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ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract— This study mainly focuses on how international students cope with balancing challenges and describe their coping strategies while adapting to a new academic environment in Chinese universities. The primary goal of this study is to identify the problems in the academic sector. A survey was conducted among forty international students recruited from a technical university in China using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The result shows that international students face more problems while adjusting to new academic and social environments. These include less classroom participation, communication gap, not understanding course materials, struggling to get enough marks, amongst others. If these students are to make a successful adjustment to the teaching and learning styles in China, they need specific assistance in methods of study and language development. Faculty members and administrative staff may also have to recognize these problems of transition by adapting their ways of work. The study also comes up with some recommendations for improving the academic and service quality so that Chinese universities can attract more international students.

Keywords— academic adjustment; international students; Chinese universities; questionnaire; semi-structured interview; challenges; coping strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, China has placed attracting international students on its agenda as a result of its growing influence of global influences, economic development, and international engagement. As a result, the population of international students has dramatically increased in Chinese universities. According to statistics released by the Ministry of Education, 397,635 students from 202 countries and regions around the world came to study in Mainland China in 2019. Indeed, China has enhanced its visibility as a higher education destination in the world, especially for neighboring Asian countries. As the number of international students is on the rise, a variety of problems and challenges involved in the overseas study also occurs (Andrade 2006; Gebhard 2012; Huang 2004; Huang & Brown 2009; Li et al. 2014; Lin &

Scherz 2014; Marui & Lee 1995; Murphy-Shigematsu & Lee 1999; Murphy-Shigematsu & Shiratsuchi 2001; Murphy-Shigematsu 2002; Roy 2013; Huang & Zhe 2013). During the early 1990s, the Chinese government decentralized its responsibility for enrolling, teaching, and managing international students. More recently, it has begun shifting its focus from quantity to quality when overseeing education programs for international students. This policy transition has mainly been a response to the emerging trend of economic-driven expansion. However, few studies have addressed the adjustment problems that have been experienced by this diverse group of international students. Despite the fact that international students engage in international education on a regular basis, there is not a doubt that they may tend to experience transition and adjustment difficulties. Indeed, international students may be faced with a myriad of changes and may encounter difficulty in adapting to a variety of situations. Academic performance is evidently one of the primary concerns of international students. This paper aims to investigate the problems and barriers international students face academically in Chinese universities by presenting a case study.

The questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:

- (1) What are the challenges and problems international students in Chinese universities have in academic adjustment?
- (2) What are the causes of these problems?
- (3) How to deal with these problems?

Data and methodology are explained in section II. Results and discussions are presented in section III and conclusion is given in section IV.

II. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to answer the research questions outlined in the first chapter by conducting a survey among international students at a Chinese technical university using a questionnaire. The ultimate purpose is to obtain a clear picture of how international students feel about their academic problems and to offer some suggestions to solve these issues. The questionnaire contains three sections. In Section One the participants will be asked to provide demographic



information, which includes place of birth, age, level of study (undergraduate, graduate, etc.), gender, and duration of stay in China at the time of survey. In Section Two there are 20 close questions about academic adjustment, to which the answers, following the likert scale, are specified as 'agree', 'partly agree', 'neutral', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. In Section Three, the participants have to answer 10 questions, which will be about the challenges they face in academic adjustment and how they overcome these challenges and make their academic life easier (see Appendix).

