Exploring practices for **Supporting and Enhancing the Integration** of International students in Irish Higher Education Institutions

Submitted to

National College of Ireland

MA in Learning & Teaching

Lionel MacCárathaigh

July 2019

ABSTRACT

The over-arching aim of this research study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on International student integration in Irish HE. This thesis explores the practices used to support and enhance the integration of International students with a view to contributing constructively to the integration process. The literature review confirmed deficiencies in the integration of International students within a HE setting, thus justifying the rationale for further investigation. The exploration of suitable methodological approaches led to the adoption of an applied research perspective in the form of a change-orientated action research study. The research questions evolved simultaneously within this action research methodological design. The two-part design corresponds to a preliminary research question and a central research question. The preliminary question sought to to elicit knowledge from experienced professionals that was used for the curation and design of a change-orientated resource, namely a student integration workshop. Findings revealed best practice approaches, exemplars of student supports and recommendations for resource design. The central research question subsequently sought to determine the perceptions of International students in relation to the workshop, designed to support and enhance integration. This process elicited data in relation to the content, effectiveness and adaptability of the workshop. Findings were then used to supplement and improve the resource for future delivery in line with the action research 'cycle' of plan, act, observe, reflect and plan again. The results of this study, i.e. the integration workshop and the subsequent findings are impactful in supporting the process of International student integration contribute to the body of knowledge in this space. Furthermore, findings suggest opportunities for the adaptability of the resource for delivery in alternative settings such as professional / workplace environments.

Declaration of Originality of Work

I hereby certify that this material which I submit for assessment of the programme leading to the award of Master of Arts in Learning & Teaching is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed:

Lionel MacCárthaigh

31st July 2019

Contents

CHAPTER 1

1. Background & Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with exploring the links between cultural dynamics and international student integration within a higher education learning environment. The definition of the term culture has been the subject of much debate amongst anthropologists for decades, if not longer (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). It is a vast and extensive concept with a multitude of layers including individual and collective philosophies, languages, traditions, behavioural norms and socio-economic backgrounds. All of these elements impact how learning and teaching occurs in an educational setting. For the purpose of this dissertation however, the researcher subscribes to the definition proposed by Hofstede (1980), "[culture]…is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". In addition to the culture of the individual, another factor at play is institutional culture; how the policies and strategies of a given organisation or government impact the cultural environment through factors such as curricula, staff training, teaching and learning methods and learning environment.

Political climate for its part, has a bearing on International student integration by way of immigration policy, in a practical sense, and indeed the social mood permeating from politics as a whole. These factors can have a very real impact on the educational landscape and educational opportunities. This research study is also conducted against a backdrop of social and political change across western countries with a gradual shift of political dynamics from centrist to right-wing sentiment. *"Multicultural societies are multi-conflict societies"*, according to Marine Le Pen, leader of one of France's largest political parties, the *Nationalist Rally*. This opposition to multiculturalism encapsulates the view of a burgeoning populous, right-wing political movement across Europe. In the recent European Parliament elections (May 2019), France's right-wing party, National Rally won 24% of the vote and the Brexit Party in the UK won 32% of the vote. The growing influence of the anti-immigrant, isolationist policies of far-right politics is evident in other European countries such as Germany, Austria, Poland, Denmark, Greece and indeed, further afield in the United States, under the

presidency of Donald Trump. Ireland's political landscape has not been impacted by the prevalence of far-right politics to the same extent as our European neighbours. There remains a centrist political consensus in Ireland that is, on the face of it, more welcoming of diversity and multi-culturalism. Within this context, there is an ambition to further expand and develop the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Ireland. Government strategy, as evidenced in current policy documents (Dep. of Education and Skills, 2016), recognises the value of Internationalisation, both economically and socially and seeks to extend its reach in a national context.

This researcher's interest in the cultural dynamics of educational settings springs from early childhood experiences, having spent a number of years in the Middle East attending an International school. Cultural integration was central, albeit based on a post-colonial educational philosophy of British / European origin. Intercultural communication was a competence fostered from a young age. An awareness and acceptance of different cultures was instilled, encompassing not only the western cultures of the International school but the Arabic culture of the host nation. Subsequent educational experiences at second level and University level also contributed to an awareness of cultural value vis-à-vis economic/ monetary value, having studied to degree level through the medium of Irish. The researcher spent a number of years working in the US in addition to periods in London and Tokyo. More recent professional experiences observing the increase and diversity of foreign workers in Irish companies have reinforced an appreciation of the importance of cultural integration. These experiences serve to highlight the ever-increasing consequence of successfully integrating students in HE institutions, given the subsequent impact that this cohort has and will continue to have, on Irish society.

'International Students', as defined by the Institute of International Education are "students who undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than their home country or who travel across a national boundary to a country other than their home country to undertake all or part of their higher education experience" (IIE, 2019). According to the Migration Data Portal, the number of international students has increased considerably in recent years. International student numbers worldwide have grown from 3.9m in 2011, to 4.8m in 2016, representing a 23% increase. This rapid increase in the number of international students is even more marked in Irish HE institutions where numbers have increased 600%

from 2000/2001 to 2017/2018 (4,200 students to 24,500 students). International student numbers equate to 11% of total enrolments in HE (232,000), with students originating from the four corners of the world; 41% Asia, 30% North America, 20% EU, 9% Rest of World (Migration Data Portal, 2019). This percentage of overall international students in Higher Education is set to increase to 15% by 2020 (Dept. of Ed., 2016). The statistics illustrate the stark reality of the scale of this phenomenon.

Underlying the statistics, of course, are the human stories of real people; individuals striving to achieve educational goals. In many cases, adult learners must overcome considerable adversity to avail of educational opportunities abroad. The societal and economic impact is significant (Dept. of Ed., 2016). Indeed, the scope and diversity of the increase in numbers leads to many challenges. These include practical supports (visas, accommodation, finances), the difficulties facing the integration of international students within the existing student body (social and interactive) and stimulating and engaging active learners (academic) (Farrelly & Murphy, 2017). The success or otherwise, in dealing with these challenges affects student retention and learner achievement, not only amongst the International cohort but amongst the entire student body (ICOS, 2018). It follows that the integration dynamic in HE institutions affects the lives of all learners and ultimately impacts on society as a whole. As students complete their studies and transition to the workplace, their higher education integration experiences influence workplace and professional settings. Indeed, the socio-cultural and political implications of integration in Higher Education cannot be understated, given these widespread influences.

1.2   Internationalisation

Internationalisation, in one form or another, has existed for millennia, from Ancient Egypt to Ancient Greece & Rome. One of the world's first universities was founded some 2,800 years ago in Taxila, India, circa 800 BC (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia, 2013). With more than 10,000 students enrolled, people travelled from all over the world to be part of the learning community, from Greece, Syria, Babylon and China. Courses of study included languages, the arts, finance, medicine and engineering. Thus, even at that time, the facilitation and integration of International students within higher education was relevant and today's efforts to support the integration of these students is a continuum of what lay before.

This present study is concerned with the modern construct of Internationalisation - involving specific, strategic approaches adopted by governments and educational institutions to facilitate international students. Indeed there is currently a vast body of literature pertaining to the topic of Internationalisation in the modern sense.

1.3 Internationalisation in Ireland

The economic and social relevance of supporting and developing Internationalisation in Ireland is widely recognised by the Irish Government. In monetary terms, Minister for Education (Richard Bruton, 2017), estimated the annual value of the education sector to the Irish economy at 1.6bn Euro, growing to 2.1bn Euro by 2020. In social terms, the Minister recognised Internationalisation as being an integral part of building relationships with other countries and fostering leadership and entrepreneurship to benefit all of society.

Ireland's decision to join the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 provided the initial impetus for government policy formulation in relation to the Internationalisation of tertiary education. European citizens had the right to free movement within the EEC trading bloc (Treaty of Rome 1957 & Maastricht Treaty 1992). Ireland was one of the original 11 member states of the Erasmus exchange programme when it launched in 1987. Initially catering for Higher education students, the programme now facilitates student exchanges across tertiary / adult education. The Bologna Declaration of 1999 was an agreement among 29 countries to "commit to enhance the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area". This agreement was significant because it aligned Ireland within a common Higher Educational framework with an associated commitment to support and encourage Internationalisation. The most significant driver of all, however, in terms of Ireland and Internationalisation policy and the subsequent growth in International student numbers, was the introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in 2003. "Ireland has collaborated with other countries to ensure that qualifications frameworks are connected internationally" (Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), 2018). The standardisation of qualifications and the alignment with their European and International peers has allowed Irish HE students and international students alike, to compare and contrast educational opportunities across borders. Other contributing factors to the increase in numbers of International students

include economic cycles, funding levels (or lack thereof) of HE education and geo-political events.

1.4   Conclusion – Background and Introduction

Research shows (Clarke, 2017; Farrelly & Murphy 2017) that although the numbers have increased, the extent to which international students have integrated in HE institutions is still greatly deficient. The most comprehensive study to date on Internationalisation in Irish Higher Education was conducted by Clarke et al in 2017. One of the main findings, that "students were of the view that a divide existed between international students and Irish students", highlights the challenges faced today by policy makers and institutions. Clarke's seminal study also exposes significant gaps in the body of knowledge in relation to Internationalisation in Irish HE institutions.

The aim of this research study is to explore the approaches and practices used for supporting and enhancing the integration of International students in a HE institution. The exploration leads to an action research approach that considers the perspectives of International office staff, academic staff and International students alike. The study proposes to contribute to the body of knowledge in this space and to impact constructively on the advancement of International student integration in Irish HE.

CHAPTER 2

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction – Literature Review

In this literature review, the researcher explores the concept of Internationalisation in Higher Education, tracing its origins from the existing body of literature. The intent is to contextualise the concept in terms of the HE environment in Ireland, by reviewing and analysing relevant research studies, government policy, institution-specific strategies and education theory related to cultural integration. The following pertinent terms are defined and investigated; assimilation, transitioning, acculturation, acclimatisation and integration. By critically analysing relevant literature in the field, the researcher seeks to determine a rationale for the exploratory study proposed.

2.2 Internationalisation – The Concept

There are numerous definitions of the term *Internationalisation,* some more succinct than others. For the purpose of this Literature Review, the researcher concurs with a version proposed by Knight (2008); "Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels." Knight's definition clearly emphasises the link between government policy and institution-specific strategy. This link is also apparent in the findings of other researchers cited in this Literature Review (De Wit (1995), Qiang (2003), Helms (2015), Teichler (2004)).

As discussed in chapter 1 (Background & Introduction), Internationalisation has existed for millennia. In a modern social science context, researchers have been defining and expanding the concept of Internationalisation for decades. De Wit (2002) conducted an historical analysis tracing the 20th century origins of the concept to the US and Europe in the 1940's and subsequently post WWII peace building. Efforts to internationalise, albeit predominantly politically motivated, continued through the half-century of the Cold War from 1945. According to De Wit, institution-specific processes and strategies did not emerge until the

1980's. This timeline also fits with the emergence of globalisation after the Cold War (Qiang, 2003). De Wit (1995), in one of the earliest in-depth publications on Internationalisation, reported on particular Internationalisation strategies adopted in the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe. The work of Knight, De Wit, and Qiang provides historical background and context to the concept of Internationalisation. These studies posit perspectives on the *how*, *when* and *why* of Internationalisation and allow us to trace the development of the concept over decades. This effectively places Internationalisation within the context of its time and place in history.

A more recent publication entitled *Trends, Issues and Challenges in Internationalisation of Higher Education* (De Wit, 2011)*,* highlighted a number of challenges and obstacles that emerged during a period of global austerity following the global financial crises. There existed "a more stringent approach towards immigration" (ibid p. 8), in the US and EU in particular. This was undoubtedly a repercussion of the financial crises of 2008 and coincided with the growth of nationalist, right-wing politics during that period (Funke et al, 2014). A further development noted by De Wit was the growing inclination for teaching and learning to be conducted through the medium of English, "increasingly, education offered in the English language is regarded as the equivalent of Internationalisation" (De Wit, 2011, p. 11). It is clear, as highlighted previously, that motivations and practices for Internationalisation are dependent on the variables of time and place. So too are the challenges and obstacles associated with Internationalisation. This is an important take-away from the literature and a consideration this researcher is cognisant of throughout.

Clarke (2017), citing Teichler (2004), accentuates this point when referring to the different strategy approaches adopted depending on the underlying catalyst, "changing political, economic, socio-cultural and academic needs have ensured that internationalisation is promoted in a variety of ways in different countries" (Clarke, 2017, p13). Strategic priorities vary from country to country and include focusing on student recruitment, curriculum and pedagogy, English-language delivery or instilling the values of global citizenry. This point is highlighted once again in a study by the American Council on Education (Helms et al, 2015) which aimed to "better understand public policies and programs for internationalization of higher education in a comparative context". Helms et al. shed further light on the various national perspectives of Internationalisation. This study examines the links between different

stakeholders; governments, HE authorities and individual institutions, and evaluates the effectiveness of policies implemented to support Internationalisation. Given the vast scope of the study objectives, the report provides valuable insights regarding the different strategies adopted in various countries. Helms (2015) reinforces the need for policy makers and higher education institutions to learn from one another in terms of effective policy formation and subsequent implementation, by sharing information and experience of best-practice approaches. Enormous resources are poured into Internationalisation efforts across the globe and policymakers have the ability to learn from one another. "We are not alone" and *learn from others*, are the concluding mantra and valuable takeaways.

The vast majority of the literature on the topic of Internationalisation is constructive and positive in tone. The benefits, advantages and opportunities are clear. Conversely, a common thread throughout the literature points to the obstacles and challenges faced by government and institution-specific policy-makers in terms of globalisation and the commoditisation of education. However, few researchers characterise the negatives and disadvantages as concisely as Teichler (2014, p.6), "such as destroying cultural heritage, diminishing language diversity, reducing variety of academic cultures and structures, quality decline or even supporting imperialist take-overs". This is an important caveat. The extent of the potential negatives and disadvantages of Internationalisation are set-forth. This particular piece of research is a refreshing departure from the majority of literature in this space; by focusing on the two sides of the debate, the author highlights the negatives and provides an alternate perspective on Internationalisation.

A research study by Ozturgut et al (2014) is also worth noting. Entitled "Effective strategies in Internationalisation of Higher Education in the United States", this qualitative study seeks to identify specific strategies utilised by HE institutions in order to support and facilitate Internationalisation. The authors cite the 'the Activity Approach' (Zha, 2003) which incorporates the development of knowledge, instilling a specific ethos conducive to intercultural relations and specific strategies of learning and teaching that support integration. The findings show the main strategies utilised by HE Institutions to support Internationalisation include training and education for international students on culture and diversity and international dimensions of institutional strategy including curriculum design, assessment strategy, and faculty support.

This Literature Review enables us to trace the concept of Internationalisation in the modern sense, through the late 20th century to the contemporary HE environment of 2019. The research papers highlight the importance of contextualisation of Internationalisation – time and place, and the varying motivations and practices employed based on these variables. Importantly the contrarian perspective becomes apparent, the downside to Internationalisation.   In the following section the researcher aims to further contextualise the concept within setting of Irish HE institutions specifically.

2.3   Internationalisation in an Irish context

Successive Irish governments have prioritised policy and strategy to support and develop the Internationalisation of third level education. However, despite a purposeful and deliberate strategy, there is a deficiency of academic research studies in the space, to effectively guide and evaluate policy. "The Internationalisation of Irish Higher Education in Ireland" (Clarke et al, 2017), is one of the first studies to be conducted in the area of Internationalisation in Ireland and was commissioned by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The aim was to; "determine the extent to which Irish education institutions have become Internationalised" and to explore "the mechanisms in place for the promotion, development and provision in relation to internationalisation at both sectoral and national levels" (ibid. p 13). Clarke et al. (2017) adopted a mixed methodology for the study including a quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews.

The results revealed rich data in relation to inclusion practices and integration approaches used by Irish HE institutions by focusing on "institutional strategies, curriculum, teaching and learning and the provision of supports for international students at institutional level" (p 6.). There were a number of different findings / conclusions (p. 83). Clarke found that some institutions advocate a "symbolic approach" to Internationalisation, where strategy and policy are not implemented and can be dismissed as mere rhetoric. The majority of institutions, however, acknowledged the importance of teaching and learning practices to encourage intercultural cooperation between students of different backgrounds. Some International students highlighted challenges in terms of social activity and found there to be a divide between them and domestic students. Some also found academic supports to be lacking. Findings in relation to curriculum and assessment were somewhat divergent. Almost

all institutions recognised the internationalisation of curriculum to be an important consideration and they encouraged staff to adopt "culturally sensitive" tasks. Surprisingly, however, some faculty members were unfamiliar with the concept and had not attempted to implement any such changes.

