, among which the biggest share (12%) came from China (King et al., 2010). They also contribute one-third of the total income of UK universities (Brown and Holloway, 2008).

Lillyman and Bennett (2014) identified several other benefits of international students, for the host country as well as for the students. Furthermore, because many sources tend mainly to review the negative perspectives of international students, positive experiences are often lost within the literature. Their presence in the UK contributes considerably to the academic, social, and financial health of most HEIs and, indeed, the larger economy (Largo, 2003).

Ultimately, the intention of the UK education system is to help students (regardless of their origin) acquire knowledge and expertise and to become progressively

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3 independent during and after their academic adventures in the UK. In order to achieve
4 these lofty objectives, students are required to be engaged in both academic and non-
5 academic activities (Astin, 1993; Ma and Wen, 2018). These activities are educationally
6 purposeful, and they include events inside and outside of the classroom (Pascarella
7 and Terenzini, 1991).
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11 Studies that have examined the adjustment process of international students have
12 focused on both their academic performance and their social and emotional
13 adjustment. The presence of a significant overlap between these processes means that
14 the studies do not distinguish between the two spheres of the students' lives in
15 empirical investigations. From an academic perspective, international students are
16 characterised by their high intellectual ability and high level of motivation which, with
17 appropriate mentoring and support, can assist them in overcoming the challenges
18 associated with academic achievement (Boylan, 2002; Idris et al., 2019).
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23 They are also more engaged than home students in their studies (Andrade, 2006).
24 Morrison et al. (2005) noted that there is no evidence that this group of students
25 performs worse than home students. The extant studies that have focused on the
26 academic performance of international students have found that the perceived
27 importance of learning success to their family, their English writing ability, and social
28 communication with their compatriots are significant predictors of academic
29 achievement. It has also been reported that Chinese students specifically have a less
30 active learning strategy than others, and that there is no evidence to indicate that this
31 negatively affects their academic achievement (Li et al., 2010).
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36 Therefore, there is a lack of conclusive evidence on the range of issues and challenges
37 that international students face and the appropriate policy responses by HEIs and
38 various support units for international students. In the light of the recent Brexit vote,
39 the ongoing Brexit negotiations, and the widespread anti-immigration tone among
40 the British population, a study providing empirical evidence regarding international
41 students is timely and valuable.
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45 This article, therefore, is intended to stimulate further discussion and debate on the
46 potential issues and challenges confronting international students in the UK in their
47 efforts to acquire academic knowledge and personal development. It also proposes
48 solutions that could make their learning and development much easier and more
49 successful. An empirical study of this nature has hitherto been rare in the literature,
50 thus making this study timely and essential.
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53 **Learning and Cross-Cultural Issues**

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55 One of the lofty objectives of HE is to develop students and make them complete
56 human beings (Braskamp et al., 2009). Learning and development in HE is not only
57 concerned with the academic and intellectual development of students, but also their
58 intercultural competency/global learning and their moral, social, and physical
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3 development (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007; Musil, 2006;
4 Yarosha et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2018). It has been argued that this holistic focus is the
5 added value of HE, particularly in the UK (Braskamp et al., 2009). Learning and
6 development emphasises both the internal and external growth and development of
7 students (Deardorff, 2006; Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). Students learn in
8 diverse ways, and there is no one-size-fits--all learning approach.
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12 However, learning patterns in HE across cultures are different (Smith and Paracka,
13 2018). A meta-analysis of the inventory of learning styles (ILSs) of two Asian countries
14 (Sri Lanka and Indonesia) and one European country (the Netherlands) revealed that
15 culture plays a significant role in the students' learning and metacognitive strategies
16 and learning orientations (Marambe et al., 2012). The growth in student mobility
17 means that a record number of students are traveling abroad for studies (especially
18 the UK, see Figure 1), making the study of cross-cultural issues highly relevant.
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22 The experience of studying abroad is gratifying and enriching (Marambe et al., 2012),
23 but adaption to a new culture is challenging (Kemmis and Edwards-Groves, 2017).
24 Most of the time, learning patterns, approaches, regulations, strategies, conceptions,
25 and orientations can conflict with the method of learning that is in practice in
26 universities abroad. For example, Wierstra et al. (2003) found huge differences in
27 educational cultures between northern and southern Europe, as reported by
28 international exchange students. Similarly, Biemans and Van Mil (2008) in their study
29 of Dutch and Chinese students found that the Chinese students were disappointed in
30 the Dutch learning culture, which stands at variance to what they are used to. These
31 studies underline the importance of cross-cultural transition in the trajectory of the
32 learning and development of international students.
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38 Typically, learning is symmetrically presented in the dualism of either student-
39 centred learning or teacher-centred learning (O'Neil and McMahon, 2005). The
40 teacher-centred approach is based on the model of an active teacher and a passive
41 student (Mascolo, 2009). This approach is believed to involve lectures as a primary
42 means of communication in the classroom. Conversely, student-centred learning is a
43 pedagogical learning approach that emphasises a shift in focus and power from the
44 teacher to the learner (Barr and Tagg, 1995). Student-centred leaning emphasises that
45 knowledge is constructed by students and presents the teacher as a mere facilitator of
46 learning rather than a presenter of information (Kember, 1997). The tenets of this
47 approach align with the paradigm of andragogy, which describes learners as self-
48 directed and as resources for their own learning and that of others (Knowles, 1980;
49 1989).
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55 Student-centred learning appears to be reflective of 21st century society, which
56 presents people with the opportunity to make choices (O'Neil and McMahon, 2005).
57 This approach has, in most cases, been found to produce higher quality learning than
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3 the traditional teacher-centred approach (Sharan, 1990), and it is archetypal of the
4 western/developed world's learning approach.
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7 Many countries in Asia (China, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, Hong
8 Kong, and Korea) have a Confucian heritage culture, which underpins and impacts
9 considerably many aspects of the society including education and schooling systems.
10 However, the importation of student-centred approach into these cultures without
11 adequate consideration given to philosophical and cultural differences impede
12 students' learning and developmental proficiencies (Thanh, 2014).
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16 The diverse nature of students coming to study in the UK universities echoes the
17 enormity of the challenges of cross-cultural learning in HE (Wettea and Furneaux,
18 2018). The task of addressing language differences, educational and pedagogical
19 differences, reasoning patterns differences, high and low, and social contextual
20 differences is by no means an easy one (Edmundson, 2007).
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24 Another cross-cultural challenge is getting students from different cultural
25 background to work together. For example, in the UK, Harrison and Peacock (2010)
26 found that many domestic students felt negative about learning with international
27 students. Similarly, Moore and Hampton (2015) found that many students prefer to
28 work with those from their cultural background. Furthermore, Singaram et al. (2011)
29 found occurrences of self-segregation by cultural background between students in
30 collaborative tutorials in a problem-based learning environment.
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34 Intercultural communication is crucial to individual development and success in an
35 intercultural and pluralistic society (Bennett and Bennett 2004; Ploner, 2018). Due to
36 the fast-growing phenomenon of the internationalisation of HE in UK HE (Quan et al.,
37 2016), it is worthwhile to investigate the trajectory of the academic progress of
38 international students in the UK. Questions, however, remain. What do international
39 students think about the model of student learning and development in the UK? To
40 what extent are these students receptive and consider the student-centred approach,
41 highly favoured in the UK, to be beneficial?
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45 **Insert Figure 1 about here**
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47 **International Students and the Process of Transitional Adjustment**