The survey was conducted in 2020 to investigate international students' learning experiences and academic adjustment in Chinese universities. The data is collected by using a questionnaire distributed among 40 international students from a technical university in China, 20 male and 20 female students. They are from different nationalities and their duration of stay in China ranges from six months to four or five years. The students filled out the questionnaire and subsequently attended a short interview about the barriers and challenges they face in their academic adjustment. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the semi-structured interviews were conducted online via WeChat. The participants were asked about their academic performance, experience in class, and relationship with their classmates whether they face any difficulties in class and many other things related to their studies. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed for further analysis. At the end of the interviews, participants were given an opportunity to review their responses for clarifications or omissions, and they were assured that their names or identifying information would not be included in the data report.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was adopted to analyze the data. Following the completion of the survey, the researcher analyzed the data by calculating the percentage of the answers elicited from the survey questions. Meanwhile, the researcher also conducted 'informal' oral interviews with the participants in various real-life contexts to obtain additional authentic information, which was beneficial because the researcher could get to know the participants closely and understand their struggles. The researcher further conducted and moderated a focus group conversation session in order to clarify the data for an accurate and deeper level of analysis. Most respondents commented that teaching and learning approaches were dramatically different from those in their home institutions. Several explicit distinctions were reported while comparing their learning experiences in the host providers and their home providers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reports findings from the lived experience of international students pursuing graduate degrees at a technical university in China. The focus in this thesis is on the quality of the educational experience of international students in Chinese universities, with an emphasis on problems associated with learning and the related factors that contribute to both

sociocultural and learning experience. 15 students from Bangladesh, 4 students from Russia, 5 students from Kazakhstan, 6 students from Ghana, 5 students from Pakistan, 2 students from Nepal and 3 from Yemen.

In their surveys, the participants were asked to describe the university. Half of the students chose 'not sure' and the other half chose 'excellent'. 67.5% of students agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of their academic scores, while 22.5% of students partly agreed and 10% disagreed. Most of the students selected 'neutral' or 'disagree', stating that they were dissatisfied with the service they received from the international office. The majority of students were satisfied, and only 2% were dissatisfied with the buildings and classrooms in the school. As for expectations of their college lectures, 77.5% of students were neutral and 22.5% of students partially agreed with the expectations. 90% of the students agreed that they are satisfied with what they learn in class, and 10% chose the neutral option. When asked whether they were able to understand and follow lectures, 85% student selected 'neutral' and 15% chose "partly disagree". 27.5% students agreed, 65% were neutral and 7.5% disagreed or partly disagreed about their teachers encouraging them to ask questions if they were not sure in class. 70% students agreed, 2.5% partly agreed and 27.5% chose neutral when they were asked if they have supportive classmates. 52.5% students partly agreed, 7.5% were neutral and 40% disagreed about their teachers have fair rules for the class and is extremely impartial. 77.5% students agreed and 22.5% partly agreed that their lecturers are friendly and cooperative. 55% selected 'partly agree' 15% selected 'agree' and 30% selected 'neutral' regarding whether they have enough access to the IT facilities in the university. The respondents were asked whether they have enough time to complete the work assigned to them and 65% of them were neutral, 22.5% partially agreed, and 12.5% disagreed with the statement. As for whether they can get proper library services in order to find academic materials at their disposal, 70% chose 'neutral' and 30% disagreed with this statement. 7.5% agreed, 35% partly agreed, 20% were neutral, 37.5% disagreed that they face difficulties communicating with teachers and students and the majority of students preferred to work on their own rather than do group-work exercises. 72.5% agreed and 27.5% disagreed on this, suggesting that this group of students preferred to work alone, which supports a common view that international students dislike group work.

Almost everyone is neutral over the quality of the teaching of their study program has been adequate. Most of the students chose to enjoy doing group work with other students and only 10% were neutral about this. They were also asked if their teachers give them helpful feedback on their work, 90% were neutral and 10% partly agreed. 10% agreed, 40% were neutral, 32.5% partly agreed and 17.5% disagreed to be satisfied with their progress they made during their stay. This study shows that international students lacked critical thinking skills, had



difficulty understanding different accents and had weak writing skills.