This extensive, far-reaching study provides important insights into the landscape of Internationalisation in Ireland. The mixed methodology adopted contributes to the reliability and dependability of the study. The quantitative survey provides valuable data, combined with in-depth insights gained from the semi-structured interviews. The summary of the main findings and the conclusions drawn from this study, as outlined above, clearly indicate deficiencies in the integration strategies of HE institutions. The findings also reveal a research gap in relation to the body of knowledge in this space in an Irish HE context.

A study entitled "International Student Forums 2018 report" was conducted by The Irish Council for International Students (ICOS). The aim of the report was to provide International students in Ireland with an opportunity "to have their voices heard….about the issues most affecting them". The methodological design utilised small group discussion forums as the primary method of data collection. The discussions were divided into two separate segments; the first focused on academic life and the second focused on social integration. 54 International students participated representing 10 different HE institutions in Ireland. One of the key findings was that only a small majority of participants were knowledgeable about the support services available in their respective institutions. This means one of two things; either colleges are not communicating / promoting the existence of these services or International students are not sufficiently engaged to avail of the services. Anecdotal evidence shows that mandatory orientation classes / workshops help to instil a sense of resourcefulness in new students and they are thus more likely to be aware of available support service. Another finding of the ICOS (2018) report was the fact that language and accents were one of the largest obstacles to integration. This reinforces the notion that the standard of English language competency is integral to integration. Furthermore, an ability to grasp colloquialism and local dialect contributes to the integration process.

2.3.1 Irish Government Policy & HE Institution Policy

Clarke M. et al (2017) found that "Government policies around internationalisation provide the context against which institutions formulate policy". The two most recent strategy documents published in 2010 and 2016 respectively, set-out ambitious strategy goals.

1. Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-2015. (Department of Education and Skills (2010)).
2. Irish Educated, Globally Connected, an International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020. (Department of Education and Skills (2016)).

The objective of the first policy document was to focus primarily on increasing the numbers of International students enrolling in Irish HEIs; in particular from China, India, Brazil, U.S.A. and Saudi Arabia (HEA, 2016). The objectives of the most recent policy document are somewhat more dynamic, aiming to "connect the benefits of internationalisation with enterprises in support of national economic ambitions" (Clarke, 2017). The student experience is central to the objectives and strategic priorities, "the Strategy places a high-quality learner experience, academic quality…. and a distinctive Irish offer at the centre of our delivery of international education". (Irish Educated; Globally Connected 2016-2020). The policy/strategy documents cited above are central to Irelands success, or otherwise, as a destination for International students. The fact that that Government strategy is updated and reformulated every five years, points to the importance of contextualisation; time and place. As society evolves, as the political climate changes and as the economic cycles ebb and flow, so also do the motivations, challenges and practices of Internationalisation.

2.4 Integration of International Students

Integration is undoubtedly a complex and multi-faceted construct. Related terms include assimilation, acculturation and transition. These terms, albeit with various connotations, imply a harmonious cohesion of different groups working together in a mutual setting. In this section, the researcher reviews and analyses the pertinent literature in relation to these keywords in the context of international students. Firstly, the researcher looks at the dictionary definitions before exploring deeper perspectives and underlying theory. The

researcher sets out to critically analyse this body of knowledge in an effort to better understand the phenomenon.

2.4.1 Acculturation

The dictionary definitions of these related terms can be somewhat misleading because in fact, there are many nuanced distinctions between them. Therefore, their interchangeability, as is often the case in academic literature, is somewhat dubious. *Acculturation* is often defined as an assimilation process to an alternative, dominant culture or indeed the process where cultural traits of a particular group are adopted. However, an analysis of the underlying theory allows us to gain a more in-depth understanding of the construct and its related components. Berry (1980), proposed the "Theory of Acculturation", as having four distinct strategies. These include, *assimilation* where the dominant culture essentially prevails and the individual rejects their own culture, *separation*, where the host culture is rejected, *integration* where one can embrace the host culture while also maintaining the original cultural identity and finally, *marginalisation*, where the person rejects both their own culture and the host culture. The distinction between the terms is a key takeaway from Berry's research and encourages a more precise approach when considering the construct of acculturation. For the purpose of the literature review, this researcher accepts Berry's (1980) definition of *integration* as a scenario through which people adopt the dominant host culture and at the same time maintain their own cultural identity.

Another theorist, Schumann (1987) proposed the "Acculturation Model" in the context of second language acquisition. This theory considers social distance; the size and congruence of the social groups in addition to psychological distance; the motivation and attitude of individuals. These, according to Schumann are the determining factors in successful acculturation, albeit in the context of second language acquisition. Many International students come to Ireland with limited English language skills and this impacts on their ability to acculturate. An understanding of the theories cited above allow us to gain a deeper appreciation of particular students' situations.

2.4.2 Assimilation

The dictionary definition of *assimilation* – "the process of adapting or adjusting to the culture of a group or nation, or the state of being so adapted" corresponds with the description of assimilation in Berry's "Theory of Acculturation". The term assumes a superior / inferior dynamic where one culture dominates and thus absorbs the subordinate culture. Much of the research on assimilation in education adopts this (dominant/subordinate) perspective (Hechanova-Alampay (2002), Zhang & Goodson (2011)). Piaget (1936) considers assimilation as an element of his cognitive development theory. Piaget essentially disagreed with the suggestion that intellectual ability was innate and believed that interaction with one's environment was the key factor. For Piaget, assimilation is part of the process involved in adapting to a given environment. Another theoretical perspective proposed by Gordon (1964) proposed 7 stages of assimilation in the context of American society in the 20th century. These stages include; "cultural, structural, marital, identity, prejudice, discrimination and civic". Although Gordon's theory relates to immigration in the US and the journey of new immigrants over time, there are relevant parallels with International students in a HE environment. Gordon found that the first stage of cultural assimilation can occur independently of the other stages.

Interestingly, recent research has found that successful assimilation in an educational environment requires reciprocal efforts from the dominant / host culture and the visiting/subordinate culture, rather than one absorbing the other. Thomas et al. (2018) explores assimilation in an environment of mutual engagement, rather than the "assimilation of international students to the dominant host culture". Although contrary to the definition cited above, this perspective speaks to a more mutually dependent view of integration in education. This approach considers assimilation to be a multi-faceted process that involves international students, domestic/host students and institutions, working in tandem. In actuality, the reality is likely to be somewhere on the spectrum between the dominant/subordinate and the mutually engaging. There will invariably be a dominant culture in any given educational context and successful assimilation requires some degree of reciprocal effort. A study conducted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), in 2015, entitled "The Integration Challenge: Connecting International Students with their Canadian peers", identified a number of barriers to developing friendships (p. 4). These

include; internal barriers, a person's cultural traits that inhibit the development of new friendships and institutional barriers, such as the on-campus environment or extra-curricular activities provided by the institution. It stands to reason that the dynamics of assimilation change markedly when the International cohort outnumbers the host learner cohort. Many higher education institutions therefore control the number of international students entering particular courses.

2.4.3   Transition

Unlike other related terms, there is a degree of consensus around the term *Transition.* In a research paper, entitled "International Students in Transition", Zhang (2016) cites a theory proposed by Goodman et al (2006). Goodman's theory defined *transition* as "any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles". In a scenario where there is transition, there are often challenges with regard to acculturation, assimilation and integration.

A seminal study in the context of transitioning International students in Ireland is that of Farrelly & Murphy (2017), "Transitions of International Students into Higher Education". It is a briefing paper commissioned by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFTL) in Ireland, in conjunction with UCC and Institutes of Technology in the southwest regions. This is one of a number of studies that emerged as part of the "Live and Learn in Ireland" project, an initiative of the NFTL, to support International students in Ireland. A mixed methodology was used for the study which included a focus group and a quantitative survey. The primary aim of Farrelly & Murphy's study "was to inform the development of online material" for the purpose of supporting transitioning International students in Irish HE institutions. Other key insights (Farrelly & Murphy, 2017, p4) include the finding that staff (International officers, administration and/or teaching staff) are the primary source of information for International students. It concluded that International students coming to Ireland were not acquainted with cultural and social norms and would benefit from foreknowledge. The study also found that International students have limited understanding of the academic rules and regulations that exist in Irish HE institutions, and thus struggle to adjust, particularly in relation to assessment methods. This comprehensive briefing paper reveals insightful information in relation to the experiences of International students in

Ireland. The methodology could be used to carry-out similar studies in other HE regions / institutions due to the transferability of the methods adopted; quantitative survey and focus group. Indeed, this approach could be used to build a longitudinal study of International students across Ireland with a view to analysing changes over time. The emerging findings from a longitudinal study would be useful in the formulation of institution-specific and national policy in relation to Internationalisation. Of particular note is the framework used in the study to examine the experiences of students. Three separate categories are identified; practical, social and academic, and student experiences are evaluated based on these three distinct groupings. This researcher views this approach as a logical framework to use when gathering and subsequently analysing data on Internationalisation.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The notion of learners combining in a collaborative setting is one supported by Wenger & Lave (1991), with their work on "Communities of Practice". This concept is characterised as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". The theory is based on three interlinking characteristics; "the domain", a shared competence among those involved, "the community", where information sharing and relationship building are central tenets and "the practice" which entails a "shared repertoire of resources" and experiences. It stands to reason that the development of a strong community of practice supports the integration of all students within the community. Furthermore, the group, acting as a collective, helps to stimulate the engagement of those within, leading to the achievement of higher standards of practice. Wenger's theory fits with an ideal integrated environment and is accepted by this researcher as a guiding philosophy in efforts to support and enhance the integration of International students in HE. Furthermore, this theory assists in providing a sound foundation for the conduct of an exploratory study into the practical, social and academic elements of the integration of International students.

A research paper entitled, "Cultural Intelligence: Its Measurement and Effects on Cultural Judgement and Decision Making, Cultural Adaption and Task Performance" (Ang, 2007) is also worth noting from a theoretical framework perspective. It is a positivist study that uses quantitative research and statistical analysis. The purpose of this research paper is to develop

and test a model that measures Cultural Intelligence (CQ). The authors clearly outline the study plan in the introductory paragraph, "empirically, we examine psychometric properties of the CQS (Cultural Intelligence Scale)".... "Test our hypothesis using multiple settings tasks and measures to triangulate results" (Ang, 2007, p. 336). If we consider the 5 credibility indicators of positivist research as described by O'Leary (2017, p. 67); objectivity, validity, reliability, generalizability and reproductability, this article holds up well on many fronts. The method used "to develop the CQS scale was to review intercultural competencies literature and supplement this with interviews from eight executives with extensive global work experience" (Ang, 2007, p.343). The conclusion (Ang, 2007, p. 365) claims "results... provide strong empirical support for the reliability, stability and validity of the CQS". This an empirical study of a multi-dimensional concept (i.e. CQ – Cultural Intelligence), where subjectivity is integral and the study successfully contributes to the body of work on cultural intelligence and why certain people "are more effective than others in today's global and 'no-so-flat' world" (Ang, 2007, p. 365).

2.6   Conclusion – Literature Review

An analysis of the literature in this space identifies a consensus among researchers in terms of the opportunities and challenges of Internationalisation (De Wit (1995), Knight (2008), Qiang (2003), Teichler (2004)), but there is little consensus in terms of ideal approaches and practices. Two studies in particular emerge as seminal research pieces in the context of HE in Ireland. The findings of Clarke at al. (2017) and Farrelly & Murphy (2017), as referred to earlier, highlight the gap in the body of knowledge in relation to the integration of international students in Irish HE institutions. A critical analysis of these finding identifies deficiencies in the integration process of International students. Clarke (2017) found "students were of the view that a divide existed between international students and Irish students". The findings from the literature review thus support the rationale for this study. The aim of the researcher is to constructively contribute to the integration process. In the following chapters, the researcher considers the pertinent research question(s) and methodological frameworks within which the aims and objectives of the study can be achieved. Furthermore, Community of Practice (CoP) is identified as an important learning theory conducive to the objectives of the study and acts to underpin further exploration.

CHAPTER 3

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Paradigms Explored

Cultural dynamics can be viewed from the perspective of various research paradigms depending on the viewpoint of the researcher and the question under consideration. Each paradigm includes the components of ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Ontology is the study of *being*, the philosophy of what is real. Once a researcher's ontological position has been established, this informs the other components of the process. Epistemology equates to the rules of knowing, the way in which a person constructs knowledge. Methodology is the "macro-level framework ... that provide both the strategies and grounding for the conduct of a study" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 11). i.e the overall strategy for the research. Finally, methods are the specific techniques and tools used for the collection and analysis of the data. In order to investigate further, let us consider two contrasting paradigms; Positivism and Interpretivism (Post-positivism).

3.1.1 Positivism

The ontological position of positivism is that of realism. This is the view that the world exists independently of our perception. Succinctly illustrated by Crotty (1998, p. 8) as cited by Scott (2012, p. 10): "A tree in the forest is a tree, regardless of whether anyone is aware of its existence or not. As an object of that kind, it carries the intrinsic meaning of 'treeness'. "When human beings recognize it as a tree, they are simply discovering a meaning that has been lying in wait for them all along." The epistemological position is that of objectivism, independent of the mind. Positivist statements tend to be factual and absolute in their declarations. *It is, what it is*. Methodologies, in turn, tend to be scientific and empirical and there is often an endeavour to determine cause and effect, e.g. an increase in a college's participation and spend on exhibitions abroad leads to a rise in International student applications from those countries. In addition, positivist research tends to be hypothesis driven and deductive in its approach, e.g.,   X percentage increase of expenditure correlates to a Y increase in

applications. Methods used are usually quantitative, large scale surveys or experiments where statistical analysis is used to examine results.

3.1.2 Interpretivism

In contrast, the ontological position of interpretivism is relativism, where everything is relative – there are as many views as there are people in the world. Knowledge is not considered to be absolute because it is individually constructed and shaped by the context of the situation. Again, succinctly illustrated by Crotty (1998, p. 43) as cited by Scott (2012, p. 11): "We need to remind ourselves here that it is human beings who have constructed it as a tree, given it the name, and attributed to it the associations we make with trees". Scot elaborates, "a tree is not a tree without someone to call it a tree". The epistemological position dictated by relativism is subjectivism where "personal experiences are the foundation for factual knowledge" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 7). That is to say, facts do not exist without somebody to interpret them in his or her own way. The truth is therefore essentially a consensus of views. Interpretivist methodologies are concerned with investigating historical and cultural contexts; ethnography, phenomenology, hermeneutics. Research tends to be qualitative in nature where themes are explored, e.g. a thematic approach might be used to highlight distinct areas of interest. In addition, post-positivist research is often participative, collaborative and idiographic (study of the individual). Research methods include interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires.

One way to categorise research paradigms is to consider the fish bowl analogy. If we imagine our research question as existing within a fishbowl, and we are observing from the outside, this fits with an empirical/scientific approach, as we are external objectivists, measuring the activity from outside, where the truth already exists within. If we consider ourselves as being within the fishbowl, we are more likely interacting and interpreting changing truths. This then fits with a qualitative, post-positivist approach. Of course, the lines are often blurred and in some cases a combination of the two approaches, i.e. a mixed methodology, is the most suitable course of action.

3.1.3   Credibility Criteria

Certain criteria must be applied to research in order to determine credibility, irrespective of whether it is categorised as qualitative or quantitative, positivist or post-positivist, scientific or interpretive. As O'Leary (2017, p. 69) expounds, the reader must determine whether subjectivities, if any, have been acknowledged, declared and properly managed, if the truth (or truths) has been captured, is there a consistent methodological approach, are emergent results relevant and can the research be verified. In the following section, the researcher explores the methodological approach options specific to the research topic.