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49 The number of international students coming to the UK obtain degrees is growing
50 exponentially (Higher Education Statistical Agency, 2018), with England being the
51 preferred destination for many international students (see Figure 1). International
52 students are a group of people from different countries who bring a diversity of
53 cultures and educational backgrounds from their home countries to acquire academic
54 knowledge and degrees in another country (Bevis and Lucas, 2007).
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59 UK universities are reputable for their internationally recognised qualifications
60 (British Council Report 2014), and they are the second most popular destinations in

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3 the world for international students outside of the US (UK Council for International
4 Student Affairs [UKCISA], 2015). However, the excitement of studying in the UK is
5 often shattered by the challenges that naturally arise in a new country/culture and
6 academic environment.
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9 Ejirofor (2010) highlighted the issue of collaborative and participative learning, which
10 many international students often find challenging. Eringa and Huei-Ling (2009)
11 argue that the academic and social integration of international students in HE is not
12 only challenging, but also impacts their academic progress. This means that there is a
13 negative relationship between academic performance and social adjustment (Mannan,
14 2007). Of great concern is that 35% of international students in the UK have been found
15 to have developed mental issues due to the various challenges confronting them in
16 their new environment (Atack, 2018). According to UKCISA (2015), academic
17 transition remains one of the most critical challenges facing international students in
18 the UK.
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24 The gap in the literature on the topic of international students' transition to their host
25 culture has been acknowledged by Quan et al. (2016) and Nada and Araujo (2017).
26 However, empirical studies that look beyond the transitional process of a specific
27 cohort (specifically Chinese students) are somewhat rare. The transitional process
28 needs to be understood in the wider context of globalisation. This is because
29 globalisation has proliferated cross-border collaborative education programmes
30 (Heffernan et al., 2010; Nada and Araujo, 2017), a phenomenon that keeps the UK
31 border open to thousands of students from across the globe every year (Tang and
32 Nollent, 2007).
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37 Furthermore, researchers have argued that studies that involve students from
38 different cultures/countries are needed considering the dynamic and complex cross-
39 cultural transitions (Major, 2005; Zhou et al., 2008). A smooth transition to HE is
40 crucial to students' learning and development (Pike and Harrison, 2011). While
41 students often find the prospect of an academic sojourn in a foreign country exciting,
42 the experience is usually constrained by uncertainty and disorientation in terms of
43 adapting to the new culture(s) (Hellstén, 2002). Furthermore, many students find
44 studying abroad and learning across different cultures difficult (Sluss and Ashforth,
45 2007).
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50 It is, however, important to note that the process of adjustment in adapting to a new
51 culture is not singular; rather, it develops in stages (Wu and Hammond, 2011). A
52 tranquil transition is crucial for students' effective academic performance and self-
53 development (Pike and Harrison, 2011). Existing models acknowledge that cross-
54 cultural transition is successive (Brown and Holloway, 2008).
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57 Research is increasingly focusing on the issue of the academic adjustment of both
58 international learners and teachers (Wang and Byram, 2011). The requirements of
59 academic adjustment and the concept of learning vary across the world and the
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3 argument and cultural justification for holding a particular position may equally vary
4 (Nada and Araujo, 2017; Ploner, 2018). However, it has been suggested that British
5 universities should adopt a culturally responsive pedagogy to accommodate
6 international students who come from multiple backgrounds with different learning
7 norms (Wang and Byram, 2011).
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11 The idea that international students should view overseas study as an opportunity to
12 experience new ways of learning is debatable. Biggs (2003) suggested that we should
13 perhaps focus on the similarities between the education systems rather than the
14 differences to bring out the best learning opportunities for students. Specifically, with
15 respect to Chinese students, Wang and Byram (2011) argued that the evidence shows
16 that they may initially be teacher-dependent, deferential to authority, lacking critical-
17 thinking skills, and dependent on memorisation. However, they are aware of these
18 challenges and can and do change.
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23 **Concept Model**