The researcher also conducted an interview with the students. The interview revealed that many of the students said that they chose this university either because they had friends studying here or because it offered the subject that they were interested in studying. Other students also included the university was offering an affordable tuition fee and provided better scholarships for international students. When they were asked about the challenges they faced, some of the students stated that they faced language barrier between teachers and students, they did not know how to speak Chinese and could not understand their lectures properly and that their Chinese classmates were not that cooperative. Almost everyone had trouble understanding lectures because of different accents. Though some of them could speak fluent English, others had different accents, so it did not really help them much. As far as academic challenges in this university were concerned, the most challenging experience they had was having to take many exams all at the same time, not having enough time to submit homework or assignments, experiencing difficulties doing lab work, learning Chinese language and the different education system compared to their home country. One of the biggest differences they have noticed between the academic experience in China and the one they had in their home country is that, according to some of them, the quality of education is much better here in China. There is a possibility that they can get mental support in their home country, or there will be people around them who can assist them, but in a foreign country they are entirely on their own and have to adapt to so many new things in the educational system, which could cause them to fail. Comparatively, the Chinese education system is very advanced and research-based, which is very different from some of their home countries. In some of them, there are fewer students in their major classes, and there is less lab work involved. The experience of the students helped them to gain an ability to communicate effectively within and among diverse cultural groups. It was a good experience for them to meet many nationalities and to have good relationships with them. Exchanging culture, breaking stereotypes, learning from each other's culture was very interesting and exciting for them. Teachers devised new and engaging ways to bring people from a variety of backgrounds together in order to promote cohesion, teamwork, and a sense of belonging. Teachers organized each team with individuals who were able to work well together and who had different cultural backgrounds, as part of team building activities. As a result of being surrounded by an international community there, they have become adept at communicating effectively because they have acquired so much knowledge. During their stay in the international student dormitory, they were successfully exposed to different cultures and people from different countries, and they have been able to cope up with and adapt to them effectively. All of the students were asked if they considered Academic writing to be a challenge that they thought was worth pursuing and they all agreed that they did. It is

very important that they have a good understanding of the language of their subject as well as learn as many technical terms as they can while studying. Even students from English-speaking countries find it difficult to jump from the casual day-to-day style to the very high standard expected of students in post-secondary institutions. In addition, 60% of international students reported that they were not actively involved in their college's activities and events, while 29% stated that they were not actively connected to their campus' social network. Another common problem that students face is when they do not have a clear idea of the importance of avoiding plagiarism. The process of integrating researched text into one's own style of writing can be very challenging, and it can be affected as well by one's level of proficiency in the English language. A very small number of students do not know how to use certain software, or how to write something, or even how to use math, but these are not always taught in classes, which lead to huge difficulty. To overcome the language barrier, students should not be afraid to speak with people around even in English or in Chinese in that language learning starts from communication. Being friendly and polite goes a really long way. When a person acts nice or appears to be trying, they have a much greater chance of people being patient and helping them. Using translators, interpreters, and language classes to break down barriers is as important as being able to communicate clearly when speaking with native and non-native speakers. They should surround themselves with people who will support, help and motivate them. It was also found that students had a very hard time following instructions in the classroom and were not able to fully participate in the classroom discussions or seminars where they were required to discuss particular topics and questions. Moreover, some students faced difficulties not only in academic sector but also in daily life. As far as language proficiency is concerned, the biggest problem they have faced is a lack of confidence in their abilities. In order for them to be able to communicate effectively with their teachers and fellow students, they should start becoming more confident. There may be times when locals are not as helpful as they should be or might feel shy to engage in communication with foreign students, but these problems can only be resolved by overcoming the fear of interacting with locals and vice versa. In addition, this university's academic sector could do better if there were more courses available in English, since compared with Chinese students, they had fewer subjects to study due to the language barrier. According to the students, hiring more international faculty in addition to Chinese faculty would attract more international students. Colleges should also consider allowing prominent members of the administrative staff to participate, such as directors of admissions and deans of student affairs. There is an urgent need for more and better research both to improve the quality of undergraduate education and to increase the number of students. In this section, I identify factors that have both positive and negative impacts on the adjustment of international students



and explore related support services. It is hoped that this will raise awareness among the faculty and support staff about the importance of better accommodations for international students. The participants in the study employed a variety of coping strategies to overcome the challenges they faced while living in China. Although some of them felt discouraged and unsure about dealing with the problems and challenges they have encountered, they persisted and remained optimistic about their future.