3.2   Methodological Approach & The Research Topic

The topic of this research study is the exploration of the practices used to support and enhance the integration of International students in HE Institutions. In this section, the researcher considers the feasibility of addressing the research topic, from a quantitative, positivist perspective and/or a qualitative, post-positivist perspective. The selection of the appropriate design depends on a number of considerations including the aims and objectives of the study and whether the adoption of a particular methodology is pragmatic in the context of available resources.   The researcher set-out to investigate the various methodological approaches and the subsequent epistemological implications of applying a given paradigm to the research topic. The limitations of particular approaches are also examined, in addition to ethical considerations. Methodological design limitations, epistemological considerations and ethical restrictions, among other factors, impact the evolution of the research question and led to the exploration of alternative methodological approaches such as evaluative research and action research. As O'Leary (2017, p.129) reiterates, the final methodological design must ultimately address the research question, be within the capacity of the researcher and must also be practical and achievable. In the instance of this study, the methodological design and the research question evolve simultaneously in an iterative process.

3.2.1   Quantitative Methodological Approach

Quantitative research relies on numerical, quantifiable data. The data is usually evaluated and analysed using statistical methods. The underlying epistemological assumptions are based on the positivist research paradigm, where knowledge is objective and there is

considered to be one truth. In the context of this research topic, a quantitative methodological design is likely to produce definitive statistical data. This type of research requires a large sample in order to support the credibility of the data in terms of reliability, generalizability and validity. The benefits of such an approach are clear; it provides for a broad study and is likely to produce objective data that could be used to identify strengths, weaknesses or gaps in the types of approaches and practices used to support the integration of International students. On the other hand, the process of adapting the research topic to a research question creates challenges in terms of the type of knowledge generated using a quantitative approach. If the researcher poses the question "what are the approaches used to support and enhance the integration of International students?", the data generated is likely to be simply a list of practices and therefore ineffective detail. Indeed, upon deeper consideration of this methodological approach, other limitations emerge. Although the design would address the research topic, there are concerns regarding the practicality of this approach. Firstly, regardless of whether the study covers one higher education institution or a number of higher education institutions, it would require the distribution of a survey to a large number of international students. It transpires that ethical approval may not be forthcoming due to the fact that students have already participated in a related survey in the academic year 2018/2019. (Irish Survey of Student Engagement - ISSE). Other limitations of quantitative methodologies include limited response rates, a lack of depth to the information generated and undependability in terms of the openness and honesty of responses. This would detract considerably from the studies effectiveness. Although there are many advantages to adopting a quantitative perspective, in the instance of this study, a lack of ethical approval amongst other limitations, ultimately rendered this approach unworkable.

3.2.2   Qualitative Methodological Approach

Qualitative research is the study of multiple views, rejecting the idea of a single truth. The ontological position is that of relativism and the underlying epistemology is underpinned by subjectivity. The researcher acknowledges there may be multiple perspectives in existence. In the context of this research topic, a qualitative research design is likely to produce knowledge of multiple truths in relation to the approaches used to support and enhance the integration of International students. Indeed, by posing the question, "what are the approaches used to support and enhance the integration of International students?", a

phenomenological exploration would elicit individual views of personal experiences and in this instance would help the researcher gain an understanding of the phenomenon of Internationalisation. The benefits of using qualitative methods such as interviews and observation include the generation of rich data and can lead to in-depth thematic analysis of results – all of which would contribute to the study's findings. Disadvantages in the context of the research topic include the fact that the sample would need to be sufficiently small and manageable, given time and resource constraints. (Estimate: 6 individual students and 2 International Office representatives). The knowledge generated would be specific to the views and experiences of a small group of people. This impacts the dependability of the findings and is therefore questionable if such findings would be considered transferable to a larger sample or a comparable setting. Furthermore, a qualitative-only approach using interviews as a method of gathering data, may evolve into an evaluative exercise of the practices used to support integration in a specific higher education institution. Such an approach may face opposition from faculty/staff and the ethics approval board. Alas, due to these limitations and constraints, a qualitative-only methodology was deemed to be an unsuitable approach for this study.

3.2.3   Mixed Methodological Approach

A mixed methodological design incorporates qualitative and quantitative paradigms, approaches and methods in the same study. In the context of this research topic, a mixed methodology design would support a top-down approach. The quantitative analysis of existing statistical data would help to contextualise the study in terms of Internationalisation in Ireland and the data generated would create a credible backdrop for the qualitative approach used to elicit more in-depth knowledge of personal experiences in terms of the integration process. The mixed method allows for the combination of large sample survey methods with small sample interview or observation methods to create a wide, rich yet in-depth data in relation to the practices used to support and enhance the integration of international students. The mixed approach was used successfully by Clarke (2017), for an exploratory study of Internationalisation in Irish HE. The findings and conclusion of which contributed to the rationale for this study. This type of methodological design also fits well with the credibility criteria described by O'Leary (2017, p.68). The reliability of the quantitative data combines with the dependability of the qualitative data. The limitations of

this approach include the capacity of the researcher, in terms of time and funding constraints and the practicality, in terms of access to personnel in HE institutions. There are, however, variations of the mixed approach that warrant further investigation. These include varying theoretical perspective, including the research-question perspective within *Applied Research* and the change-orientated approach.

3.2.4 Applied Research

Applied research is defined by O'Leary (2017, p.177) as "research that has an expressed goal of going beyond knowledge production towards situation improvement." The two branches of applied research include evaluative and action approaches. Evaluative research looks at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a given initiative. This particular design is not suitable for this research topic. Although in recent years there has been an increase in the body of literature on intercultural learning and teaching, there is limited consensus on *best practice* for International student integration. Thus, in a small-scale study it is difficult to assess objectively the effectiveness of the practices used in any given institution. Furthermore, in an evaluative research scenario, there are likely to be ethical approval barriers in addition to participant access restrictions. Action research, on the other hand, is a very different proposition. Defined as "research strategies that tackle real-world problems in participatory and collaborative ways in order to produce action and knowledge" (O'Leary, 2017, p.186). It is usually a cyclical process where the knowledge generated leads to improvements and more effective action. This approach enabled the researcher to combine action with change and explicitly address the research topic. This, in turn, led to the framing of a specific research question to correspond with the action research, change-orientated approach.

3.3 Action Research & The Research Question

Action research involves the implementation of a process that prompts immediate change. Designing an action research methodology to address the research topic involves the development of a resource to act as a catalyst in order to drive the required change, i.e. to support and enhance the integration of International students in a HE setting. It follows that the research question must directly address the vehicle of change and vice versa. Once data

is collected, this resource can then be refined and improved to enhance the process. The central research question is articulated as follows:

"What are the perceptions of International students in relation to a resource designed to support and enhance the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institution?"

In order to develop the resource in the first instance, however, the action research design calls for a preliminary research question. The purpose of the preliminary question is to elicit knowledge from experienced professionals that can be used for the curation and design of the change-orientated resource. The preliminary research question is articulated as follows:

"What are the perspectives of HE International office staff and faculty in relation to the curation and design of a workshop resource to support International student integration".

Action research allows for quantitative and/or qualitative methods for data gathering and data analysis. The overriding rationale for adopting an action research design is to bring about change. There are a number of stages involved in the cyclical process or action research. These stages include the initial plan, an action to drive change, the gathering of data, the analysis of this date and finally the amendment or improvement of the change action. [Plan – Act – Observe – Reflect – Plan].

3.4 Methodological Design

The research design plan included 2 distinct parts. The first part entailed a number of semi-structured interviews with 2 HE professionals (1 International office representative and 1 member of the teaching faculty). Upon completion of the interviews, a content analysis was conducted for the initial organization of data. Following this, a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted for a more in-depth investigation.

Part 2 of the design plan involved the curation, design and delivery of a specific workshop resource to a group of international students. The resource workshop was followed by a survey of participants and a focus group discussion to elicit further in-depth data. This method includes elements of phenomenology and idiographic analysis of human experience captured

by way of the focus group discussion. An important element of action research involves the process of reflection of generated knowledge and the potential to improve the resource by reconfiguring the design mix for further deliveries.

3.4.1 The College

The research work was carried out in an Irish Higher Education Institution based in Dublin city. The college offers business, computing, psychology and education qualifications at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

3.4.2 Research Participants

The two separate components of the research design; the semi-structured interviews and the action research element necessitated two different participant cohorts. The purpose of the interviews was to inform the curation and design of the action research element. The perspective of both the International office staff and academic staff were deemed important in this regard. A non-random / purposive sampling approach was used to select the research participants for the semi-structured interviews, based on their respective experience and expertise in the area of Internationalisation. This is akin to a hand-picked sampling approach in order to select one representative of the international office and one academic faculty member to be interviewed. The action research component required a larger number of participants and therefore required an alternative sampling approach, namely volunteer sampling. This involved requesting volunteers to participate in the action research resource by advertising the workshop using posters (see Appendix E) in the college and in the International office. This also involved on-campus volunteer recruitment by canvassing international students in the college common areas. Participants were all registered undergraduate and/or postgraduate international students and all participants were over eighteen years old.

Non-random sampling is not without its disadvantages. The researcher is cognisant of potential unwitting bias, "the tendency to act in ways that confirm what you might already suspect" and erroneous assumptions, "assumptions about a population that turn out to be false" (O'Leary p.210). However, purposive sampling is deemed to be the most suitable approach given the challenges in accessing the population for both elements of the design. In addition, the selection of participants is

done in such a way as to target representation of those with the managerial expertise (in the case of the semi-structured interviews) and those students with day-to-day experience of integration (in the case of the workshop volunteers). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the researcher is applying post-positivist credibility criteria to the population sampling approach. That is to say, the researcher is targeting authenticity, dependability and transferability as opposed to positivist measures such as validity, reliability and generalizability (O'Leary p. 67-68).

The interpretation and analysis of the themes that emerge from the interviews inform the development of the action resource. The combination of international staff and faculty interviews in addition to student workshop participation allows for enhanced exploration of existing practices and provides for insights and perspectives of all stakeholders.

3.4.3   Semi-Structured Interviews

A number of different interview types were considered by the researcher; formal and informal, structured and semi-structured, one-to-one and multiple person, in addition to a focus group style (O'Leary, p 239). It was decided that an informal, semi-structured interview style with individual participants was the most suitable approach to take. This style of interview, if managed appropriately, allows for a relaxed atmosphere in a free-flowing, communicative setting. Trust between the interviewer and interviewee is paramount and there is a limited amount of time with which to establish this trust. A relaxed atmosphere helps to establish confidence from the outset and should ultimately contribute to richer data. Nonetheless, an informal setting such as a college common area, canteen or coffee shop was deemed inappropriate due to the lack of confidentiality. The researcher therefore decided to conduct the interviews in an on-campus meeting room. Such a setting ensured privacy and was conducive to audio recording the proceedings. The semi-structured interview format allowed for the use of a defined list of foundation questions to direct proceedings from the outset.   Questions focused on the main areas for exploration. Importantly, the semi-structured interview allowed for deviation and for the exploration of tangential themes that can often lead to valuable findings. The one-to-one format was deemed to be the most suitable as the researcher endeavored to capture the views of the International Office representative and the academic faculty member alike.

3.4.3.1   Procedure, Materials & Duration

The interviews were conducted in an on-campus meeting room. The researcher used a laptop and electronic data storage device to record the interview audio, with the permission of the interviewee and subsequent to the signing of the consent form. Five questions were prepared in advance and were put to each interviewee (See Appendix D). Following the initial questions, there was sufficient scope for the discussion to develop organically. The researcher also took notes to help guide the interview and to highlight important comments throughout. Each interview lasted approx. 45minutes long. Interviews were subsequently transcribed for thematic analysis.

3.4.3.2   Thematic Analysis

O'Leary (2017, p384) defines Thematic Analysis (TA) as "searching through data to inductively identify interconnections and patterns". The researcher analysed the data in an effort to construct relevant themes. Maintaining an inductive approach was integral to the process of identifying patterns objectively. The researcher allowed the themes to emerge from the elicited data, rather than subjectively applying categories. In this regard, the researcher endeavored to allow the pertinent themes to materialise organically. The six-phase approach proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis was adopted; data familiarization, data coding, theme search, review of themes, define themes and finally report.

3.4.4   Workshop Resource

The overall workshop structure was framed by the categories used by Farrelly and Murphy (2017); social, academic and practical aspects. The knowledge gathered from the literature review and the data elicited from the semi-structured interviews inform the curation and design of the workshop. The workshop approach is underpinned by the theoretical framework outlined in section 2.5, i.e. "Communities of Practice" (Wenger and Lave, 1991). Delivery of the workshop resource is primarily instructive but also includes audio/video elements and interactive exercises. (Flanagan (2015), Vaugh (2010)). See section 4.3 & Appendix I for detail of the workshop content and structure.

The advantages of a face-to-face workshop include the support aspect of personal contact, a collaborative group environment, potential for Instant feedback from participants and the fact that the facilitator can assess the attention levels of participants and adjust delivery accordingly. Disadvantages of face-to-face workshops include the limitations on the number of participants that can participate at any one time and the difficulty in timetabling a slot to suit students studying different courses.

3.4.4.1 Procedure, Materials & Duration

The workshop resource was delivered in an on-campus classroom, with participants sitting in round table setting; 3 x 4-person tables. A classroom computer with audio / visual screen was required to present the resource, using MS powerpoint presentation to guide the format. In addition, a whiteboard was used for collaborative exercises with participants. The timeframe designated for delivery and data collection was 1 hr. 30 minutes in total. This included 60min allocated for workshop presentation/facilitation including participant exercises, followed by 15 mins allocated for the quantitative survey and a further 15 mins allocated for the discussion forum. Participants signed a consent form before commencement of the workshop.

3.4.4.2 Quantitative Survey Questionnaire

A self-administered, in-class, anonymous survey allowed the researcher to capture data from the entire sample of participants upon conclusion of the workshop. The survey acted as a representation of International student perspectives in relation to the workshop resource. The small size of the sample limited the overall generalisability but it is likely to lead to transferable data from participant insights. O'Leary (2017,p. 227) outlines the main considerations when planning a survey; who, where, what, when and how. The framework when applied to this survey equated to; International students (who), in-class (where), evaluative survey (what), post-workshop delivery (when), pen & paper (how).

Exploring existing surveys was a key part of the survey design. The researcher reviewed a number of student course evaluation questionnaires to inform the design. Relevant exemplars included surveys from Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and Webster University, USA. Using existing question banks as a guide for the questionnaire

design contributed to the validity and reliability of the approach taken. The action research cycle of iterative improvement requires the survey instrument to be evaluative by nature in order to provide critical feedback for further enhancements of the workshop. Having experience using commercial survey programs, the researcher set-out to adapt, augment and adopt a survey questionnaire from Surveymonkey, namely, the "Course Evaluation Survey". A study by Burnett et al (2009) provides guidance for developing "valid and reliable survey instruments" with the use of commercial programs such as Surveymonkey. Burnett (2009) recommends defining objectives, identifying the sample, drafting questions, piloting the questions and modifying where necessary. The researcher subscribed to these recommendations when designing the questionnaire. In addition, the researcher set-out to operationalize concepts, to turn "abstract concepts into measurable variables" (O'Leary, 2017, p231). Integration was the key concept used throughout the questionnaire. The researcher then sought peer feedback and made certain modifications and additions on foot of the feedback, in order to strengthen the reliability and dependability of the questionnaire. The final version of the survey included closed response questions; yes/no, interval response scale (Likert scale) in addition to a number of open response questions to elicit more in-depth data. (See Appendix J).

The advantages of using a questionnaire to evaluate the workshop include the uniformity of the questions posed to all participants, the anonymity of respondents, responses are received instantly and surveys enable the researcher to carry-out a statistical analysis of the results. Disadvantages of using a survey instrument to evaluate the workshop include the potential for surface responses lacking depth or insight, issues with the interpretation of the questions by International students and the risk of misleading or dishonest answers.

3.4.4.3   Focus Group / Discussion Forum

Once the workshop participants completed the survey questionnaire, they were invited to participate in a focus group / discussion forum. The purpose of the focus group was to elicit additional in-depth data that may not have emerged in the survey instrument. The researcher used three guiding questions to stimulate the discussion, and then acted as a moderator. This was not a question & answer forum. The intention was to encourage open and frank discussion in a comfortable and friendly environment and "to draw out depth of opinion that

might not arise from direct questioning" (O'Leary 2017, p.240). The discussion forum format is utilised successfully by ICOS in the International Student Forums Report 2018, as referenced in section 2.3.