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25 Based on the present study's findings, which drawn on students' experiences and
26 previous studies (Brown and Holloway, 2008; Oberg, 1960; Torbiorn, 1994), this study
27 identifies an empirical-based transitional stage model. This model projects students
28 into new social and academic contexts. It builds on and extends the existing work on
29 the contextualisation of students' experiences and perceptions. The proposed 'three-
30 stage' scaffolding model consists of (i) the stormy stage, (ii) the acclimatisation stage,
31 and (iii) the functioning stage.
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39 Consistent with Borrett and Zysk's (2007) research, which found that international
40 students are confronted with a range of challenges in their first study period in a new
41 country, the current study's model proposes that international students struggle to
42 transit to their new environment in the first stage. In the stormy stage, international
43 students struggle to weather the storm of the new academic and social climate. They
44 are exposed to a social and academic climate that is different to what they are used to
45 in their native culture (Lamberton and Ashton-Hay, 2015; Shaheen, 2016).
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50 There are two categories of students at this stage: (a) those who find both or either of
51 the social and academic climates too difficult to weather and (b) those who quickly
52 understand the new climates and get on well with them. Many students struggle at
53 this stage, and this struggle often has a negative effect on their learning and
54 development. During the acclimatisation stage, the students have, to a large extent,
55 now come to terms with the fact that the social and academic climate is different to
56 what they are used to in their native culture. They are now learning and getting used
57 to the new climate.
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3 Tinto (1987) described this phase as a stage in which international students let go of
4 the ways and behaviour of the past and learn new methods that are suitable to the
5 new environment. Not all students make it to this stage from the stormy stage.
6 Students who are unable to make it to the acclimatisation stage due to the difficulties
7 in terms of dealing with apparent challenges of the storming stage either leave
8 university or retake the first semester. This depends on their academic performance
9 and ability to cope. All students should aim to reach the functioning stage. The
10 students should have now weathered the storms, be acclimatised to the new climate,
11 be functioning, and be able to cope as well as their counterpart British students.
12 Mushibwe (2009) argued that this a stage in which international students are stable
13 and are well integrated into the new system/climate. For example, international
14 students on masters' or undergraduate programme should aim to reach the
15 functioning stage at about eight weeks into the programme. This will enhance their
16 learning and academic success.
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23 Ryan (2011) made a strong argument about the problematisation of international
24 students. She argued that western academics need to move beyond this
25 problematisation and begin to see international students as a source of
26 internationalisation for universities: 'in truly internationalised and transcultural
27 learning environments, everyone is "international," and global knowledge and skills
28 become available to all' (p. 644). With an increasing number of international students
29 choosing other European destinations (the most popular choice being The
30 Netherlands, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, and Italy) where many universities
31 provide studies in English and due to the threats associated with the UK's exit from
32 the EU, it is only a matter of time before British universities begin to feel the pressure
33 of a lower level of recruitment students.
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39 The UK Higher Education Academy's Teaching International Students (TIS) project
40 aims to address this challenge (Ryan, 2011). Recently, it has been said that
41 internationalisation is a much broader project than the narrow prism of international
42 students (Jones, 2009). It is more about providing an international learning experience
43 beyond exporting education so that global citizens who will commence and continue
44 their careers with enthusiasm in all parts of the world are created (Healey, 2017).
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48 For example, the notion of critical thinking and criticality in writing is often taken as
49 the norm in HE in the West. Most international students are unlikely to have a full
50 understanding or appreciation of this important western education value when they
51 arrive for their studies. Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016) examined the
52 importance of critical thinking in HE in the UK with specific reference to international
53 students. They suggested that there needs to be a shift in policy and practice with
54 regard to how academics understand and promote critical thinking in academic work.
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58 Apart from the key role of tutors in guiding international students and supporting
59 them on both academic and sometimes pastoral levels, home students also play an
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3 important role in the academic journey of international students. Harrison and
4 Peacock (2010) found that home students perceive the presence of international
5 students as a threat to their academic success and group identity, specifically
6 regarding academic learning in class and on the social front outside of the classroom.
7 This can even lead to passive xenophobia among the majority (Harrison and Peacock,
8 2010).

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12 The diversity of the student population, in which many UK universities take pride,
13 has not led to diversity in interactions (Haines, 2007). This may be a threat to the long-
14 term sustainability of the internationalisation of HE in the UK and beyond before it
15 can become positive, meaningful, and non-threatening (Harrison and Peacock, 2010).
16 Considering the transitional stages discussed earlier, this article investigates the
17 potential issues and challenges confronting international students in the UK in their
18 efforts to acquire academic knowledge and personal development. Are the processes
19 of transitional adjustment and the ability to cope the same for all international
20 students? Are the issues and challenges also the same across the board? How long
21 does it take to get to the functioning stage? This research aims to investigate and
22 answer to all these questions.
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29 **Method**