Since international students have different personalities, language skills, family backgrounds, educational experiences and other individual differences, it is very difficult for them to adjust at first unless they are all given an effective and productive training before stepping into the research zone. They should be provided with effective orientation and courses with appropriate instruction in order to assist them in understanding the new educational system.

A. Challenges and problems in academic adjustment of international students in Chinese universities- One of the most prominent and important issues for international students is academic adjustment. In spite of their individual

differences, all the students are “operating in a new country, in a foreign language, and adapting to a multitude of cross-cultural differences” (Snively, 1999: 188). The academic and cultural differences in Chinese classrooms can be challenging to international students, for example, (1) attentive listening in classroom presentation and discussion in Chinese; (2) difficulty in understanding accents; (3) lack of variety in assessment of academic performance. With such huge differences in learning contexts and assessments, there can be no doubt that, upon arrival and starting their studies, they will face many difficulties. Stress, anxiety, and the challenges faced by international students are some of the factors that often contribute to poor performance, and even academic failure. As they embark on their journey of learning, they follow a U-curve, which means that when they arrive at a new culture, they are in the Honeymoon stage, and then they move down to the Crisis Stage and up to the Recovery Stage, and ideally, they move up to the Adjustment Stage eventually (Lysgaard 1955). Table 4.1.1 reveals that Lysgaard’s U-curve does not fit the international students’ adjustment pattern in that there is severe cultural shock at the early stage and there will be more crisis after their lives as students become routine.

	Short time group (0 months–1 year)	Moderate time group (1–2 years)	Long time group (over 2 years)
Academics	Busier lifestyle; positive impressions with faculty.	Difference in education systems; inaccessibility of professors.	Huge workload
Communication with others	Positive and negative stories	Mentoring and support from the native community.	Ease with communicating with faculty
Relationships with others	Easy to make friends at surface-level	Easy to make friends at surface-level; neutral relationship with teachers	Hard to evolve past roles and communicate as friends
Cultural adjustment	Problem adjusting in schools; high cultural shock	Easy to adjust at first; life came to routine; difficulties emerged.	Adjust but felt the cultural differences; stable and being able to function within both cultures
Language	Largest problems in adjustment	Root of miscommunications; Difficult to communicate with professors and classmates;	Continued problems and learning to cope up.

Table 1 Adjustment of international students by length of stay

B. Causes of challenges and problems in academic adjustment of international students in Chinese universities- First, international students in China tend to experience high levels of difficulty adjusting to the new environment due to the vast differences between China and their home country (e.g., a collectivist culture, expectations of classroom participation, etc.). The second reason is that they tend to complain quietly (such as by writing diaries) rather than to openly discuss their adjustment problems with each other. It may be due to the fact that these students grew up in a culture, which views discussion of emotional difficulties as disruptive or shameful, that they tend to engage in this kind of discussion. Furthermore, because the students do not have

familiar social support networks around them, they may not seek out social support for the resolution of their problems, leading to possible internalization of their problems in the long run. They passively receive support from their faculty and fellow countrymen and place great value on such support. As a result of the extreme differences between the educational systems in their home country and in China, international students often have to cope with “unfamiliar and unclear expectations ... in the area of pedagogy and assessment” (Heng 2018: 29). These challenges are: (a) feeling uncomfortable participating in classroom discussions, asking questions, and having critical arguments openly; (b) feeling unfamiliar with the learning environment and professor’s