Disadvantages of focus group settings include the risk that participants may be intimated by a group setting and are less likely to contribute openly and candidly leading to inferior data. To partially mitigate this risk, the decision was taken not to record proceedings, akin to approach taken by ICOS (2018). As evidenced in the ICOS studies, this allows for more open and frank exchanges among participants and such openness may not be achievable were participants to be taped. A study by the University of Kansas (2018) found "some people are less likely to speak candidly if they know that what they say is going to be recorded". Field notes were taken during the discussion. The researcher acknowledges the risk of not capturing all of the data and/or the risk of subjective interpretation by using field notes.

3.5   Ethical Considerations of Methodological Design

There are ethical considerations with regard to study participants ages and whether they belong to vulnerable groups in addition to consent of participation and right of withdrawal. Participants sign a consent form and are informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the process.   There are also ethical considerations with regard to data management and data protection. All participants are anonymized using distinct codes and data is secured using password protected device. Data is then de-identified in order to ensure that participants are not be recognisable by/ from given responses. This data management process is applied to all instruments of data collection used in the research design; interviews, surveys and focus group discussion. These steps ensure privacy and data protection law is protected and at the same time allows for the collection for rich data.

3.6   Conclusion – Methodological Design

The research topic of this study has been clear from the outset, i.e. exploring the practices used to support and enhance the integration of International students in HE Institutions. Notwithstanding the clarity of the aims and objectives of the study, the articulation of the specific research question and the appropriate methodological design to be adopted was somewhat elusive. As discussed, the quantitative approach, although favorable in many

respects, was unworkable due to ethical approval considerations among other limitations. The qualitative approach, also apt to a certain extent, was also unsuitable due to various constraints and limitations. However, the mixed method approach, although limited in its purest form, is entirely applicable in the context of an applied research perspective.

This applied research perspective, in the form of a change-orientated action research study, allowed the researcher to overcome the constraints of the qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. Indeed, a significant advantage of this approach is that it enables the researcher to harness the strengths of a mixed methodology. This change-orientated approach is fully reconcilable with the aims and objectives of the study. The research question(s) evolves simultaneously within this action research methodological design. Thus, following a critical examination of the methodological design options, the action research approach emerged as by far the most suitable and provided the opportunity for the researcher to have a real constructive impact in supporting and enhancing the integration of International students in an Irish HE institution.

CHAPTER 4

4.   Results & Analysis

4.1   Introduction – Results & Analysis

In advance of setting out the results of the study, it is advantageous to restate the specific research questions that evolved alongside the methodological design for this study.   There are two distinct research questions. The first is a preliminary question that serves to provide data for the design of a workshop resource:

"What are the perspectives of HE International office staff and faculty in relation to the curation and design of a workshop resource to support International student integration".

This is followed by the central research question:

"What are the perceptions of International students in relation to a workshop resource designed to support and enhance the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institution?"

As discussed in the previous chapter, the methodological design of the research study entails a number of initial interviews where the data collected contributes to the curation and design of an action research workshop resource that is subsequently delivered to a group of International Students.   The workshop participants are then surveyed using a bespoke questionnaire, followed by their participation in a focus group discussion. In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of the data gathering process.

4.2   The Interviews

Clearly, the perspectives of both academic staff and international office representatives are important when gathering data for the curation and design of such a workshop resource. (Student perspectives were sought at a later stage of the design process).   A purposive sampling approach was chosen, (as discussed in section 3.4.2) to select one academic staff member and one representative of the International office.

The preliminary research question (as set-out in section 3.3) reads as follows:

"What are the perspectives of HE International office staff and faculty in relation to the curation and design of a workshop resource to support International student integration".

4.2.1   The Interview Questions

A select number of questions were used as a guide and the researcher encouraged the development of discussion during the semi-structured interviews. Questions were formulated with a view to uncovering the most important themes relating to International Student integration. The researcher was particularly interested in exploring the existence of *Best Practice* and any resources that might help to inform the workshop design. Gaining insights from knowledgeable professionals would inevitably lead to a better-informed resource workshop design. In preparing the semi-structured interview questions, the researcher was guided by a resource entitled "Strategies for Qualitative Interviews" (Harvard 2018).

Interview participants were asked the following questions:

Q 1.   What is *Best Practice* for supporting the integration of International students in Irish HE?

Q 2.   In your opinion, which countries are the most successful? ..and why?

Q.3   In your opinion, which institutions are the most successful? …and why?

Q.4   In your opinion, which element of the transition to Irish HE, is the most important; Practical, Academic or Social?

Q. 5   Do you think students would benefit from attending a workshop designed specifically to enhance the integration process?

Q.6   Do you have any recommendations in relation to content and/or structure of the proposed workshop?

4.2.2   Interviews – Thematic Analysis - Results

The thematic analysis approach, proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006), was selected to analyse the data.   Interviews were transcribed and the researcher familiarised himself with the content.   The data was subsequently coded by general topic and themes were constructed. After a detailed review, the main themes were categorised as below:

- Theme 1 – The Nationality Mix
- Theme 2 – Provision of Supports
- Theme 3 – Best Practice for International Student Integration
- Theme 5 – Relevance & Recommendations for Workshop Resource

Themes are listed in random order and do not reflect an order of importance.   Theme categorisation is supported by the codes attributed to the data collected from the interviews. Interviewee contributions were anonymised and were assigned codes P1 (International Office Representative) and P2 (Academic Staff member) respectively.

4.2.3   Theme 1 – The Nationality Mix

Information relating to perspectives on the Nationality Mix of a given cohort emerged when interviewees were asked about their views on the existence of 'Best Practice'.   P1 described being cognisant of nationality breakdown in any given course / class, and noted how best practice dictates that there should not be a large group of one nationality dominating any one class:

> *…from a best practice point of view, it would be ideal to have a better mix of students, that you shouldn't have a large group of one nationality, dominating a classroom.* (P1)

P2 concurred, adding that the breakdown/mix of students impacts the level of Internationalisation that exists:

> *It's not truly international if the vast majority of students in a particular cohort, or on a particular program, are all from the one country…*

Indeed, P2 expressed the view that the presence of International students has a positive impact on domestic students who may not have prior experience of interacting with other cultures:

..for Ireland, I think it's actually better to have a mixture of nationalities along with home students to internationalize the Irish mindset as well.

Both interviewees expressed the need to limit the number of International students on a given program in cases where one nationality is likely to dominate the overall numbers. This is a factor when there is a considerable change in dynamic with the intake of a new group of students at the beginning of a course or during the lifetime of a course cycle:

…. you have large groups of students, joining in a final year. So they're joining an already established class. (P1)

..you certainly wouldn't want the number of students that were together for the first and second year of the program, irrespective of the background, to be suddenly dwarfed in final year by an incoming group of students. (P2)

A follow-on consideration is the collaboration of students from different nationalities once a course program is underway. P2 notes how academic staff can influence this dynamic by selecting diverse teams for group assignments:

Our academic staff are very good at integrating them across where they have group work, to make sure that we don't end up with four internationals from the one country, even if it's a very big country, working in a group on their own.

4.2.4   Theme 2 – The Provision of Supports

Unsurprisingly, the provision of supports for international students emerged as a key theme for supporting integration. Although the two interviewees come from different perspectives (International office and academic staff respectively), there was a consensus view with respect to the necessary supports required to aid the integration of international students.

According to the interviewees, the International office plays a central role. P1 states that up until recently

… the focus has always been on the recruitment of students…. the next stage of the supports for the international office is, looking at how we can expand that welcome over the entire year. To include the practical, the academic and the social side of things.

Compulsory induction programs are required for all courses in order to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. College Clubs & Societies also play an important role. According to P2, societies that were established for distinct specialisms (Business, Law, Science etc.) support the integration of students in different years across the same specialism:

..what we're trying to do there is to get not just home and international students to integrate, but to get the years of those courses to integrate as well. (P2)

The International office works with academic staff to provide supports such as peer mentorship programmes:

…our peer mentors, they're all international students that work here. (P1)

In addition to academic staff mentoring individual students:

All questions are fair game. You can ask anything, and it's not going to go any further. And that is a fantastic resource for them to have. (P2)

Academic orientation workshops (curriculum, assessment, rules & regulations) to make students aware of the learning and teaching requirements:

We need to be very clear about the expectations that we have. We shouldn't assume that people understand. (P2)

Intercultural training and education of staff and domestic students also emerged as an important factor in student integration. There was a slight divergence in views as to whether this type of training should be compulsory. P2 was of the view that compulsory training can impact negatively on attitudes but also found that a compulsory workshop on intercultural communication held for staff resulted in additional faculty peer support and collaboration

among   staff.
Another useful discovery was the emergence of a bespoke longitudinal workshop designed
by P2 and delivered to international students at the beginning and end of the academic year.
The object was to record the aims and objectives of students at the start of the year and then
reflect on how those aims and objectives may have evolved by the end of the academic year.

Language skills were also raised as a key factor in the successful integration of International
Students. HE Institutions administer minimum standard requirements but must also be
sufficiently adaptable to provide additional supports if needed. P2 noted a situation where a
particular intake of students lacked the English language fluency:

> *…we put in place a huge amount of additional support for them. So we had spoken*
> *English classes, written English classes.*

4.2.5   Theme 3 – Best Practice

Enquiring about the existence of '*Best Practice'* resulted in the discovery of some valuable
resources and useful case studies in the area of intercultural communication and student
integration. P1 highlighted a study conducted by the Irish Council for International Students
(ICOS), 'Diverse Voices; Listening to International Students' released in 2015. This publication
collates and explores experiences of international students in addition to academic and
resource staff.

The UK Council for International Affairs (UKCISA) was also noted as a source of useful training
material in the field of international student integration and intercultural relations.

> *they would have very established international offices, and they've been welcoming,*
> *particularly in the UK international students for such a long time* (P1)

Sheffield Hallam University was listed by P1 as an exemplar institution with regard to
International student integration. Other examples of institutions with progressive integration
policies and programs included:

...University of Warwick, of Westminster, North Hampton, you know, Scotland, all of the UK big universities, they're just exceptionally good. University of Sydney then and University of Auckland. (P1)

P2 noted how faculty and staff in some institutions travel abroad to provide orientation and initiation classes before students arrive in their home country.

..we actually start the integration piece long before the students ever get here. So we have faculty from here that go out there to teach. (P2)

Intercultural communications training for home students and academic staff emerges as an important factor and is promoted as Best Practice by the representative bodies (ICOS and UKCISA).

4.2.6   Theme 4 – Relevance of & Recommendations for a Workshop Resource

Both interview participants were asked their views on whether a bespoke resource workshop would contribute to the integration process for international students and moreover, what form that resource workshop might take.

P1 felt there was considerable scope for a resource to support integration:

I think there's an opportunity to do something before they arrive, when they arrive, and during their time here... interactive. It could be an online resource. (P1)

P2 also felt that a resource should be interactive:

I think it might be very helpful to have some kind of an interactive instrument that they could use. (P2)

Intercultural awareness was noted by P1 as being integral to the transition to new surroundings:

That they take the time to consider how, where they're coming from, their culture, is going to impact on their experience. (P1)

There was a suggestion that a longitudinal approach may be of value:

The first thing is to make sure that there has to be some way of trying to get a handle on the perceptions and thoughts of the students as soon as they come here, and to track that in some way. (P2)

P2 highlighted the importance of empathy and trying to 'dial-in' to the students' emotional wellbeing:

it is about trying to find out what makes people feel uncomfortable or unhappy or stressed, and seeing if you can deal with that. And signpost them if they do have a problem. (P2)

According to P2, data management and analysis of student perspective would be very useful for HE institutions:

if you could come up with a data collection instrument that could be used because institutions all have different levels of support. (P2)

P2 viewed the social element of integration as paramount and suggested there should be particular emphasis on this aspect:

when they come here first, the social is the most important. ….if they're lonely, if they're homesick, if they don't feel integrated, if they don't feel that they know that they belong here, then there isn't the opportunity really to do anything with anything else. (P2)

P2 felt that adaptability would need to be a key attribute of any resource:

you'd need different things for different groups, depending on their performance levels, the number of students that are coming in from outside, different countries. (P2).

4.3 Workshop Resource – Structure and Lay-out

The central research question for this study is articulated as follows: *"What are the perceptions of International students in relation to a resource designed to*

support and enhance the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institution?"

Further to the findings of the semi-structured interviews and the views expressed by P1 & P2, the workshop was structured as follows:

The social aspect of integration was given precedence over the academic and practical elements in the workshop design. The ratio of time allocation was set at 30m:15m:15m (social/academic/practical). See Appendix I.

The section on social integration included the following elements:

- A word from the workshop facilitator on the subject of National cultures based on Geert Hofstedes cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 1980). This theory identified distinguishing dimensions of National cultures based on; Individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity. The facilitator then provided students with an exercise sheet (sourced from ICOS, 2015) and the group worked through the task collaboratively.

- The next element of the workshop dealt with intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communication, where the facilitator used an exercise to illustrate these concepts (ICOS, 2015, p. 68). For this, the facilitator drew on extreme examples of greeting people in different countries. This was followed by a mind-map exercise on the subject of stereotyping, carried out collaboratively using the white-board: Ireland & the Irish – Stereotypes.

- The next element pertained to an explanatory guide on Irish Geography, History & Culture: *Did you know?* This part is supplemented by a digital object unit from the "Live and Learn in Ireland" project that emerged from the research of Farelley and Murphy (2015).

- There is a specific piece on languages explaining the social history of the Irish language, a brief piece on colloquialisms. The facilitator provided suggestion and recommendations for dealing with common challenges of International students in this regards.

- A piece on homesickness is centered on the use of a 2-minute video clip (ICOS,2015), containing student and International office staff perspectives on the home-sickness phenomenon. This piece helped to bring awareness and empathy among the workshop participants.

The 2nd section of the workshop dealt with the academic aspect of student integration:

- The facilitator explained the landscape of HE in Ireland; different state-sponsored colleges, Universities, private colleges; the structure of the QQI system of accreditation.
- The facilitator outlined the various types of academic cultures that exist in addition to student / teacher relationship dynamics.
- Group work is highlighted as a useful method to support integration of students. Some colleges assign groups, others allow students to self-select.
- The facilitator provided a general overview of assessment approaches in Irish HE institutions.
- This section is supplemented by use of additional "Live and Learn" digital objects.

The 3rd and final section of the workshop pertains to the practical aspect of student integration.

- The facilitator provided an overview of the pertinent practical considerations faced by International Students moving to Ireland for the first time. This is done using a mind-map method and encouraged all participants to contribute. The main elements included:
  - Housing,
  - Visas & Immigration,
  - Banking & Finance,
  - Healthcare,
  - Shopping,
  - Dress,
  - Transport and Employment.

Upon completion of the 3rd section of the workshop – students are requested to fill-in the survey questionnaire before participating in the focus group / discussion forum.

4.4 Workshop Resource - Survey Questionnaire

Workshop participants were asked to fill-in an evaluative survey questionnaire (see appendix J) immediately following delivery of the workshop. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions in total; 12 questions in Likert format, 5 in binary format (yes/no) and 3 open-ended questions. 15 minutes were allocated to complete the survey.

Over 80% of the respondents rated the overall course very good or excellent. Although the majority found the time of the course (2pm-3.30pm) to be convenient, three respondents suggested alternative time slots; 10am, 4pm-5pm and 12pm to 5pm. 75% found the course material to be either very useful or extremely useful. Most (11/12 respondents) found the clarity to be 'very clear' or better and the speed of delivery to be suitable. The exercises used during the workshop were considered to be very helpful or extremely helpful by over 80% of respondents. When asked their views on the most relevant aspects of the course for International students in general i.e. Social, Academic, Practical or all of the above, respondents were divided; 16% identified social aspects as being the most important, 16% identified the practical aspects and 66% felt that 'all of the above' were relevant. When asked what aspects that were most important to them personally, respondents were equally divided; 25% noting the social aspect, 25% noting the practical element and 40% selecting 'all of the above' and a small percentage (<1%) choosing the academic aspect.

The vast majority (11/12) did not find the course material to be repetitive. When asked if the information contained in the workshop was already provided during the college orientation programme or seminars hosted by the International office, 50% of respondents said no, however 40% felt there was some crossover. All respondents were satisfied (somewhat suitable or better) with the balance of presenter time and the use of video material during the workshop. 65% were of the view that this workshop could be extended / modified to a 1-day course in the form of 3 x 2hr sessions. The majority were satisfied that the instructor was sufficiently knowledgeable in the field of Internationalisation / Inter-cultural studies.