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31 Birkinshaw et al. (2011) argued that a multicultural group is a particularly complex
32 phenomenon that should be studied and interpreted through qualitative studies. This
33 holds true for the present study, which considers international students from different
34 countries and cultural backgrounds. We used a multi-method qualitative approach.
35 This approach encourages the use of multiple data sources (Saunders et al., 2012),
36 which is essentially a mixture of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A focus
37 group is particularly useful for exploring in-depth, qualitative information in terms of
38 the participants' thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, and perceptions relating to
39 the relevant concept or phenomenon (Sherraden, 2001).
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44 Four universities in central London were chosen for this study. The selection of these
45 universities was informed by the number and diversity of international students
46 studying in them. The researcher paid careful attention to ethical considerations. The
47 participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their unreserved right
48 to end their participation at any stage of the study. Two datasets were carefully
49 investigated, with specific attention given to the issues elucidated above.
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53 The first dataset is formed of information taken from focus group interviews with 104
54 international students from 25 countries (Table 1). There were 13 rounds of focus
55 group discussions, with eight participants in each session. Each session lasted about
56 75 minutes. Participants were purposively grouped according to their availability, and
57 each session started by discussing the transitional period (Patton, 2002). The
58 moderator (facilitator), however, ensured that the purpose of the exercise was not
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3 defeated (Silverman, 2006). Focus groups help in gaining diverse but congruent views,
4 which interviews might not provide (Bryman, 2012). It is an 'information-rich' tool
5 that is pertinent for achieving 'data saturation' (Krueger and Casey, 2000, p. 25). Focus
6 groups further encourage participants to give genuine information unwittingly
7 through its interactive mechanism, which increases validity (Bloor et al., 2001).
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11 The second dataset is formed of information taken from in-depth semi-structured
12 interviews with 21 lecturers (13 male, 8 female) with a vast experience in teaching in
13 HE. Their age ranged between 36 and 56 years old and they reported an average of 12
14 years of working experience. The lecturers were interviewed individually at different
15 times and places. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Semi-structured
16 interviews permits flexibility and also enable the identification of the voice inflections,
17 emotions, and body language of the interviewees (Saunders et al., 2012), especially
18 when dealing with important issues (Okpu, 2016). As noted by Bryman (2012), the use
19 of semi-structured interviews enables us to gather rich data that is vital to the
20 achievement of the research's aim and objectives. As a two-way communication
21 process, the data gleaned from this exercise gave us the platform to ask more questions
22 based on the reactions of the participants concerning what can be regarded as a
23 significant response.
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32 Both datasets were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim almost immediately
33 after the interviews. Interview times and dates were confirmed via email, and all the
34 participants were happy to participate in the study. Consent forms stating the purpose
35 of the study and giving information regarding the benefits of the study were provided
36 prior to beginning the interview sessions. The participants were required to complete
37 the consent forms, thereby demonstrating their agreement to participate in the study.
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41 All of the interviews were conducted in English. Eight respondents participated in
42 each session of the focus group interviews. Semi-structured interviews were
43 conducted on one-to-one basis with the participants. Furthermore, in order to ensure
44 that the participants would speak freely, they were assured that their names,
45 institutes, and comments would remain anonymous. Following the principle of
46 induction, the interviews began with open questions, allowing the participants to
47 share their subjective views on the relevant issues. Furthermore, in order to
48 accommodate the participants' rich experiences and thoughts, the order of questions
49 was maintained as flexible. The interviewers also remained open to new themes
50 throughout the process, as recommended by Myers (2008). Data saturation was
51 realised when emerging themes and motifs seemed recurrent (Glaser and Strauss,
52 1967) in the semi-structured and focus group interview sessions.
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58 However, a brief session was held before every interview in order to gather the
59 participants' background information. The main questions addressed to the focus
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3 group were (a) what are the issues and challenges confronting you in terms of your
4 learning and development? (b) how do you cope with these issues and challenges?
5 The main questions addressed to the lecturers in the semi-structured interviews were:
6 (a) what do you think the issues and challenges confronting international students in
7 terms of their learning and development are? (b) How do you think these issues and
8 challenges can be overcome?
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12 **Insert Table 1 about here**

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15 A total of 104 students from 25 different countries took part in the focus group
16 interviews, with their ages ranging between 17 and 32 years old. They were enrolled
17 in foundation, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes in their respective
18 places of learning. The focus group participants were classified in no particular order,
19 segregation or restriction. The open focus group membership ensures participant
20 membership of each group is rich, diverse, and multicultural. This approach is a
21 beneficial learning process for members of each group who by virtue of the diverse
22 membership may learn from each other.
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28 **Data Analysis**

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30 The data analysis approach chosen for this study was an inductive approach (Glaser
31 and Strauss, 1967). Using an 'open coding' technique (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), all
32 the transcripts were carefully studied to identify the recurrent themes across them all.
33 This process ensured that the themes were logically selected and that they were
34 guided by inductive epistemology (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002). The coding was
35 predominantly undertaken by the first author, with the emerging themes being
36 frequently and intensely discussed with the second author during the entire process
37 of data analysis.
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41 After the coding process was finalised, the findings were crosschecked thoroughly by
42 three of the authors again. An additional reliability check was undertaken by the
43 fourth authors and an independent research assistant. This was done to ensure the
44 consistency and reliability of the study. This check was then compared with the coding
45 undertaken by the first author, based on the same set of transcripts. A satisfactory
46 level of reliability was achieved. Subsequently, reports on the themes were prepared.
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51 **Findings**

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53 Across the dataset, the following major themes were found to be overwhelmingly
54 recurrent: language/accents difficulties; impaired communication; and adjustment to
55 the nature of the British education system (including the teaching style and the
56 university system itself), culture, transport system, food, and weather.
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Language/Accent Difficulties

An overwhelming majority (92%) of the participants mentioned, during the focus group interview, that they have struggled with the language barrier since they came to the UK to study. The participants complained about the regularity at which they are required to speak the English language and its impact on their learning. The following comments typify their shared experiences ('FGP' refers to 'focus group participant'):

I am struggling with the language. I have to speak it at all time....at school, on the bus, in the shop, almost everywhere. It's really difficult (FGP1).

Language, for me, is the main issue. Lessons, instructions, coursework, presentations, and exams are all given in the English language. I speak very little English, which reduces my understanding (FGP2).

Participants also commented on how their inability to speak and understand English fluently inhibits their participation in class activities:

My involvement in the class and learning activities is often curtailed by my inability to speak and understand the English language...or, I should say, I understand, but a little (FGP3).

Most of the time, I find it rather difficult to share experiences and opinions, or express myself in class, because I can't speak English properly...my roommates also have the same problem. This is our third month in the UK, and we are struggling to cope (FGP4).

In line with these findings, Peters (2010), Robertson et al. (2000), and Yarosha et al. (2018) argued that international students studying in foreign cultures are often confronted with linguistic challenges, which in many cases, negatively affect their academic performance.