expectations; (c) needing to take extra time understanding course readings, especially in social science courses; (d) lacking the sociocultural background that is already common to Chinese students (Ching et al. 2017). International students who wish to pursue academic degrees in countries other than their own are confronted with the difficulty of learning an additional language in order to be able to pursue university-level studies in that country. There are many challenges faced by international students, along with the different sociocultural backgrounds and educational orientations that are associated with them, but the language barrier is certainly at the top of their list. Several students have indicated that their struggle has been intertwined with several variables, such as the language barrier, the new working environment/culture, the pressure regarding their future research, and the feeling of loneliness. For the entire year they had to constantly struggle with three goals at the same time: learn a new language (in the Chinese language course), how to overcome language barrier and culture difference, and figure out their way to get better at the academic sector (getting good grades). It is common for students to experience accent problems or language barriers in the classroom, even if the course is in English. Beside language barriers, the relationship with academic advisors was also identified as very important to international students. Students consider their advisors to be their connection to the university and to the future opportunities in their chosen career field. However, they do not know how to initiate a topic or how to approach their advisor in the most effective manner. There is a challenge when conducting classroom teaching when dealing with the accents and the lack of contextual knowledge of the concepts that need to be explained to the students. Due to the fact that they have studied and developed in a different contextual environment, students argue that it is difficult for them to understand different accents due to the fact that they have grown up in a different context. At the

same time, it was very difficult for them to provide relevant examples related to the Chinese context during their classes. Students of different cultures expressed their concern in the classroom that there was a natural cultural segregation between them. As a result, international students were seated on one side of the classroom while Chinese students were seated on the other. Even in group studies, students had to work together in mixed groups; it appeared that some subgroup interactions were taking place. When they work in group, if one group has two foreigners for example, the two will talk to each other but when they try to communicate with the Chinese student; he or she will only answer what they ask. International students described Chinese students as hard-working, motivated, and grade oriented. Seeing Chinese students studying the majority of the time, they feel that they do not have the habit of studying throughout the day. Many international students feel anxiety and uncertainty before coming to a particular university, even more so because they have to adjust to a whole new country and education system as well. Coping with a new education system in a different land can also be one of the major challenges for them, where there is no one to support and they have to adapt so many new things. For most students, many of these difficulties were unexpected and students were unprepared for them since these difficulties were very different from the problems they faced at their home country universities. When they were in their country, many of these students were unable to imagine the magnitude of difficulties they would eventually encounter in China. They were shocked by both the unexpected nature of the difficulties and their inability to effectively deal with those difficulties. Facing many difficult situations while pursuing their goals and dreams in China, international students may become frustrated to maintain the aspirations that originally motivated them to relocate to China.

Table 2 Summary of adjustment issues faced by international students

Category	Specific problems
Personal psychological issues	Homesickness, loneliness, stress, depression, frustration adapting a new education system.
Sociocultural issues	Cultural shock, cultural fatigue, stereotyping, prejudice, racial discrimination, difficulties in adjusting to new social/cultural customs, norms and regulations and participating in intercultural/social activities, relationship problems, etc.
General living issues	Accommodation difficulties, difficulties in using student support services, financial stress, dietary restrictions, safety threats, etc.
Chinese language issues	Difficulties in communicating with native speakers, understanding lectures, writing up essays, etc.