Respondents felt overall that the workshop would support student integration. Respondents were divided (50/50) when they were asked their view on whether they felt the workshop could be adaptable to other colleges and / or workplace settings.

Question 17 and question 18 were open-ended questions with 10 out of the 12 respondents contributing comments:

'What are the most important takeaways for you from the course?'

- Culture shock and homesickness – awareness / psychology of
- Understanding Irish cultural dimension and impacts
- History of Irish language. Geography and dialects.
- Practical aspects of integration
- Academic aspects of Irish HE

'What improvements would you make to the class?'

- More collaboration
- Video clips could be better quality / standard
- More interaction / Invite participants to share deeper perspectives
- Apply additional structures to the course structure
- Use ice-breaker techniques at beginning of workshop
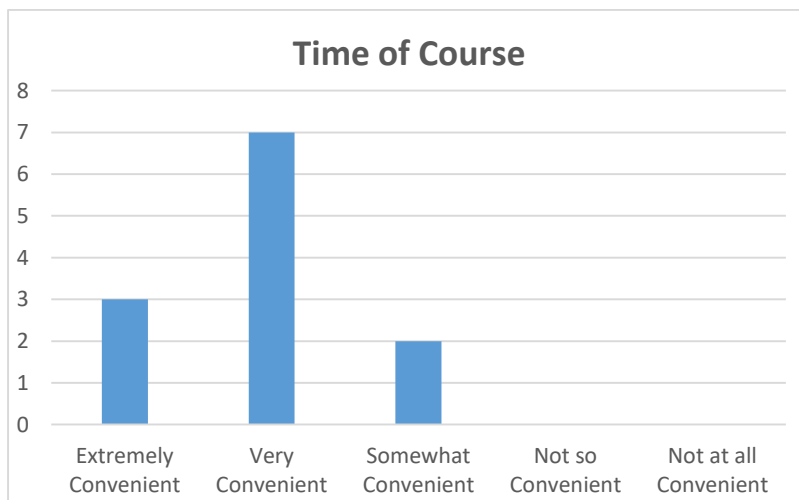- Introduce a careers aspect to the workshop content

Question 1.

Overall, how would you rate the course?

Rate the Course

Rating	Count
Excellent	3
Very good	7
Good	2
Fair	0
Poor	0
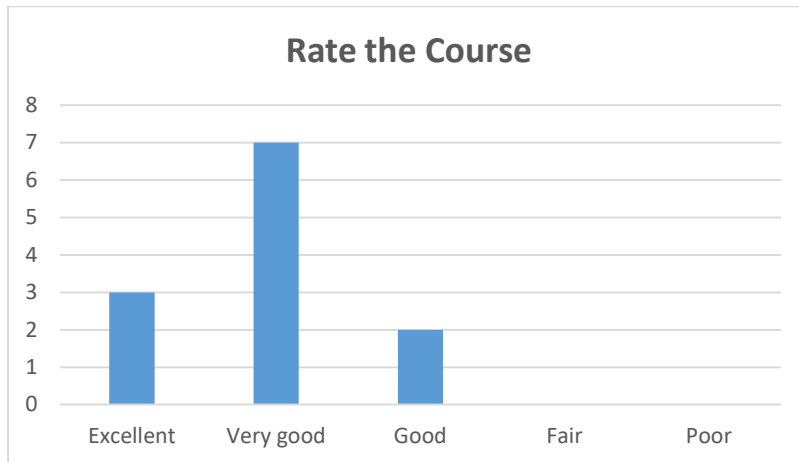
Graph 1 – The course Rating

Question 2.

How convenient was the time that the course was held?

Time of Course

Rating	Count
Extremely Convenient	3
Very Convenient	7
Somewhat Convenient	2
Not so Convenient	0
Not at all Convenient	0

Graph 2 – Course Convenience

Question 3.
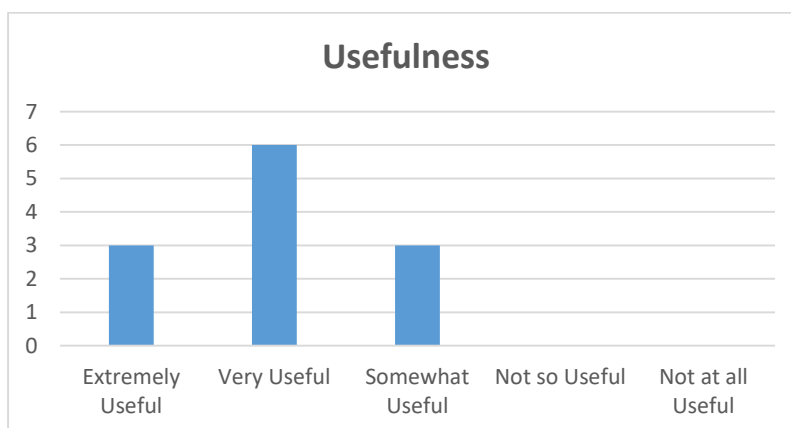
What time would have worked better for you?

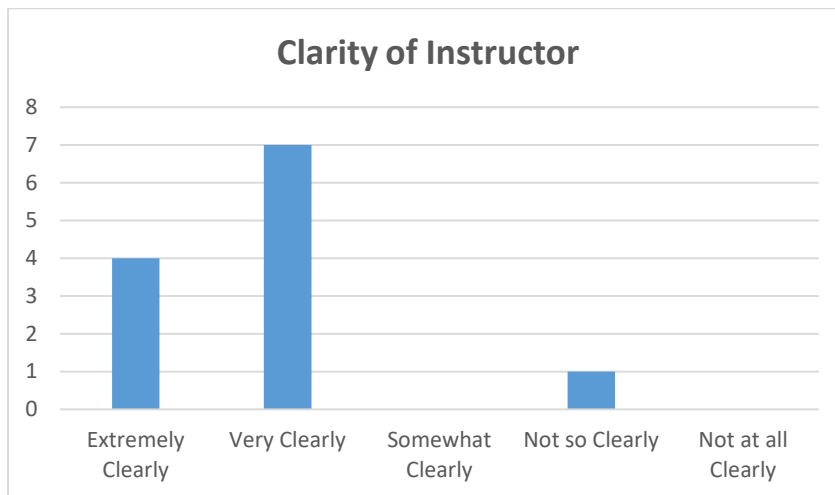3 Responses:

- 4pm - 5pm

- 10am

- 12 noon - 5pm

Question 4.

How useful was the course material?

Usefulness
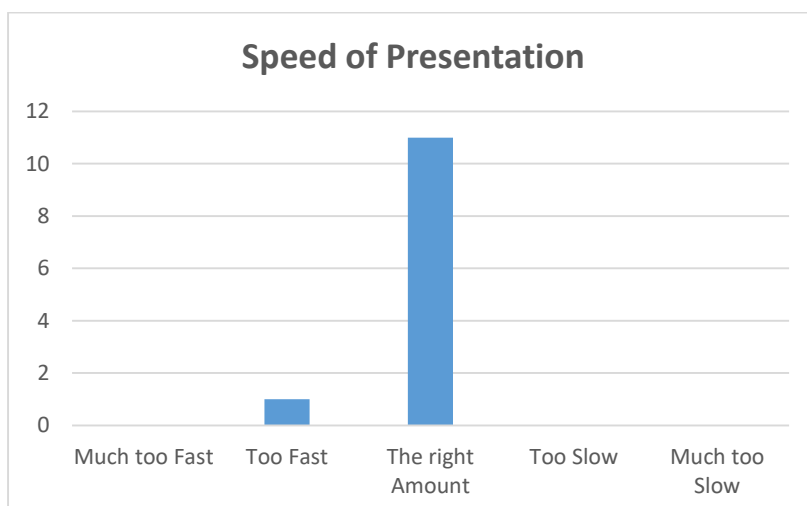
Graph 4 – Course Usefulness

Question 5

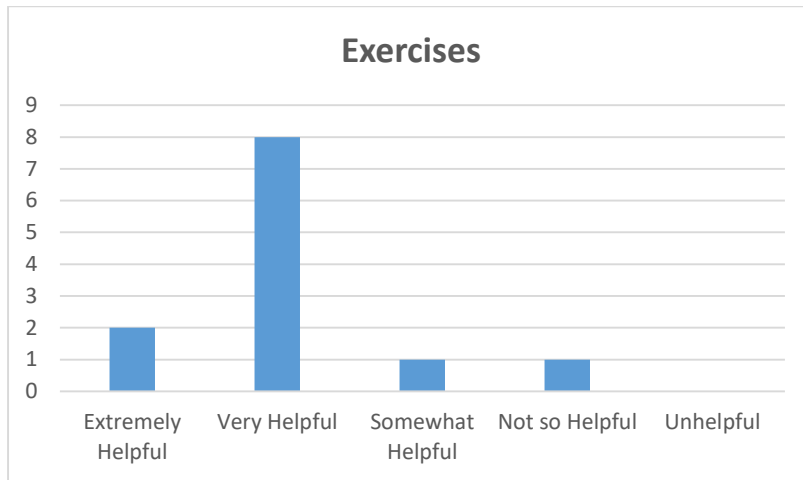How clearly did your instructor explain the course material?

Clarity of Instructor

A bar chart titled "Clarity of Instructor" with a y-axis ranging from 0 to 8. The categories and their values are: Extremely Clearly = 4, Very Clearly = 7, Somewhat Clearly = 0, Not so Clearly = 1, Not at all Clearly = 0.

Graph 5 – Clarity of Instructor

Question 6.

Was the speed with which your instructor presented the course material too fast, too slow or about right?

Speed of Presentation

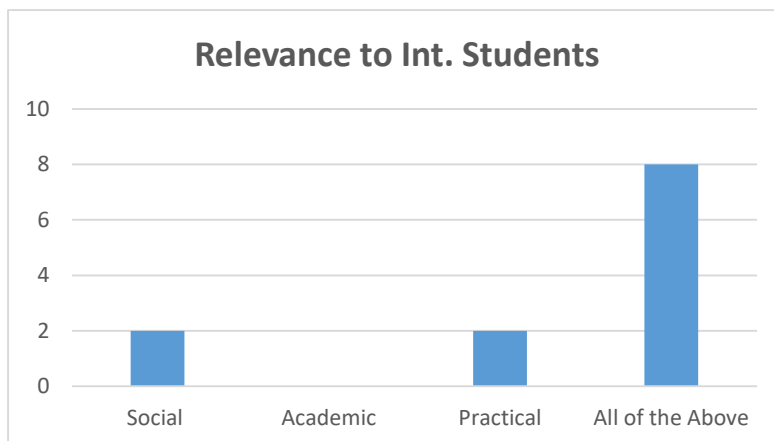A bar chart titled "Speed of Presentation" with a y-axis ranging from 0 to 12. The categories and their values are: Much too Fast = 0, Too Fast = 1, The right Amount = 11, Too Slow = 0, Much too Slow = 0.

Graph 6 – Presentation Speed

How helpful were the exercises during the workshop?

Exercises

A bar chart titled "Exercises" with a y-axis from 0 to 9. Extremely Helpful = 2, Very Helpful = 8, Somewhat Helpful = 1, Not so Helpful = 1, Unhelpful = 0.

Graph 7 – Helpfulness of Exercises

Question 8.

What aspects of this course are most relevant to International Students?

Relevance to Int. Students

A bar chart titled "Relevance to Int. Students" with a y-axis from 0 to 10. Social = 2, Academic = 0, Practical = 2, All of the Above = 8.

Graph 8 – Relevance to International Students

Question 9.

What aspects of this course were most relevant to you?

Personal Relevance

|	Social	Academic	Practical	All of the Above
Value	3	1	3	5
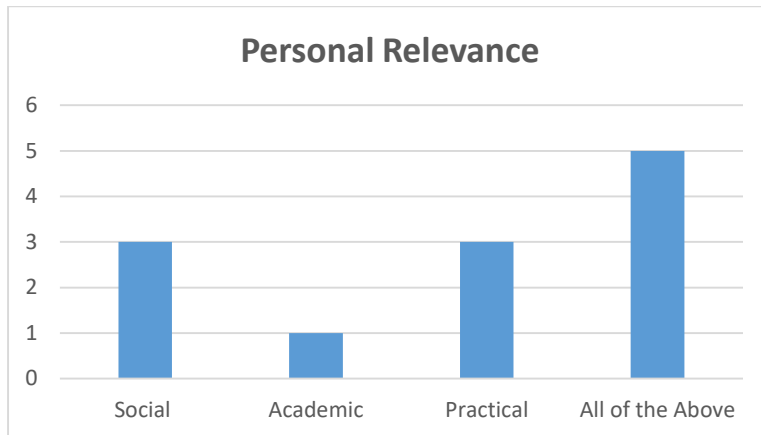
Graph 9 – Personal Relevance

Question 10.

Is the content of this workshop repetitive?

Repetitiveness of Content

	Yes	No
Value	1	11
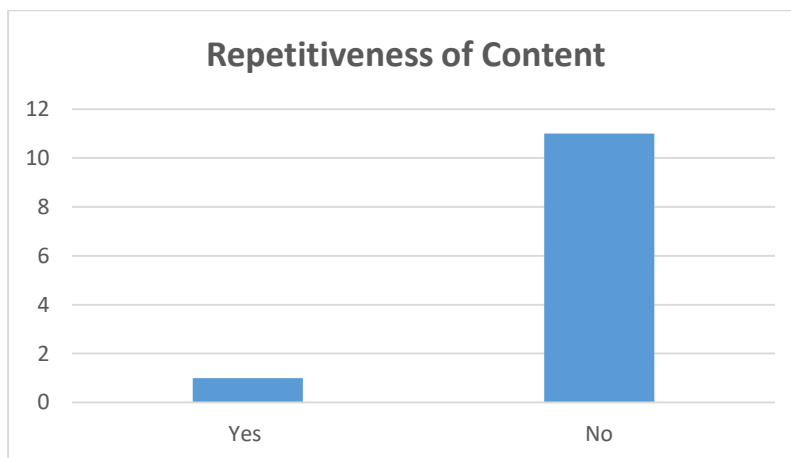
Graph 10 – Repetitiveness of Content

Question 11.

Is the information contained in this workshop already provided during the college orientation programme or seminars hosted by the International office?

Information available during orientation prog?

- Yes: 42%
- No: 50%
- (grey): 8%
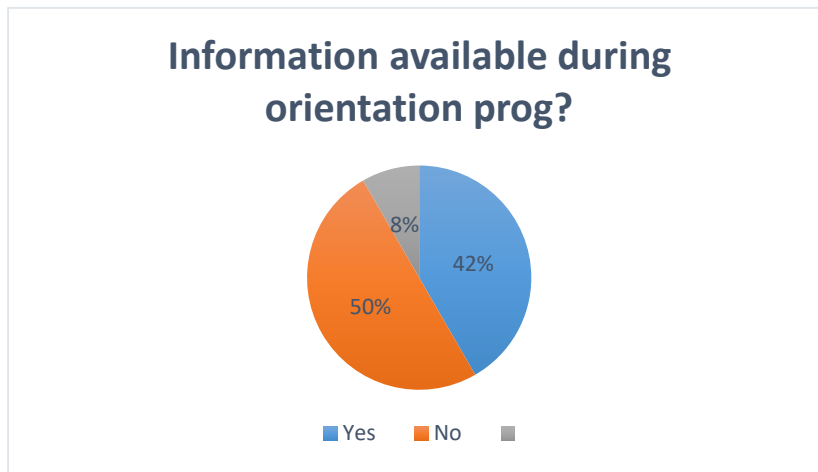
Graph 11 – Information made available during orientation prog.

Question 12.