As well as the language itself, many participants also commented on the difficulties involved in understanding the British accent. There are three categories of students here: (a) those who have difficulties understanding the English language, (b) those who have difficulties in understanding British accents, and (c) those who fall into both of the previous categories. The participants said:

I can say that I have a little understanding of the English language. However, since I arrived in England, it seems to me that the English

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3 they are speaking is different from the one I understand...I always
4 struggle to understand the accents (FGP5).
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7 My first three months were difficult. Understanding people at school,
8 in shops, on the Tube, or on the bus was problematic...it's now better
9 (FGP6).
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11 Norman (2017) argued that the accent spoken by native English speakers could impact
12 the communicative competence of international students. Other participants
13 commented:
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16
17 I did not understand what the teacher was saying. The accent was
18 really difficult to understand. Same thing in other places like the
19 church, shop...so, I was just staying indoors. That lasted for like two
20 months. It is not perfect now, but it is better (FGP7).
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23 I just arrived five weeks ago, and I am still struggling with the
24 language and the accent. Everything seems like magic to me at the
25 moment (FGP8).
26
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28 The above statements represent the overwhelming majority (92%) of the focus group
29 participants' comments. Furthermore, the lecturers (who participated in the face-to-
30 face semi-structured interviews) also commented that language and accents remain a
31 big issue for students, specifically international students from non-English speaking
32 countries. One lecturer commented:
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35 Students from English-speaking countries have no issue with the
36 language. They may find the accent somewhat strange, but they are
37 quickly adaptable. However, the story is different for students from
38 non-English-speaking countries – the language and the accents are
39 both issues (Participant A).
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43 Another participant mentioned that students from francophone countries and some
44 countries in Asia often struggle with understanding the English language and the
45 British accent. She commented:
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48 Students from francophone countries and some part of Asia found the
49 English language and the British accent problematic. My concern,
50 over the years, and this is different for different students, has been:
51 how quickly can these students learn the English language and get
52 used to the British accents? (Participant B).
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56 Tiffany (2012) argued that international students may have problems when
57 communicating with British locals due to various accents, which may affect the
58 learning process of the students. Another participant said:
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3 I don't want to mention countries, but the majority of the students
4 from Asia (not all of them) generally have problems with
5 understanding the English language and the British accents
6 (Participant D).
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10 The majority of the lecturers believe that students should learn an appreciable degree
11 of the English language and become accustomed to the British accents between six and
12 eight weeks of their arrival, otherwise their learning process and the trajectory of their
13 academic development is adversely affected. The following statements typify their
14 shared views:
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16
17 I believe that students should have a good understanding of the
18 English language before arriving in the UK for their studies.
19 However, if not, there is a window gap of between six and eight
20 weeks for them to quickly learn and get used to it, otherwise they may
21 have problems in their studies (Participant C).
22
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24
25 Other participants commented:

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27 I would say six weeks, because by that time, the lectures are already
28 at an advanced stage, and if a student cannot cope at the six-week
29 stage, then things may not work out well (Participant F).
30

31
32 For me, it is between six and seven weeks, and it is really important
33 that students get on with the language and the accents within this
34 period. From my experience, students who are unable to get on with
35 the language and the accents within this time often either get
36 withdrawn or have an extra year (Participant E).
37
38

39
40 The statements above represent the overwhelming majority (94%) of the lecturers'
41 comments on language and accents. Researchers have noted that language and accent
42 barriers are the most common and overwhelmingly dominant problem confronting
43 international students, which could give rise to academic difficulties and
44 psychological anxiety (Campbell and Li, 2008; Ploner, 2018; Zhang and Mi, 2010;).
45
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47 48 **Impaired Communication**

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50 The majority of the participants (lecturers) commented on the issue of a general lack
51 of communication skills as a result of difficulties in understanding the English
52 language and the British accents. The following statements typify their shared views:
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55 Difficulties in understanding the English language and the accents
56 often limit the international students' (specifically those from Asia)
57 communication and participation in classroom activities. They often
58 seemed lost in the early stage (Participant V).
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Communication between the lecturers and the international students, and also between students from different cultures, for the first five weeks after their arrival or so, is often poor. This is because they usually find the conversational flow of the English language in the classroom quite difficult (Participant S).

The communication is one-way traffic, at least in the first four weeks of their arrival. Aside from the language and accent issues, they are not used to the British student-centred learning style. More so, most of the students from Asia (not all of them) are generally shy – they are not used to speaking in public...it sometimes takes some of them more than eight weeks to overcome most of these challenges (Participant K).

One participant clarified the issue more succinctly thus:

Communication for the first six weeks for them (international students) is poor for three reasons: (a) they struggle with the English language, (b) the accent is another massive issue for them, and (c) they often do not want to talk in the class for the fear of failure and criticism...they are not used to this system (Participant Q).

The issue of impaired communication between students and between students and lecturers is evident from the above comments. Communication, or miscommunication, remains a big problem for international students due to language and accent difficulties. Meanwhile, Park (2017) argued that a lack of adequate language proficiency for communication negatively affects the academic success of international students.

The Education System

All participants but three described the British education system as exceptional and strange in relation to their previous educational experiences in their respective countries. Getting used to the teaching style and the school system was problematic for them, specifically those who had just arrived. The following quotations typify the participants' focus group discussion:

The education system is new to me. It is just the opposite of the system in my country...I have never experienced it before. I think it's good, but I don't find it easy to adapt to (FGP12).

...discussion of case studies, group presentation, uploading coursework on Turnitin...strange, I find it difficult to adapt to and adopt this system (FGP 14).

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3 For me, the teaching style, online teaching materials and the method
4 of assessment are weird. That is not what I am used to. Sometimes it
5 seems to me like it is impossible to learn and get used to, but I think I
6 am getting used to it. How long will it take? I honestly don't know
7 (FGP 17).
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10 I am a shy person, and I dislike talking in public. But now I have to
11 engage in group discussions in class and group presentation, which
12 are part of the summative assessment... it is difficult for me (FGP 19).
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16 Some participants mentioned the school system as one of their problems with the UK
17 education system. The majority of the participants specifically commented about
18 commencement and finishing times.
19

20 The school system is also an issue for me...sometimes I will still be in
21 school for lectures at 5pm. In my country, the time for study is
22 between 10am and 3pm. I find it difficult to cope with the British
23 system (FGP 21).
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27 The lecturers also recounted their classroom experience with international students in
28 terms of the nature of the British education system. Some tutors said:
29