C. Strategies for successful academic adjustment of international students in Chinese universities-In terms of coping strategies to overcome Chinese language issues and for a successful study period some methods can be followed. To learn a new language, students can follow a basic Chinese conversation group in the university. They can also get a 'conversation partner' program that allows them to meet and interact with Chinese students on campus on a weekly basis. During the focal group conversation session, they can also download several useful Chinese learning apps on their smart phones and study them in their spare time. They should spend time and try to communicate more with Chinese friends too, most of whom provides much support for them in China. It would break the language barrier. If they have trouble understanding lectures in class because of the accents they can ask for help from the teachers. Understanding the most challenging part of the education system can be much easier if they get help from classmates and teachers. Students seldom tend to ask questions in class and try not to challenge their teacher for fear or embarrassment and in order to avoid making a negative impression. They can break this barrier by interacting more with the teachers. Group studying can be helpful too. At the beginning of every class, the teachers can call the students' attention to the accent problems and encourage them to speak and ask more if they have problems with that. In case they do not understand what their teachers are saying, they should speak to them and ask their teachers to explain what they missed. Students should also have the opportunity to learn outside the classroom. During office hours they can interact with their teachers even can ask for help if they face any problem in lectures. Additionally, students can seek assistance from their international community, as they at first feel uncomfortable interacting with native speakers, including their teachers. This will also help them to broaden their knowledge about other countries and their culture. There are many challenges facing international students studying at the university, none more so than the transition into writing academic English. Even students from English-speaking countries find it difficult to jump from the casual day-to-day style to the very high standard expected of students in post-secondary institutions. Teachers should also arrange some placement tests for the students and it will help them to learn Chinese better. The aim of placement test is to determine the learners' state of knowledge. Placement test should indicate firstly whether the learners need the course at all and secondly, should a need be indicated, what form the course should take? A placement test is, therefore, both a proficiency and a diagnostic test. To put it in another way, based on the results of a placement test, one can understand whether the learners are proficient in the skills required or not. If yes, no further instruction is needed. If the learners are not proficient, a placement test can indicate how far and in what ways the learner falls short of the proficiency level. It is not only a linguistic, but a cultural shift – expectations are quite different. Another common obstacle

comes when students haven't yet understood the importance of avoiding plagiarism. It's very difficult to integrate researched text into one's own style of writing, and it's something that can also be affected by one's level of proficiency in English. The roles of teachers are also important as it is related both to assumptions about language and language learning at the level of approach. Some methods are totally dependent on the teacher as a source of knowledge and direction; for successful cohesion and teamwork, teachers can devise new and engaging solutions to bring individuals of varying backgrounds together. For example, team building activities and organize each team with individuals who normally don't work together and those with different cultural backgrounds. By enrolling in a study abroad program, they will have the chance to see a side of their major that they may not have been exposed to at home. Being friendly and polite goes a really long way. If the students are being polite and appear to be trying, they will have a much greater chance of people being more patient and helping them. They should work on breaking down the barriers using translators, interpreters, and language classes, and also give their best to communicate clearly when speaking to native and non-native speakers. International students and their parents should obtain more comprehensive and accurate pre departure information about the life and study in China. The current study indicates that thorough preparation for the upcoming adjustments would result in less stress and frustration during the initial weeks and months of their time in China. International exposure such as international trips, short term visits, and working in international corporations would be very helpful to improve their cross-cultural knowledge, and therefore shorten their cross- cultural and academic adjustment time in China. Other convenient ways for students to use in their daily life to enhance their culturally relevant knowledge or skills could be meeting with Chinese students in China and watching Chinese movies and documentaries. Study abroad offers greater opportunities, but like life itself, it is full of stress and difficulty. As Yan (2008) argued, international students' cross-cultural adjustments are not only influenced by group level acculturation factors (e.g. social, cultural, economic, and employment), but also by individual-level factors (e.g. age, gender, major, marital status, expectations, pre departure knowledge and skills). Additionally, before making a final decision about study abroad, one should not only look at the overall picture of international students' group acculturation in China, but also take a careful consideration of the individual factors and judge whether they are personally ready for the inevitable stressors and difficulties. Additionally, international students should actively participate in their host country's culture and socialize with natives. They should adopt an integration strategy (synthesizing the best elements of both Chinese and their own cultural traditions, bridging two cultures, and becoming mediating persons) and consciously conduct a deep-structure socio-cultural transformation. This will help international



students alleviate their stress, and shorten their cross-cultural and academic adjustment time.