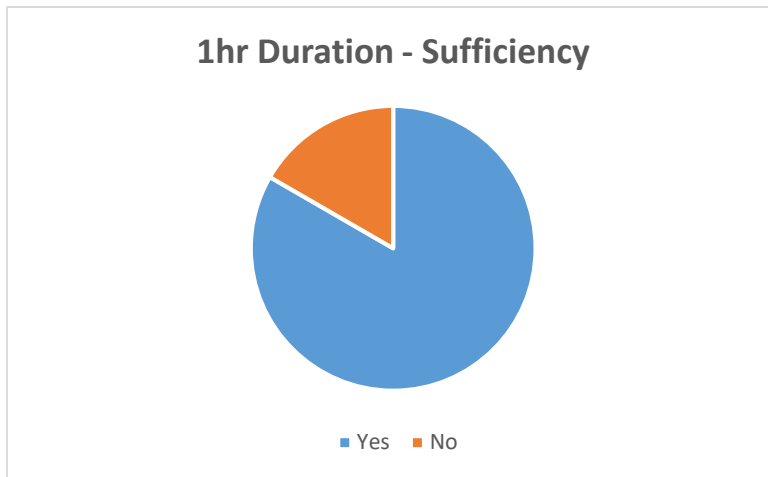Did you find the balance of presenter instruction time and video material suitable?
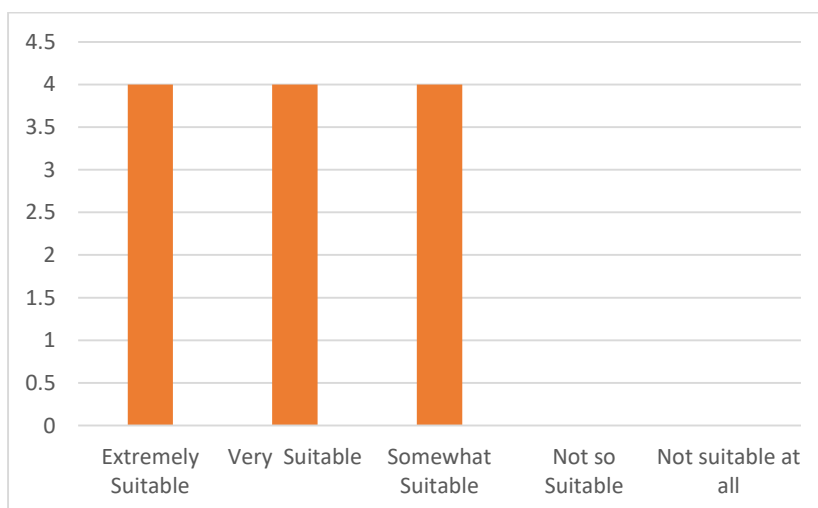
Graph 12 – Balance of Instruction

Question 13.

Was the duration of this course sufficient – 1 hour?

Yes	10
No	2

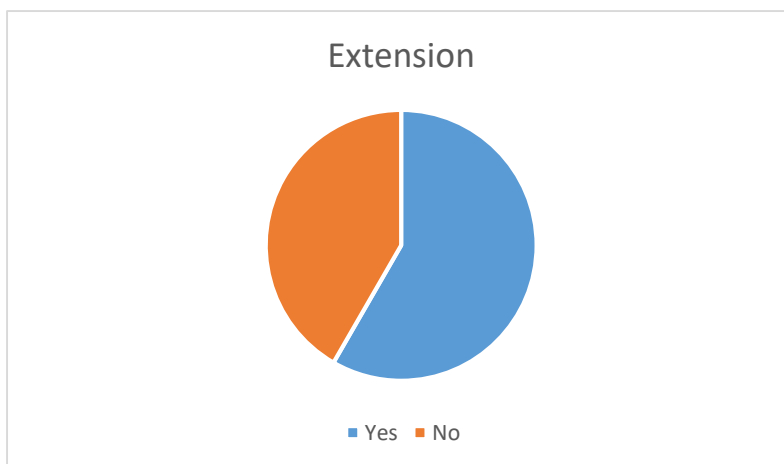**1hr Duration - Sufficiency**

Graph 13 – Sufficiency of Workshop duration

Question 14.

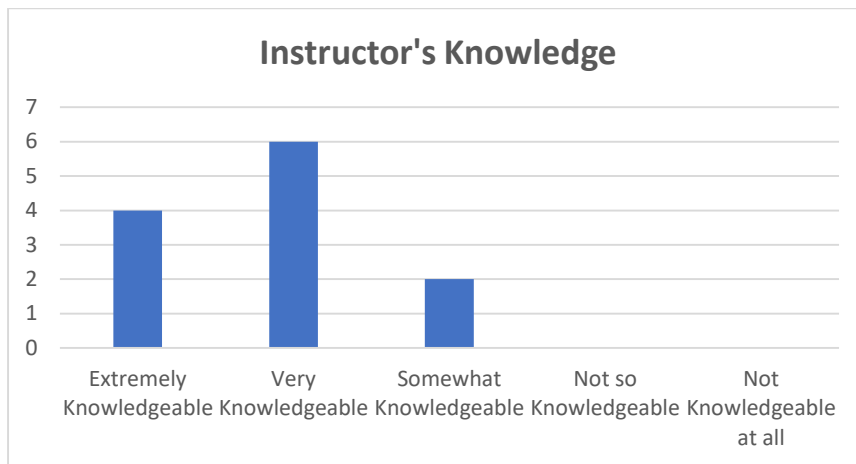Could this workshop be extended to a 1-day workshop in the form of 3 x two hour sessions?

Yes	7
No	5

Extension

Graph 14 – Viability of Worksop extension

Question 15.

Do you think the instructor is sufficiently knowledgeable in this field?

Instructor's Knowledge

A bar chart showing the following values:
- Extremely Knowledgeable: 4
- Very Knowledgeable: 6
- Somewhat Knowledgeable: 2
- Not so Knowledgeable: 0
- Not Knowledgeable at all: 0

Graph 15 – Knowledgeability of Instructor

Question 16.

Do you think this workshop is helpful for student integration specifically?

Chart Title

A bar chart showing the following values:
- Extremely Helpful: 6
- Very Helpful: 5
- Somewhat Helpful: 1
- Not so helpful: 0
- Unhelpful: 0
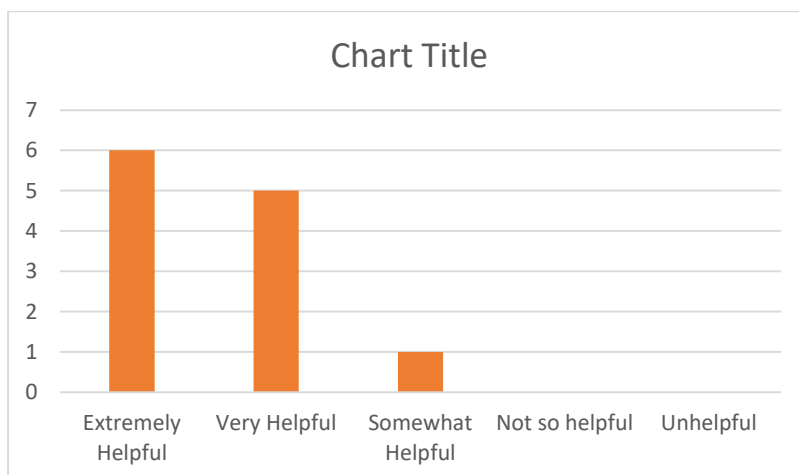
Graph 16 – Helpfulness of student Integration

Question 17.

What are the most important takeaways from the course?

Question 18.

What improvements would you make?

Question 19.

Would you recommend this workshop to prospective International students?
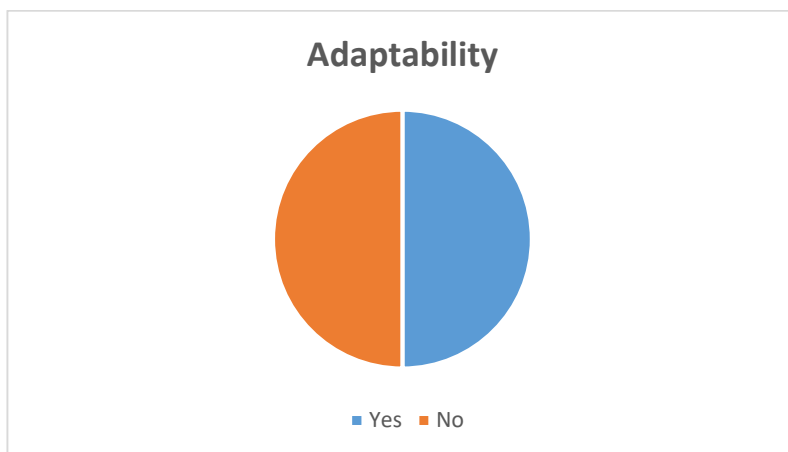
Yes	11
No	1

Graph 19 – Would you recommend this workshop?

Question 20.

Do you think this workshop is adaptable to other colleges and/or workplace settings?

Graph 20 – Workshop Adaptability

4.5   Focus Group / Discussion Forum

The focus group / discussion forum commenced immediately following the collection of the survey questionnaires. The objective was to gather further insights and direct feedback from students in a relaxed and open setting. In order to facilitate such an atmosphere, the decision was taken not to record group discussion. Field notes were used by the researcher to record the views and insights of participants. The discussion observations are presented below, divided into 3 sections; new insights, oversights & omission and opportunities. Guiding questions:

Question 1: Is there anything you would like to add - about your experiences as International student that may help to improve the content and structure of this workshop resource?

Question 2: Were there any stark errors or omission in the workshop resource?

Question 3: Can you suggest ways to improve the workshop resource in its current form, or otherwise?

4.5.1   Topic 1 – New Insights

It was clear from the discussion that there was a perception amongst International students that Irish students make very little effort to integrate with international students. This is supported by the literature review and the study by Clarke et al (2017). Students went as far as to say that they often feel that Irish students can sometimes deliberately set-out to ignore them.

Visa and residency requirements emerged as a considerable concern for all students, undergraduate and postgraduate alike. Challenges include conditions under which International students must seek visas, the overall cost / financial burden and the general difficulty in obtaining documentation due to the red-tape and bureaucracy.

Another insight from the focus group discussion was the testimonials from students who have experienced racism when seeking accommodation. Irish landlords, apparently,

blatantly avoid leasing properties to non-nationals and this results in some students having to move further and further away from where they are attending college.

4.5.2   Topic 2 – Oversights & Omissions

Students expressed the view that additional emphasis should be place on the academic challenges facing students. This is contrast to the findings from the semi-structured interviews that indicated social integration to be the most important element in integration and should be central to the workshop resource. Participants also felt that a take-home resource of some description would be useful. This could be in the form of a summary booklet or alternatively an electronic link to additional supplementary online resources.

4.5.3   Topic 3 – Opportunities

The students expressed how they enjoyed the 'Icebreakers' used in the workshop, not just for the purpose of getting to know other workshop participants but also in the context of learning about other cultures. The exercise used (Appendix I,1) allowed students to build awareness and instil empathy with the customs of other cultures. As referenced in terms of workshop omissions, additional interactive exercises present an opportunity for further development of the workshop. Finally, participants expressed their view that the workshop could be adapted to suit professional workplace environments, given certain modifications and revisions.

CHAPTER 5

5.   Discussion

5.1   Introduction – Discussion

This chapter considers the results presented in Chapter 4 (Results & Analysis) in the context of the existing body of literature and related theories expounded in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). Both elements of the research design plan and the subsequent results warrant discussion; *The Interviews*, where the researcher sought insights and direction to curate and design a workshop resource, and *The Survey & Focus Group* that followed the delivery of the workshop resource, used to determine the views and insights of participating students. A comprehensive discussion of the findings is integral to the objectives of this study. Evaluating and improving the workshop is central to the action research strategy of "planning, acting, evaluating, refining and learning from the experiences". (Koshy, 2005).

5.2   Discussion – The Interviews

The interviews revealed valuable data in terms of International Office strategies and the academic practices used to support the integration of International students. In addition, the interviews brought to light resources that the researcher had not hitherto encountered. The interview findings are discussed by theme, as presented in section 4.2.2 i.e. The Nationality Mix, The Provision of Supports, Best Practice and Relevance & Revelations for a Workshop Resource, with a view to contextualising and developing ideas for a workshop resource. The findings from the interviews are discussed with the purpose of the curation and design of the workshop in mind.

5.2.1   Theme 1 – The Nationality Mix

Interviewees raised concerns in relation to the ethnic diversity of class and group cohorts. There was a consensus among P1 & P2 that HE institutions must be cognizant of disproportionate numbers of one Nationality over another due to the risk of disruption to the overall class / group dynamic. This perspective is underpinned by Schumanns (1987) "Acculturation Model" which considers the size and congruence of the social group as a factor

in integration. Students must feel comfortable within the learning and teaching environment in order for them to acculturate. In some circumstances, the existence of a dominant International student cohort is unavoidable. For example, students of certain national origin are often drawn to specific courses of study. This can depend on college affiliation programs with other colleges, national trends, potential job opportunities or even word of mouth reports through student placing agents. P1 gave an example of a course of study where the size of the domestic student cohort was reduced considerably in the final year of 3-year program by incoming International students through an affiliation with an Asian college. This scenario links with the "Theory of Acculturation" (Berry, 1980) and his definition of assimilation that assumes a superior / inferior dynamic with the domination of one particular culture over another. HE Institutions must endeavor to effectively manage such scenarios and be sufficiently adaptable to implement supports when required.

5.2.2   Theme 2 – The Provision of Supports

One of the interviewees in particular (P1), noted that up until recently, the focus of Irish Higher Education Institutions was on increasing the number of International students in contrast with supporting the integration of those in situ. This view is supported by the recent government policy documents of 2010 and 2016. The first (Dept. of Education and Skills (2010)) focused on increasing the number of International Students, whereas the most recent policy document (Dept. of Education and Skills (2016)) explicitly prioritised "high quality learner experience". P1 is of the view that Irish HE institutions are only receently coming to the realisation that ongoing supports to enhance International Student integration are vital. Clarke (2017) found that the approach taken by many HE Institutions to support integration was merely symbolic. However, the findings from the interviews (P1 & P2) suggest that this has improved in recent years. P1 pointed to experiences working with the international offices of a number of Irish HE institutions that have implemented dynamic policies for supporting integration including; staff/student mentorship, peer mentorship, clubs and societies, inter-cultural training workshops, continuous assessment group diversity. This resonates with the research of Ozturgut et al (2014), where effective strategies of Internationalisation were evaluated and included many of those highlighted by the interviewees.

5.2.3   Theme 3 – Best Practice

The interview participants' insights and perspectives in relation to *'Best Practice'* resulted in the identification of a number of relevant resources and case studies. One such example is the contribution of ICOS. Although the researcher had reviewed pertinent research produced by ICOS, as discussed in the Chpater 2 (Literature Review – International Student Forums 2018 Report), the interviewees (P1 specifcally) highlighted the extent of these services and resources provided by the organisation. A seminal training guide produced by ICOS entitled "Diverse Voices: Listening to International Students" emerged as an important input the for curation and design of this researcher's workshop resource. The ICOS training guide draws on a wide range of research including studies considered in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) of this study (Hofstede (1980), De Wit (2011), Knight (2004))   The training guide, aimed specifically at HE academic and administrative staff includes a DVD of perspectives "that offers … a unique insight into the hopes, fears, expectations and lived experiences of students". The accompanying training guide "offers a structured approach to fostering …the intercultural skills needed to engage successfully with International students". Useful exercises in the guide cover areas such as motivation, intercultural communication, academic cultures and customs & traditions.

The sister body of ICOS in Britain, namely the UK Council for International Affairs (UKCISA) also emerged as valuable source of information for research and training resources. Given the vast experience of UK HE institutions in Internationalisation, the training and guidance material compounded that of the ICOS material and contributed to the design of the resource. The training practices used by ICOS and UKCISA are supported by the findings in some of the existing body of knowledge referenced in Chapter 2 (De Wit (2011), Thomas (2018)), thus enhancing their relevance as inputs for this workshop resource design.

In addition to student support organisations, specific colleges in the UK and Australia were highlighted by the interviewees as exemplar institutions for supporting the integration of International students.   Institutions cited by P1 include Sheffield Hallam University, Northampton, University of Warwick in the UK, University of Sydney in Australia and University of Auckland, New Zealand. An exploration of online material published by these institutions contributed to the design of the workshop resource. Many of the practices used

are congruent with the findings of researchers such as. Indeed, Bigg's (1996) theory of constructive alignment is reflected in some of these practices where learning, teaching and assessment strategies are designed in such a way as to support International Student integration. e.g. diversity of group work and peer feedback.

5.2.4   Theme 4 – Relevance of & Recommendations for a Workshop Resource

The interview participants acknowledged the relevance of designing bespoke workshop resource to support the integration of International students. The view was that such a resource should exist in tandem with the International office inductions and college orientation programs. Participants (P1 & P2) were of the view that the social element of integration is of paramount importance, over and above practical and academic considerations. This perspective resonates with the study by Farrelly & Murphy (2017), which found that International students would benefit from a better knowledge and understanding of cultural norms and practices prevalent to the host country. It follows that the majority of the time assigned to the workshop should be designated to the social aspects of integration; host country culture & customs, intercultural communication and diversity awareness.