30 A huge number of students came from a teacher-centred learning
31 background, where the classroom environment, the teaching style,
32 and the method of assessment are different. They learn the British
33 education system as they move on; however, the quicker they learn
34 the better for their learning and development (Participant Q).
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38 The teaching style is a huge problem for them. A lot of them come
39 from a background where they are not used to participating in
40 classroom activities. Thus, getting them into the British education
41 system is challenging (Participant R).
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45 As noted by Scollon (1994), McLean and Ransom (2005), and Shaheen (2016), the
46 majority of international students do not share the western idea of university system
47 prior to their arrival. Therefore, quick adaptation to the system is fundamentally
48 important to their academic success.
49

50 **The British Culture**

51 The majority of the participants commented on British culture, specifically the British
52 transportation network, food, and weather.
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56 **The London Transport Network System**

57 An overwhelming majority of the participants found the London transport network
58 system difficult to understand and navigate at first, and many of them are still
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3 struggling, specifically in terms of the bus numbers and the London Underground
4 network. Some participants commented:
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7 The London transport system is complicated for me. The buses are
8 numbered, and I have to start learning what bus number goes where.
9 The Underground is even more difficult for me. I lost my way on
10 several occasions, resulting in my lateness for lectures or sometimes
11 just going back home (FGP27).
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14 The transport system is a headache for me. The first six weeks of my
15 arrival were difficult. I kept forgetting the bus number...I missed a
16 couple of classes as a result (FGP 23).
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19 I went on the wrong bus, which took me to an area that I did not
20 know. I did not go to school that day because it was too late; I
21 eventually found my way back home (FGP 25).
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24 As much as I have tried to learn the London transport network
25 system, four months on, I am still struggling with it. The only thing I
26 know is that bus 68 takes me to school. Going out shopping or to
27 socialising with friends has been difficult (FGP 31).
28
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30 Another participant reflected:
31

32 I and a couple of my friends went out shopping, and the story was not
33 a good one...because we got lost using the Underground. At that
34 time, we had no idea where to go...we asked for directions, but the
35 language barrier was an issue. At the end of the day, we came back
36 home without shopping (FGP 29).
37
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40 As indicated above, the participants find understanding the London transport system
41 challenging. This has caused some of them to miss classes for weeks before getting
42 used to it. Such attitude (missing classes) is symptomatic of culture shock, which many
43 international student experience (Zhou et al., 2008). These findings also align with
44 Newsome and Cooper's (2016) argument that individuals who encounter alien
45 cultures often experience a sense of dislocation, which thrusts them into culture shock.
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49 **The Food and the British Weather**

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51 Some issues which pose a huge challenge to the participants are the British food and
52 weather. The participants commented on the food, which the majority of them termed
53 "cold food" and the weather, which they claimed made them sick and therefore
54 sometimes unable to attend lectures. Some participants commented:
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Aside from the UK education system, the food and the weather are big issues for me. The Brits are used to frozen and cold food, and the weather too is very cold, which often makes me sick (FGP 37).

I missed a couple of classes last week due to illness...the food, and the weather are too cold for me (FGP 41).

It is my seventh week and I am still struggling with the weather...it is a sickly weather because it can be very cold in the morning, sunny in the afternoon, and really cold in the evening and at night. Sometimes, I cannot get out of my bed to go to school in the morning (FGP 43).

A participant summed up these issues as follows:

The first thing I battled with was the language and the accents. Even though I could speak some degree of English before I left China, I did not understand one bit of what people were saying when I arrived in the UK. They spoke too fast and the accents were difficult to understand. The transport system is tough, too...memorising bus numbers, and everywhere looks exactly the same to me. The education system is strange...participating in group discussion, group presentations, and the idea of Turnitin for assignments and coursework are completely alien to me, and indeed, my friends. The food and the weather are also problematic and made my first eight weeks massively difficult. I was struggling to get used to a wide range of things (FGP 39).

The above quotations further point to various difficulties that international students have in adjusting to a new environment. The difficulties are even worse if new students are unaware or falsely assume that the new society will operate like their home country (Zhou et al., 2008). Furthermore, the participants commented on the number of weeks it took them to actually get over the challenges. This number, however, varied from one group of students to another (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 2, based on the findings of this study, shows the duration of the participants' involvement in each stage of the transition. Students from Asian countries, specifically those who are studying foundation courses, find the stormy stage of the transitional process rather challenging. They took between four and six weeks trying to find their ground in this stage before spending another four weeks in the acclimatisation stage.

Invariably, they started functioning as British students after ten weeks of their arrival. This is slightly different to undergraduate and postgraduate students, who spend between three and four weeks in the stormy stage, then the same period in the acclimatisation stage, before they start functioning after eight weeks.

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3 Students from Europe spend between three and four weeks in the stormy and
4 acclimatisation stages before they start functioning after eight weeks, except for
5 postgraduate students, who start to function after six weeks.
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8 No participants from Africa on foundation courses participated in this study.
9 However, participants from Africa on undergraduate and postgraduate courses spend
10 three weeks each in the stormy and acclimatisation stages before they start to function
11 after the sixth week. The lecturers thus consider that students should complete the
12 stormy and acclimatisation stages and start functioning by the sixth week. One
13 lecturer commented:
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17 Students have different starts to their academic lives. Students from
18 Asia, specifically China tend to have a slow start to their academic
19 lives. However, it is crucial that students start to function properly at
20 week six. This is important for their learning and development
21 (Participant P).
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26 Another lecturer commented on the implications of students' slow start to academic
27 life:
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30 For me, students should start functioning at week five. This is because
31 serious academic activities would have begun by this time and if
32 students are struggling to settle into the system at week five then their
33 learning, development, grades, and overall success will be negatively
34 affected. I have seen this happen over the years (Participant Z).
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37 This participant said:
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39 ...I think its six weeks; otherwise, it will affect the whole learning and
40 academic development process (Participant Y).
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43 Pedagogical and cultural adaptations in higher education are essential requirements
44 for the academic success of international students. However, the quicker they are able
45 to adapt to the new culture and academic environment the better for their academic
46 learning and development.
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50 Discussion

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52 As the globalisation of education brings students from all over the world to study in
53 the UK, there is a growing need to investigate the transitional process of international
54 students studying in the UK. An overwhelming majority (if not all) of the international
55 students coming to study in the UK are expected to pass through different transitional
56 stages from what they are used to in their respective native culture to the British social
57 and academic system. The implication is that if the transitional adjustment (from stage
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one to the last stage) of international students is not properly and rapidly executed, achieving academic success may become difficult.

