

ASIAN STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY CLUBS: CASE STUDIES IN LEADERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Paper presented at
ISANA International Education Association
19 the International Conference,
Promoting Integration & Interaction
2-5 December 2008, Sky City Convention Centre, Auckland

Jirayu Chotimongkol
Jirayu.chotimongkol@wcc.govt.nz

Dr. Deborah Jones
Deborah.jones@vuw.ac.nz

Victoria Management School
Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand

Background

New Zealand Context:

- o The government spending of NZ\$ 2,641 million through tertiary education
- o A total of 22,569 International Asian students enrolled in 8 universities. China, Malaysia and South Korea were the main sources of Asian students.
- o Main reasons for International students to study in New Zealand compared to other countries:
 - o Clean, green and safe environment
 - o Cheaper cost of living
 - o Closer geographical location
 - o English Speaking country

Research Context:

- o Major Challenges for Asian Students and social integration: negative attitudes and perceptions
- o Outside classroom activities: Integration and Leadership learning
- o Different cultures and backgrounds: different style of involvement and outcomes

A focus of this study:

Asian Students and their activities outside classroom
among their own group

Research Question:

“To what extent do students learn & develop leadership skills from participating in a cultural club at a university?”

Objectives:

1. To explore cultural issues for international Asian students in these clubs
2. To explore the relationships between club participation and social integration (specifically in this paper)
3. To develop key recommendations for universities to assist social integration of international Asian students through student club participation

Research Methodology

The research approach was:

- o Qualitative
- o Ethnographic
- o Based on the perceptions of participants

Method

Who were the research participants?

- o Two Cases Studies:
 - o Thai Students Association (TSA)
 - o Wellington Malaysian Students Organisation (WMSO)
- o 16 students: 8 from each club

How was data collected and analysed?

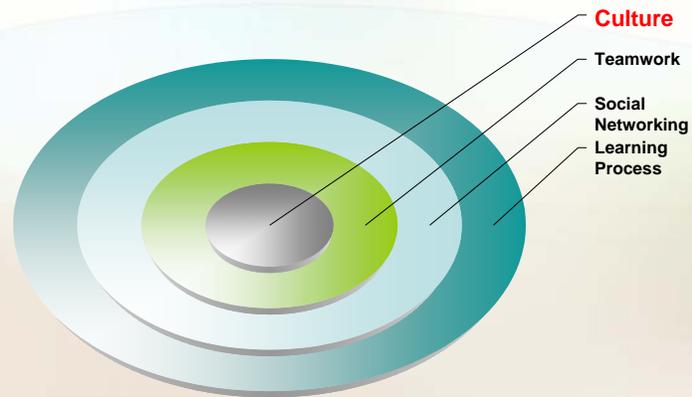
- o Semi-structured qualitative interviews
- o Participant observations for a period of 5 months
- o Collection of documentation through emails, e-newsletters, minutes & websites
- o Content Analysis

Overview Findings (1)

Asian students perceived their key club experiences in terms of themes of:

- o Teamwork
- o Social Networking
- o Learning Process
- o National Cultures

A Holistic View of Integration and Leadership Development in Student Clubs



Overview Findings (2)

Moderating factors of club participation:

- o Position held in the clubs
- o Motivation for joining the clubs
- o Students' cultural backgrounds

What we found specifically for Asian Students:

- o A need to form a social network while staying in New Zealand
- o A preferred style of their social participation increased their involvement in social activities

Overview Findings (3)

From overview findings, further Questions were raised:

- (a) What would be an alternative for students who are not part of these clubs?
- (b) What could be done to increase student club participation?

Recommendations

Support & guidance from the university is 'ESSENTIAL'

- o Promoting club participation as complementary learning activities
- o Support and guidance provided through regular feedback through club officers, advisors, etc.
- o Providing leadership development programmes as part of academic activities
- o Raising awareness of existing club activities as part of introductory programmes for new students

To Conclude

Research question?

“To what extent do students learn & develop leadership skills from participating in a cultural club at a university?”

The study answered:

“Cultural club participation not only helps Asian students to gain leadership experience but also facilitate their social integration during their stay overseas ”

Discussion Questions

- o What is done in your universities?
- o What are the challenges and benefits from your activities?

Thank You ☺