Both interviewees recommended an interactive element and were of the view that student participants would build a more in-depth understanding of intercultural dynamics by way of a collaborative learning setting. This, again, resonates with Biggs (1996) "Constructive Alignment" of linking teaching and learning strategies with learning outcomes. P2 felt that an online resource may be useful – a resource that would allow students to login at any given time rather than attending a face-to-face workshop at a designated time. (Vaughan 2010 cited by Flanagan (2015)).

P2 highlighted the importance of empathy when dealing with International students. Thus, compassion and understanding of the personal challenges encountered by students play a pivotal role in connecting with those students. Evidence from the ICOS (2018), Student Forum report supports this assertion, with one student commenting on the "lack of ability to understand the fact that we are new and we are foreigners so we don't know the way society is working in Ireland". The researcher subsequently adopted an empathetic approach with the workshop design by including ice-breakers, scenario examples and interactive activities.

5.3   Key Takeaways from Interviews

There were a number of important takeaways from the interviews. HE Institutions on the macro level (in terms of admissions) and individual teachers on the micro level, (in terms of group assignments), must manage the Nationality Mix of the student dynamic.   The *Nationality Mix* dynamic is taken into consideration for the design of the workshop resource with the researcher cognisant of the manner in which International students from different backgrounds interact with one another.

The ICOS and UKCISA research and training resources emerged as particularly relevant sources of material to support the workshop design. The case studies and exemplar institutions highlighted by the interviewees also proved to be a valuable source of material. Both interview participants confirmed their view that the social element of student integration is the most important and should be allocated the greatest amount of time and attention. Finally, understanding and empathy were confirmed as the key emotional attributes required of staff (both academic and administrative), in order to have a meaningful impact in supporting the integration of International students.

5.4   Survey Questionnaire & Focus Group Discussion

The questionnaire was designed specifically to capture the views of participating students in order to assess the viability of the workshop resource. The survey consists of 20 questions that can be ordered into four different categories (with some overlap); Content, Effectiveness and Adaptability of the workshop resource. The purpose of the focus group discussion was to elicit further data that may not have been captured by the survey questionnaire. The findings of the discussion forum are also considered within the frame of the abovementioned categories. The discussion of these findings leads to prospective amendments and adjustments for future iterations of the workshop. The researcher remains mindful of certain studies that consider the validity of student perspectives (Marsh & Roche, 1997) and endeavours to undertake a balanced analysis of the findings set-out in chapter 4.

5.4.1 Content of the Workshop

Six of the survey questions (Questions: 7,8,9,10,11,12) relate specifically to the content of the workshop and inquire about the helpfulness of exercises, the repetitiveness of material, the balance of teaching methodologies used and the most important aspects of the course for International students.

75% of the students surveyed describe the material to be either very useful or extremely useful. The researcher considers this to be a favourable result as it is highly unlikely that all of the students surveyed are ever going to find the content of a particular course to be 'very useful' or better. Although the vast majority of respondents did not find the course material to be repetitive, 40% of the students felt there was crossover with already existing HE orientation programs or International office seminars. This underscores the importance of the originality of the workshop design. However, it is clear that excessive crossover with already existing programs is likely to undermine the relevance of the workshop resource.

The balance of the teaching methods used, in terms of audio-visual, lecture-style and collaborative exercises was considered to be satisfactory by all respondents. This follows data elicited from the interviewees recommending a balanced approach of teaching methods. The interactive exercises in particular help to maintain participants' focus and supports intercommunication between participants (ICOS, 2018).

When asked to consider the most important aspect of the course (i.e social, academic or practical) relevant to International students and them personally, interestingly, the majority (66%) considered all aspects to be important. This contrasts somewhat with the perspectives of the interviewees (P1 & P2) who were of the view that social integration was of paramount importance, over and above academic and practical concerns. The researcher accepts the divergence of perspectives (also highlighted by Clarke (2017)) and endeavors to find a balance, allocating a sufficient amount of time to the social aspects, while also allocating adequate time to the academic and practical considerations. The current structure allocates 60% to social and 20% to both academic and practical. In order to improve the balance, this can be skewed slightly less in favour of social aspects and adjusted to a ratio of 50:25:25.

5.4.2 Effectiveness of the Workshop

Seven of the survey questions (1, 4, 5 ,6, 12, 13, 16) relate to the effectiveness of the workshop resource, examining the pace and clarity of instruction/facilitation, helpfulness for student integration and overall rating. The vast majority found the pace and clarity of the instruction to be 'very clear' or better and found the speed of delivery to be satisfactory. Results corresponded to the findings from the ICOS (2018) *Student Perspectives* survey that highlighted the importance of facilitators using standardized language and accents when teaching in order for students with English as a second language to understand. The majority of respondents were of the view that the workshop resource would help with student integration. It emerged from the discussion forum that some students were particularly interested in the aspects of Irish culture and history introduced to them in the workshop and they felt that this understanding would allow them to engage with Irish people with a more informed frame of reference. When asked about their overall rating of the course, 80% of respondents rated the course very good or excellent. This comprehensive rating gives the researcher confidence that the workshop design is effective and in good order albeit with room for improvement in future iterations of the action research plan.

Participation levels by students were evaluated by questions 2 & 3, where students were asked how convenient the time of the course was (2pm-3.30pm), and, if inconvenient, what time would have been preferable. Most participants found the scheduled time to be convenient, while others suggested alternative time. There was, however, no consensus on alternative times. According to research on time-of-day instruction (Wile & Shouppe (2011)), morning time is optimum for student mental alertness. It stands to reason that the workshop should be held in the morning where possible.

5.4.3 Adaptability of the Workshop

The adaptability of the workshop resource was evaluated by questions 14,18,19 & 20. Student participants were asked whether the workshop session could be extended to a 1-day course with 2 x 3 hour sessions. Students were also asked if they would recommend the workshop to other international students and whether the material could be used to facilitate workshops in other HE institutions and/or works settings.

65% were of the view that the material and design of the workshop could be modified to fit a 2 x 3-hour structure. This is an important finding because it allows the researcher to expand the existing content and add additional exercises in order to cover more material. This supports findings from the discussion forum with regard to suggested improvements such as icebreakers and additional interactive exercises.

When asked about the potential adaptability of the workshop resource to other HE and workplace settings, respondents were split 50:50 (Yes/No). This was a somewhat unsatisfactory finding given the researcher's intent to design a workshop that was adaptable following input from the interviewee. The focus group elicited further data on this perspective where students discussed certain oversights and omissions from the workshop such as a lack of emphasis on academic challenges, a take-home resource and electronic links for further information. These elements could be added to future iterations and should help with the adaptability of the resource.

CHAPTER 6

6.   Conclusion & Future Perspectives

6.1   Conclusion

"Exploring the practices used to support and enhance the integration of International students in Irish HE institutions."

The initial motivation for this research study stemmed from the researcher's experiences and observations of the considerable increase in the number of International students attending Irish Higher Education institutions. This remarkable change in the HE landscape feeds through to the workplace and society as a whole.   Anecdotal evidence indicated that International students are not integrating sufficiently with domestic/home students. The Literature Review confirmed this notion. Indeed, the seminal study by Clarke et al (2017) found, "students were of the view that a divide existed between international students and Irish students".

Having established a rationale for the study, the next step was to explore suitable methodologies and to articulate the research question. During the process of probing various methodologies and the subsequent identification of the applied research approach, the researcher's motivation to explore evolved into a desire to bring about change. Action research emerged as *the* tool for change; what could the researcher do to support and enhance the integration of International students. This led to an action research plan of two distinct parts. Firstly, to determine the views of experienced professionals in relation to the curation of a resource to bring about change and secondly to determine the views of student participation in relation to said resource.

The preliminary research question read as follows:

"What are the perspectives of HE International office staff and faculty in relation to the curation and design of a workshop resource to support International student integration".

Thematic analysis of 2 semi-structure interviews elicited data on various themes; the Nationality mix of students, the provisions of supports to enhance integration, 'best practice'

in the field and finally, recommendations in relation to the workshop resource. An integral finding from the interviews was the confirmation of the need and requirement for a bespoke workshop resource to support and enhance the integration of International student integration. In addition, the interviewees identified the social aspect of integration as the most important element for International students. Recommendations, suggestions and attestations elicited from the interviews served to guide the curation and design of the workshop resource.

The main research question reads as follows:

"What are the perceptions of International students in relation to a resource designed to support and enhance the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institution?"

A survey instrument and focus group discussion were used to obtain data on student perspectives in relation to the workshop resource. The findings indicated the benefits and insights International students gained as a result of participation. Interestingly and in contradiction to the views of the interviewees, students felt that academic and practical integration aspects were equally as important as the social element. Students provided pragmatic feedback in relation to the content, effectiveness and adaptability of the workshop resource. This data can be used to improve and enhance the workshop for future iterations, thus exemplifying the effectiveness of the action research methodological design.

6.2 Future Perspectives

A number of opportunities for further research and development of the workshop resource emerge from the findings of this study. These include the incorporation of blended learning and teaching pedagogies, a longitudinal study, intercultural training for domestic/Irish students, and the options of creating long and short-course versions of the workshop.

It is clear from the findings of the interviews (P1 & P2) that an opportunity exists to develop the workshop resource by introducing elements of blended online teaching pedagogy. This addresses some of the limitations of the workshop in in its current form (as outlined in section 3.4.4) with regard to the limited number of potential participants and scheduling / timetabling

hurdles. A blended online approach enables a flip-classroom environment, where students can engage in material before, during and after the traditional face-to-face workshop. Advantages include the student-centred environment and the interactive/collaborative facet.

The research findings confirm the adaptability of the workshop (as discussed in section 5.4.3), by virtue of the flexible nature of its curation and design. Consequently, with certain amendments and adjustments, the resource could be used in other educational environments beyond a HE setting. Indeed, the workshop could be adapted to fit a corporate workplace setting as part of intercultural training and/or international staff integration. The adaptability would also support the involvement of domestic students in intercultural training. The adaptability of the course structure would also allow a change of scope to expand the workshop duration from 1hr 30 min to a full 1-day course.

Finally, the research findings indicate the opportunity to evaluate student perspectives (in relation to the workshop resource) over time using a longitudinal study approach. This would enable HE institutions to observe the shift, if any, in attitudes over time and may help to appraise certain practices used to support integration.

7. References

Ang, S et al., (2007). Measurement and effects on cultural judgement and decision making, Cultural adaption and task performance. *Management and Organisation Review,* 3(3), 335-371.

Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models and some new findings* (pp.9-25). Boulder, CO: Westview.

Biggs, J. (1996). Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment. *High Education, 32*(3), pp.347-364.

Burnett, D. et al. (2009) Developing Valid and Reliable Online Survey Instruments Using Commercial Software Programs. *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet, 13* (1).

Clarke, M., Hui Yank, L., Harmon, D. (2017). *The Internationalisation of Irish higher education.* Commissioned by the Higher Education Authority and funded by the Irish Research Counsel. Retrieved from https://www.internationalstudents.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-07/report_internationalisation_of_education_2018.pdf

De Wit, H. (1995). *Strategies for internationalization of higher education: A comparative study of Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States of America*, pp. 5–33. Amsterdam: European Association for International Education.

De Wit, H. (2002). *Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

De Wit, H. (2011). *Trends, issues and challenges in internationalisation of higher education. Amsterdam.* Centre for Applied Research on Economics and Management, Hogeschool van Amsterdam.

Department of Education and Skills (2010). 'Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy. Retrieved from: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Ireland-s-International-Education-Strategy-2010-2015-Investing-in-Global-Relationships.pdf

Department of Education and Skills (2016) 'Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020'. Retrieved from: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf

Flanagan, B. (2015). Exploring the journey to online teaching. MA Dissertation. NCI.

Harvard University (2018). *Strategies for qualitative interviews.* Retrieved from: https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/interview_strategies.pdf

ICOS (2018). *International student forums 2018 Report.* Dept. of Education & Skills.

ICOS (2015). *Diverse Voices: Listening to International Students. Intercultural awareness and student support training guide for staff working with International students.* Dept. of Education & Skills.

European Commission (2016). *From Erasmus to Erasmus+. A story of 30 Years*. Retrieved from: http://eurireland.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/30-Years-of-Erasmus.pdf

Koshy, V. (2005) *Action research for improving practice; A practical guide*. London. PCP.

Farrelly, M. & Murphy, T. (2017). *Transitions of international students into higher education.* National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Retrieved from https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2017-Transitions-of-International-Students-into-Higher-Education-in-Ireland.pdf

Funke, M., Schularick, M., Trebesh C. (2014): Going to Extremes: Politics after Financial Crises, 1870-2014. *Centre for Economic Studies & Ifo Institute*. CESIfo Working Paper 5553. Retrieved from: https://www.cesifo-group.de/DocDL/cesifo1_wp5553.pdf

Government of Ireland / Dept. of Education and Skills (2016). *Irish educated, globally connected.* Retrieved from https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf

Government of Ireland / Dept. of Education and Skills (2010). *Investing in global relationships.* Retrieved from https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Ireland-s-International-Education-Strategy-2010-2015-Investing-in-Global-Relationships.pdf

Gordon, M., (1964). *Assimilation in american life*. Oxford University Press.

Hechanova-Alampay, R., Beehr, T. A., Christiansen, N. D., & Van Horn, R. K. (2002). Adjustment and strain among domestic and international student sojourners: A longitudinal study. *School Psychology International*, 23(4), 458-474

Helms M., (2015). Internationalizing Higher Education Worldwide: National Policies and Programs. Washington DC: American council on education.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values.* Beverly Hill, CA: Sage Publicatoins.

Institute of International Education - IIE. (2019). *Research & Insights*. Retrieved from https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Project-Atlas/Glossary.

Knight, J. (2008). *Higher education in turmoil. The changing world of internationalization.* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Nagy, J., Berkowitz, B. (2018). *Community Building Skills.* University of Kansas. Retrieved from: https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/record-meeting/main.

Schumann, J. (1986). Research on the acculturation model for second language acquisition. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development*, 7 (5) 379-392.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012) What is culture? A compilation of quotations. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. Available at GlobalPAD Open House. Retrieved from: http://www.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural

Marsh, H. & Roche, L. (1997). Making student evaluations of teaching effectiveness effective. *American Psychologist*. Vol. 52, No. 11, 1187-1197.

Migration Data Portal – supported by German Govt. & UK Govt. (2019). *Types of migration – International students.* Retrieved from https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students

Piaget J. (1976) Piaget's Theory. In: Inhelder B., Chipman H.H., Zwingmann C. (eds) Piaget and His School. Springer Study Edition., Berlin.

Teichler, U. (2004). The Changing Debate on Internationalisation of Higher Education, *Higher Education* 48(1): 5-24.

Thomas, V. (2018) Leveraging Common Ground: Improving International and Domestic Students' Interaction through Mutual Engagement Journal of International Students v8 n3 p1386-1397

Vaughan, N. D. (2010). A Blended Community of Inquiry Approach: Linking Student Engagement and Course Redesign. Internet And Higher Education, 13(1-2), 60-65.

Qiang, Z. (2003). Internationalization of Higher Education: Towards a Conceptual Framework. *Policy Futures in Education*, 1(2), 248–270.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), 2018. Irish National Framework of Qualifications. Retrieved from http://www.nfq-qqi.com/

Takshashila University (2013). *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Takshashila+University.

Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.

Wile, A. & Shouppe, G. (2011). Does time-of-day of instruction impact class achievement? Perspectives in Learning: A Journal of the College of Education & Health Professions, 12, (1).

Zhang, J., & Goodson, P. (2011). Predictors of international students' psychosocial adjustment to life in the United States: A systematic review. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(2), 139-162

Zhang, Y. (2016). International Students in Transition. *Journal of International Students.* 6 (1). 2166-3750.

Zhang, J., & Goodson, P. (2011). Predictors of international students' psychosocial adjustment to life in the United States: A systematic review. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35(2), 139-162

8.   Appendices

Appendix A Invitation of Participation – (Interview Participants)

Dear Participant,

My name is L. MacCárthagih and I am currently undertaking a Masters in Learning & Teaching with the National College of Ireland, Dublin.