This article sets out to investigate the issues and challenges confronting international students in the UK in their efforts to acquire academic knowledge and personal development. The key issues highlighted from our data include language/accent difficulties and adjustment to the British education system and culture. These issues informed the creation of an empirical model, which conceptualised the international students' learning and development. The model further embedded an academic understanding of the process of the transitional adjustment of not just a particular group of students, but students from 25 different countries, thus fulfilling the global outlook of this article. The model includes three stages of transitional adjustment: the stormy stage, the acclimatisation stage, and the functioning stage.

The model is derivative of students' experience, a review of the extant literature (Brown and Holloway, 2008; Oberg, 1960; Torbiorn, 1994), and a call in the extant literature for further studies on students' transitions (Quan et al., 2016).

It is evident (Table 2) that students on foundation courses spend as much as six weeks in the stormy stage of their academic adventures in the UK. Meanwhile, undergraduate and postgraduate students spend as much as four weeks in this stage. The cultural values and students' prior academic experiences in their respective home countries are crucial for surviving a quick transition from this stage (Klineberg and Hull, 1979). Many students struggle in this stage because it is a stage at which everything is alien to them. However, this article posits that spending more than six weeks in the stormy stage may have a negative impact on student's learning and academic progress.

The acclimatisation stage appears to be easier than the stormy stage. Students at this stage have weathered the storm and are now getting used to the British academic and social climates. Students spend as much as three weeks in this stage. However, not all the students in the stormy stage will make it to this stage. The functioning stage is the ultimate stage, and students on foundation courses often reach this stage ten weeks after their arrival in the UK. The time involved in each stage varies according to the courses studied and the continents from which the students come (Table 2). This raises concerns about the implication of a slow transitional movement.

The empirical findings of this article highlight the numerous issues and challenges confronting international students in their bid to achieve academic success in the UK. An overwhelming majority of international students struggle with understanding the English language, which is further made difficult due to the high pace at which it is spoken and the unfamiliar accents. Park (2017) argued that a lack of adequate language proficiency for communication negatively affects the academic success of international students. Similarly, Yeh and Inose (2003) argued that a limited language

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3 proficiency could impact the social connectedness of international students and
4 negatively impact their psychological wellbeing.
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7 Additionally, there is a great deal of ineffective communication between students and
8 lecturers and between students themselves in the stormy stage of the students'
9 transition. This is attributed to language difficulties, difficulties in understanding the
10 different British accents, a fear of failure, students' attitudes, and a fear of being
11 criticised by the lecturers. This situation undoubtedly means that international
12 students stay longer than necessary in a particular transitional stage (usually in the
13 stormy stage), which is detrimental to effective learning and overall academic success.
14 This is because a common classroom communicative feature, free-flow
15 communication between the learners and the lecturer, is absent.
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19 Furthermore, consistent with the research of Hyams-Ssekasi et al. (2014), this study
20 found that the UK student-centred education system was strange to many
21 international students. The majority of the participants are used to teacher-centred
22 learning, in which students are supposed to be quiet and listen (See Nguyen et al.,
23 2006). In this climate, students are mainly listeners, which is typical of most south-east
24 Asian countries (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Kennedy, 2002; Nguyen et al., 2006).
25 Meanwhile in student-centred learning, students are more active, and lecturers act as
26 facilitators who promote students' independence and autonomy (Elmgren and
27 Henriksson, 2014). Furthermore, the concept of plagiarism and interactive learning,
28 *inter alia*, are outlandish to them, thus making the process of transitional adjustment
29 slow and difficult.
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33 The majority of the participants, specifically students from Asia, are not used to this
34 system (student-centred learning style) and consequently found learning in this
35 system somewhat difficult at first. It is essential to mention that the traditions and core
36 values of the student-centred learning system are the hallmark of the British education
37 system. The system helps students to develop critical, constructive, and creative
38 minds and helps students to develop holistically (Braskamp et al., 2009).
39
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42 Additionally, the British culture, specifically the transport system, food, and weather,
43 is alien to the majority of international students. All of these issues and challenges
44 make studying in the UK (especially for those studying foundation courses and first
45 year undergraduates) a challenging experience for the international students. It is,
46 however, important to highlight that these charms and challenges of British life are
47 much the equivalent of the pleasures, attractions, and frustrations of any foreign
48 travel. Future studies may reveal how such views experienced by these respondents
49 change among those who remain in Britain after a couple of years.
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53 However, this article has found that the speed of adaptation to British culture is
54 essential in determining the students' academic success in the UK. Furthermore, the
55 study has found that students should achieve the functioning stage at six weeks;
56 otherwise, their academic success is negatively affected. International students' efforts
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3 to achieve academic success are not only frustrated by the abovementioned issues and
4 challenges, but they also affect learning development.
5

6 7 **Conclusion**

8
9 This article has documented the issues and challenges confronting international
10 students in their academic sojourn in the UK. The article, based on a review of the
11 extant literature and empirical evidence, proposed a three-stage model to give a
12 brighter insight into the international students' process of transitional adjustment. The
13 findings show that international students have uneven potential to achieve the
14 functioning stage. While some reach this stage six weeks after their arrival, it took
15 some ten weeks, which could be detrimental to their overall academic success.
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18
19 A robust mentoring programme and effective institutional support, which will
20 accelerate students' progress from the stormy stage to the functioning stage, should
21 be made available by HE institutions. Such support will enhance students' learning
22 and development in the new global knowledge economy (Rizvi, 2007). While
23 acknowledging institutional support, a key contribution of this study is the depiction
24 of students' movements and the duration of the movement from the stormy stage to
25 the functioning stage.
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29 This will enable students (on a personal level) to be able to identify at what stage they
30 are and the importance of getting to the functioning stage as quickly as possible. The
31 assurance of effective learning and development and the provision of a culturally
32 amenable learning approach, for international students, may be achieved if the
33 necessary support is provided. Furthermore, a critical evaluation of the current
34 academic discussions and practices in the UK is advisable.
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38 Future research may undertake a comparative study on the process of the
39 international students' transitional adjustment in different western countries
40 comparing the issues and the challenges involved.
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43 **Implications for Practice**