I would appreciate if you would consider participating in a research study entitled: "Exploring practices for supporting and enhancing the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institution". The aim of this study is to explore the various approaches used, to support and enhance the integration of International students and to design an action resource workshop for delivery to International students. The workshop will be followed by a brief survey and focus group to gain student perspectives.

In advance of curating the workshop, I am inviting you, as a member of the International office, to participate in an interview. The findings of the interviews will assist me in designing the best possible resource for delivery to International students.

The interview will take place on X date at Y time in NCI (approx. 50mins in duration).

I have enclosed an *Expression of Interest From* and a *Consent Form* which I would ask you to read carefully and complete before we commence the interview. It is perfectly acceptable for you to cease participation at any time, and withdraw from the study, if you so wish.
If you have any questions, you may contact by email: X17150345@student.ncirl.ie.

My sincere thanks for agreeing to participate in this study.

Best regards,

L. MacCárthaigh.

Appendix B   Expression of Interest of Participation (Interview Participants)

Dear L. MacCárthaigh,

I have received the information you sent and I wish to participate in the research study entitled; "Exploring practices for supporting and enhancing the integration of International students in an Irish HigherEducation Institution".

I wish to express my interest in participating in the study.

I am aware that I can withdraw from the study at any time and at my own discretion. Please find my preferred contact details below.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours Sincerely,

Signature:

Name (please print):

Email:

Phone Number:

Date:

Study Title: Exploring practices for supporting and enhancing the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institutions.

Research Question: What are the perceptions of International students in relation to a resource designed to support and enhance the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institution?

Researcher: L MacCárthaigh

Background to the Research Study:

International students (as defined by the Institute of International Education) are "students who undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than their home country or who travel across a national boundary to a country other than their home country to undertake all or part of their higher education experience.

As is the case globally, the Internationalisation of HE in Ireland is occurring at a rapid rate. The statistics indicate a clear upward trend that is projected to continue in the coming decades. According to the HEA Almost 25,000 (or 11%) of students are non-Irish; (41% Asia, 30% North America, 20% EU, 9% Rest of World).

The aim of this study is to explore the various approaches used, to support and enhance the integration of International students. The researcher will conduct a number of preliminary interviews with International Office staff to assist in the curation and design of the action research resource. These interview will be approx. 50min in duration and will be recorded with the consent of participants.

The action research will take the form of a workshop to present a specifically designed resource to a group of NCI International students. The workshop will be followed by a brief survey and focus group to gain student perspectives. The workshop duration is estimated at 2 hours, with approx. 15 international student participants. Workshops will not be recorded.   It is perfectly acceptable for you to cease participation at any time, and withdraw from the study if you so wish. Contributor identities remain anonymous. All data is stored in a secure and confidential location and in accordance with The Data Protection Act 2003. Data is destroyed when it is no longer required for research purposes.

Declaration: I have read the information leaflet provided by the researcher regarding the nature of this study and I understand what is involved in this research. I have been provided with the opportunity to ask questions about this study and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this research study and I understand that I may withdraw my consent from this study at any time.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this agreement.

Participant Name (Please Print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement of Researcher's Responsibility: the researcher has explained in full the purpose of this research study, the procedure it will follow and any anticipated risks to participants. The Researcher has offered to answer any questions the participant may have. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the participant is providing full and informed consent to participate in this research study.

Researcher Signature: _____

Date:_____

Appendix D   Semi-Structure Interview – Questions

Interview participants were asked the following questions:

Q 1.   What is *Best Practice* for supporting the integration of International students in Irish HE?

Q 2.   Which countries are the most successful, in your opinion? Why?

Q.3   Which institutions are the most successful, in your opinion? Why?

Q.4   Which element of the transition to Irish HE, in your opinion, is the most important; Practical, Academic or Social?

Q. 5   Do you think students would benefit from attending a workshop designed specifically to enhance the integration process?

Q.6   Do you have any recommendations in relation to content and/or structure of the proposed workshop resource?

Appendix F   Invitation of Participation 1 – Email from Int. Office to International Students

Hello,

A current NCI postgraduate student is working on his research project and requires student input. You are therefore invited to participate in his workshop next week. The details are as follows:

How important is student integration in college?? - Give your view...

Are you free to attend a short workshop in NCI (room 2.03) next Tuesday (25th June) at 2pm?

Pizza & refreshments served afterwards.

Please sign up via this Doodle link -
https://doodle.com/poll/2he4qrzpsqiiiedc

**Workshop facilitated by NCI postgraduate student as part of action research project.

We will consider academic, social and practical supports for international students.
Students will have the opportunity to give their views on integration and the effectiveness of the workshop in a brief survey and discussion forum.

Please come and have your say in creating a useful and practical resource to support the integration of international students.

Appendix G   Invitation of Participation 2 – Email from Researcher to International students (voluntarily registered)

Dear Student,

Thank you very much for signing up for tomorrows workshop at 2pm! Your view is really important and I appreciate your input.

Pizza and refreshments will be served at 3:30pm immediately afterwards.

I am an NCI postgrad. student carrying out research as part of an MA in Learning & Teaching. My research project relates to the integration of international students. I have developed a workshop resource in order to support the integration process - (following a literature review of current research and preliminary interviews with international staff and academic staff).   I would like to know *your view* on the effectiveness of the workshop.   I will ask you to fill in a short survey and we will hold a brief discussion afterwards.

I will ask you to sign a consent form beforehand as part of the ethics approval process - You can withdraw from the workshop at any time.

Thank you again for your support and I look forward to seeing you tomorrow - Tuesday 25th June at 2pm in room 2.03!!

Best regards, Lionel.

Appendix H   Expression of Interest & Consent – Workshop Participants

Researcher: Lionel MacCárthaigh

Study Title: Exploring practices for supporting and enhancing the integration of International students in Irish Higher Education Institutions.

Research Question: What are the perceptions of International students in relation to a resource designed to support and enhance the integration of International students in an Irish Higher Education Institution?

Dear Lionel,

I wish to participate in the study & I am aware that I can withdraw at any time and at my own discretion.

Declaration: I have read the information provided by the researcher regarding the nature of this study and I understand what is involved in this research. I have been provided with the opportunity to ask questions about this study and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this research study and I understand that I may withdraw my consent from this study at any time.

Participant Name (Please Print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement of Researcher's Responsibility: the researcher has explained in full the purpose of this research study, the procedure it will follow and any anticipated risks to participants. The Researcher has offered to answer any questions the participant may have. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the participant is providing full and informed consent to participate in this research study.

Researcher Signature: _____

Date:_____

Appendix I   Workshop Slides

Slide 1

International Students

Integration in College

Research Workshop
25th June 2019 @ 2pm – 3:30pm
NCI – Room 2.03

Slide 2

The Researcher & The Project

• M.A. in Learning & Teaching at National College of Ireland

• Dissertation – Integration of International Students in HE

• Action Research: Workshop for International student
  • Adaptable Resource
  • Change focused
  • Impactful

Your VIEW is so important

Slide 3

The Workshop

• Duration 2pm-3:30pm
  • 1hr Workshop presentation
  • 10 min survey – Give your view on the usefulness of workshop
  • 10-15 min. discussion forum – Further perspectives
  • **PIZZA served at 3:30pm!**

1. Social [30 min.]
2. Academic [15 min.]
3. Practical [15 min.]
          (Farrelly & Murphy 2017)

• Consent Form – Ethics Approval – Please sign the consent form

Slide 4

Social Integration

Cultural Values – Awareness   exercise p 78
- Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Framework
  - Individualism - 'I' Vs Collectivism - 'We'
  - Power Distance
    - Hierarchical /High Power Distance
    - Less Hierarchical / Low Power Distance
  - Uncertainty Avoidance
    - Strong Vs Weak
  - Masculinity Vs Femininity
    - Masculine Society
    - Feminine Culture

Slide 5

Social Integration cont'd

- Intercultural Awareness & Cross-cultural Communication
  - Stereotypes - Ireland/The Irish p42, p86 – white board

  - Ireland – Geography / Regions
    http://www.liveandlearnireland.net/Unit_3_Social/story_html5.html section 5.1

  - Social customs & Habits of Communication
    - Summarise greetings exercise p.68

  - Cultures – Sport, Music, Festival, Pub-culture section 5.2

Slide 6

Culture Shock & Homesickness

Slide 7

Social Integration

- Languages
  - Irish & English official languages – brief history
  - Irish Accents - slang and colloquialisms – P.27, Local Radios
  - English language ability of International student - Linguistic / Intercultural

Slide 8

Academic Integration

- Academic Institutions – Ireland
  http://www.liveandlearninireland.net/Unit_1.1_Academic/story_html5.html (2.1,2.2,2.3)

- Different Academic Cultures – p 88/89.
  - Student/teacher relationship
  - Types of Learning
    - Big or Small class sizes
    - Theory or Practice
    - Active or Receptive
  - Group work
  - Intercultural experience

- Assessment – pass mark, critical thinking, CA, group work
  http://www.liveandlearninireland.net/Unit_1.1_Academic/story_html5.html (5.2)

Slide 9

Practical Integration

- Housing - Digs, College owned/on-campus, off-campus and private accommodation
- Visas & Immigration http://www.liveandlearninireland.net/Unit_2_Practical/story_html5.html
  - Non-EEA visas, INIS, Garda Immigration Bureau, Citizens Info. & ICOS
- Banking & Finance
  - Required documentation, anti money laundering,
- Healthcare
  - EEA cover, Non-EEA medical insurance, college Health centre
- Shopping
  - Euro, Metric system, UK shoes, Food
- Dress -
- Transport
  - Student travel / Leap Card. Bus, Tram and Train. Drive on the left!
- Employment – PPS number

Source: www.liveandlearn.net funded by National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in HE

Slide 10

Useful sources of Information for
International Students

- ICOS – Irish Council for International Students
- USI - Union of Students in Ireland
- www.liveandlearninireland.net
- Competition and Consumer Protection Agency
- Aoife.ie
- Discoverireland.ie

Slide 11

Useful sources of Information for
International Students

- Immigration for students –
  http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Students

- Garda National Immigration Service - https://www.garda.ie/

- Immigration rules for full-time non-EEA students -
  https://www.citizensinformation.ie/

Slide 12

International Students

Integration in College

Research Workshop
25th June 2019 @ 2pm – 3:30pm
NCI – Room 2.03

Greetings Exercise Handout

Shake hands with a light grip and keep a distance of about 2 feet between you (England)

Press your nose against another person's nose while keeping your eyes closed ('Hongi' Maori, New Zealand)

Shake your fist at head level and say "Wooshay wooshay" (Niger)

Embrace the other person and kiss them twice on alternate cheeks (Portugal and Spain)

Press your face against another person's cheek and sniff deeply (Tuvalu)

Say "Salaam alaykum" then shake hands and say "Kaif Halak" then place your left hand on the person's right shoulder and kiss the person on both cheeks (Gulf States: Bahrain, Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and UAE)

Press the palms of your hands together in a praying position and hold your hands chest high while bowing slightly forward (India "Namaste")

Greet people by making eye contact followed by raising and lowering your eyebrows (Philippines)

Using your right hand touch your heart, then your forehead and then gesture forward (Jordan)

Cover your left fist with your right hand, raise both hands to your chest and bow your head with eyes downcast (Taiwan)

Greet a person with a firm handshake while smiling and making eye contact (Ireland)

Greet a person saying "salaam" and bow with the palm of the right hand on your forehead (Pakistan)

Touch hands like a handshake that doesn't include a grip, just lightly grazing palms and fingers (Botswana)

Clap your hands three times and then say hello (Northern Mozambique)

Bow with both hands together at chest level. The depth of the bow signifies the level of respect for the other person (Japan)

Take the other person's right hand and kiss the back of it (Poland and Moldova)

Nod, slightly bend knees, and shake hands, right hand extended, with left hand under right elbow (Zambia)

Bow with your hands together in front of the chest as if you are praying (Cambodia and Laos)

Hug the person you wish to greet ('Abrazo', Mexico)

Greet another person with a firm, brief and confident handshake while maintaining eye contact (USA)

Kiss the person you wish to greet on both cheeks twice (i.e. left, right, left, right) (Certain regions of France)

Kiss three times, on alternate cheeks...left, right, left (Russia)

Source: Material adapted from unpublished ICOS materials, and from Friend-Pereira, J. C. & McDaid, R. , 2002. Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Campaign: Activity and Resource Pack for Student Co-ordinators. Dublin: Union of Students in Ireland (USI).

Source: Diverse Voices: Listening to Intel national Students (ICOS)

GEERT HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS - ANSWER SHEET

FIT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS INTO THE CORRECT BOXES BELOW:_____

1 , Calling your boss by their first name

2.   Valuing success over participation

3.   Centrality of the family

4.   Always addressing a person in authority by their formal title (e.g. Doctor/Professor)

5.   Rules are made to be broken

6.   Being self-reliant and believing that you are the best person to help yourself

7.   Consulting your colleagues when you want to make a decision

8.   It is better to be late than to never show up

9, Starting a meeting late disrupts the schedule and should not be done

10. Bureaucracy is necessary for efficiency.

A. Individualism =	B. Collectivism =
C. High Power Distance =	D Low Power distance =
E. Masculinity =	F. Femininity =
G. Strong Uncertainty Avoidance =	H. Weak Uncertainty Avoidance =
I. Polychronic =	J. Monochronic =

Adapted by ICOS into an exercise based on theories of Hofstede, G., 1997.
Culture and Organisations: Software of the Mind. New York: Mc Graw-Hill.

Source: Diverse Voices: Listening to Intel national Students (ICOS)

1. Overall, how would you rate the course?

○ Excellent

○ Very good

○ Good

○ Fair

○ Poor

2. How convenient was the time that the course was held?

○ Extremely convenient

○ Very convenient

○ Somewhat convenient

○ Not so convenient

○ Not at all convenient

3. What time would have worked better for you?

4. How useful was the course material?

○ Extremely useful

○ Very useful

○ Somewhat useful

○ Not so useful

○ Not at all useful

5. How clearly did your instructor explain the course material?

○ Extremely clearly

○ Very clearly

○ Somewhat clearly

○ Not so clearly

○ Not at all clearly

6. Was the speed with which your instructor presented the course material too fast, too slow, or about right?

○ Much too fast

○ Too fast

○ The right amount

○ Too slow

○ Much too slow

7. How helpful were the exercises used during the workshop?

○ Extremely helpful

○ Very helpful

○ Somewhat helpful

○ Not so helpful

○ Unhelpful

8. What aspects of this course are most relevant to International Students in general?

○ Social

○ Academic

○ Practical

○ All of the above

9. What aspects of this course were most relevant to you?

○ Social

○ Academic

○ Practical

○ All of the above

10. Is the content of this workshop repetitive?

○ Yes

○ No

11. Is the information contained in this workshop already provided during the college orientation programme or seminars hosted by the international office?

○ Yes

○ No

12. Did you find the balance of presenter instruction time and video material suitable?

○ Extremely suitable

○ Very suitable

○ Somewhat suitable

○ Not so suitable

○ Not suitable at all

13. Was the duration of this course sufficient 1 hour?

○ Yes

○ No

14. Could this workshop be extended to a 1-day workshop in the form of 3 x two hour sessions?

○ Yes

○ No

15. Do you think the instructor is sufficiently knowledgeable in this field?

○ Extremely knowledgeable

○ Very knowledgeable

○ Somewhat knowledgeable

○ Not so knowledgeable

○ Not knowledgeable at all

16. Do you think this workshop is helpful for student integration specifically?

○ Extremely helpful

○ Very helpful

○ Somewhat helpful

○ Not so helpful

○ Unhelpful

 17. What are the most important takeaways for you from the course?

18. What improvements would you make to the class?

19. Would you recommend this workshop to prospective international students?

○ Yes

○ No

20. Do you think this workshop is adaptable to other colleges and/or workplace settings?

○ Extremely adaptable

○ Very adaptable

○ Somewhat adaptable ful

○ Not so adaptable

○ Not adaptable

Appendix K   Focus Group Discussion – Guide Questions

Guiding questions:

Question 1: Is there anything you would like to add - about your experiences as International student that may help to improve the content and structure of this workshop resource?

Question 2: Were there any stark errors or omission in the workshop resource?

Question 3: Can you suggest ways to improve the workshop resource in its current form, or otherwise?