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45 It is evident that the academic success of international students studying in the UK is
46 predicated on their ability to be able to overcome various issues and challenges.
47 International students primarily seek to obtain a qualification in addition to other life
48 experiences and cultural assimilation. The students' parents, institutions, and the UK
49 authorities (such as the Department of Education) have an important role in ensuring
50 that the students achieve success.
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54 With respect to academic performance, however, Morrison et al. (2005) examined
55 several studies and found that international students performed better academically
56 than the home student population. Based on these findings, the quality and the success
57 of student learning and development depend on how successfully the students are
58 able to tackle the abovementioned issues and challenges. In other words, how quickly
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3 are they able to reach the functioning stage? It is proposed herein that six weeks is
4 ideal for achieving the functioning stage in order to achieve academic success and the
5 desired learning development. Students who are functioning at week five stand the
6 chance of graduating with good results and vice-versa. The context (inside and outside
7 of the institute) in which the learning occurs is essential (Entwistle et al., 2002).
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11 Consequently, the challenge remains for various HEIs in the UK to devise a supportive
12 welcome programme that will create an enabling environment in which smooth and
13 successful learning and development is fostered. Additionally, UK HEIs could
14 provide two to three-week pre-sessional programmes before the beginning of term,
15 for which international students coming to study in the UK would have an option to
16 register in order to help them 'acclimatise' and get used to the system before their
17 main academic programmes commence.
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21 Universities could also initiate a robust two-tier programme of pre and post arrival.
22 The pre-arrival may involve formation of all-inclusive online training programme,
23 including special videos to manage expectations. This will include information that
24 are educational, informative in terms of cultural issues and potential challenges, and
25 possible ways to deal with them. It will also include clarity about issues around
26 wellbeing, where to get help and who to contact. Universities could also introduce a
27 pre-arrival system that takes maximum advantage of social media networking where
28 intending students could use the support of alumni as contacts and pen pals to help
29 candidates before leaving their countries. These would increase their awareness and
30 readiness for impending challenges.
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36 Regarding the post-arrival, an integrative system such as a one-stop shop would be
37 helpful where students could catch up on gaps around pre-arrival information and
38 also have the opportunity to report problems and access relief. On arrival in the UK,
39 staff members from same country or region, where available, could also be engaged
40 to have drop in session with the students. This will go a long way in helping student
41 to settle in and attain the functioning stage very quickly.
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44
45 The findings of this research establish that UK universities and other HEIs must
46 understand that the process of transitional adjustment is an important element of the
47 support that they must offer to international students (Brown and Holloway, 2008;
48 Ploner, 2018).
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Table 1 Focus Group Participants' Profile

Country of origin	No. of participants	Age	Pre-degree/ Foundation	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Time in UK
China	18	17-24	9	7	2	1-3 years
Pakistan	8	18-22	4	4	0	1-2 years
Vietnam	10	17-25	5	3	2	1-2 years
Bangladesh	5	18-23	2	3	0	1-3 years
Turkey	3	18-21	2	1	0	1-2 years
Thailand	4	17-23	2	2	0	1-2 years
Saudi Arabia	4	18-25	1	2	1	1-2 years
Indonesia	3	19-21	1	2	0	1-2 years
Brunei	4	17-20	2	2	0	1-2 years
Libya	4	18-21	2	2	0	1-2 years
Uganda	3	19-26	0	3	1	1-2 years
Nigeria	3	20-32	0	1	2	1-2 years
Hong Kong	3	17-20	1	2	0	1-2 years
Russia	4	17-21	2	2	0	1-2 years
Ghana	3	19-31	0	2	1	1-2 years
Italy	3	18-20	2	1	0	1-2 years
Japan	3	18-21	0	3	0	1-3 years
Uzbekistan	2	18-21	2	0	0	1 year
Sweden	2	17-19	1	1	0	1 year
Burma	2	18-20	1	1	0	1 year
France	3	19-21	1	2	0	1-2 years
Germany	3	18-21	1	2	0	1-2 years
Afghanistan	2	18-20	1	1	0	1 year
Morocco	2	18-19	2	0	0	1 years
Algeria	3	18-22	1	2	0	1-2 years
Total	104					

Table 2 Duration In Transition Stages

Students	Stormy Stage	Acclimatisation Stage	Functioning Stage
Asian Students (68)			
Foundation	4-6 weeks	3-4 weeks	After 10 weeks
Undergraduate	3-4 weeks	3-4 weeks	After 8 weeks
Postgraduate	3-4 weeks	3-4 weeks	After 8 weeks
European Students (18)			
Foundation	3-4 weeks	3-4 weeks	After 8 weeks
Undergraduate	3-4 weeks	3-4 weeks	After 8 weeks
Postgraduate	3 weeks	3 weeks	After 8 weeks
African Students (18)			
Foundation	-	-	-
Undergraduate	3 weeks	3 weeks	After 6 weeks
Postgraduate	3 weeks	3 weeks	After 6 weeks

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Education + Training

Figure 1 International Students Studying in the UK

International student numbers by UK nation 2016-17

Country	Total EU students (not incl UK)	Total non-EU students	Total international students
England	104,875	258,710	363,585
Scotland	21,245	31,045	52,290
Wales	6,235	14,970	21,206
Northern Ireland	2,480	2,810	5,290
UK	134,835	307,540	442,375

Source: Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA)

Figure 2 Three stage Scaffolding model