D. Suggestions for better management of the international students' academic adjustment- In this section, I put forward some suggestions for faculty members and administrators in the hope that they may contribute to the successful academic adjustment of international students. (1) At the beginning of the semester, international students are required to get together to complete their registrations and discuss the course requirements with faculty members. This allows them to become aware of the importance of their given courses as well as to become familiar with their faculty members. (2) There should be an opportunity for international students to meet native speakers and receive help from Chinese students. As a result, they will be able to make more friends and become more outgoing. (3) More group projects ought to be assigned. This will encourage strong relationships amongst classmates and lead to more communication. Even though international students grow up in different backgrounds and environments and may experience unique adjustment issues, they must grasp the courses, coursework, and assessments as their host students. (4) Students can join a basic Chinese conversation group. In terms of coping strategies to overcome Chinese language issues, students can adapt several learning strategies that would meet their situation. As they do not have a lot of time to study and practice Chinese, they can join a basic Chinese conversation group in the hall near their dorm. They can also sign up for a 'conversation partner' program that will allow them to meet and interact with Chinese students on campus on a weekly basis. In this case the students have to be really extrovert and outgoing otherwise it will be harder for them to learn fast. Introverted students should at first break this habit. The more they will be active, the easier it will be for them to capture. (5) They can also download several useful Chinese learning apps on their smartphone and can study them in their spare time. Chinese movies and dramas also play an important role. (6) There should be one or two international student coordinators so that they can check up on students whether they need any assessment or not. (7) University can hire more foreign faculty to attract foreign students and more eligible employees in overseas office and can interact with the foreign students. Given these perceptions, university personnel can take necessary steps to make their academic sector better for international students. Language program coordinators should become more aware of these issues, which present many and varied challenges for international students, and strive to authentically help them, by means of psychological assistance, cultural training, or counseling (Ikeguchi 2012). They must become aware of the degree of success of their international students, helping international students to be successful requires colleges and universities to be proactive in illustrating their dedication and belief in the contributions of international students by engaging in related research and offering appropriate programming and services. The

interaction with international students with their Chinese friends, Chinese students' hard-working attitude towards study might have a positive impact on international students, suggesting that having more Chinese friends would help international students to adjust academically.

This study shows that international students, who have more local friends, tend to adjust better to higher education, can learn more and they get the habit of working hard from them. Therefore, expanding international students' social circle with Chinese students may have a positive impact on international students' academic performance or may help them to study harder, as do the Chinese students. The universities can arrange international events to engage Chinese students. It would be practical to include both host-national and international students in academic and non-academic activities. However, the difficulty is that Chinese students take most courses in Chinese. Hence, schools would need to launch more combined classes taught in English and design a more international curriculum. Another suggestion is to bring Chinese students and international students together for language practice. The results of this study indicated that international students are eager to form friendships with Chinese students with the purpose of practicing Chinese and vice versa. It suggested that these result-oriented friendships were hard to maintain even if they worked well in the beginning. It might be different if students could meet one another for the purpose of language practice and develop friendships based on communication and mutual help. One measure would be to offer English classes for a group of both Chinese and non-English-speaking international students; another might be to offer such relevant activities as Chinese language speech activities for which Chinese students volunteer to serve as mentors.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although the study is not intended to be applicable to all international students in China, the potential of applying the findings of the present study to other institutions in China is still considerably high. The main purposes of the study are: to assist the international students in developing better study approaches and to help researchers and educational managers to devise new strategies for the improvement of the existing strategies in teaching international students. The focus of this study was on the learning experiences of foreign students with hypothesis that they come to the international universities after making up their minds about adjusting to the local culture but were unaware that they were going to face academic shocks once they arrived there. This thesis explores the challenges and the problems international students face in a Chinese technical university academically. According to the survey conducted, the majority of the international students imply that their struggle was intertwined with several variables, which include new environment and language, not having anyone there and doing everything all by themselves. Due to the new educational system, they are receiving low grades. At the



beginning the students tend to struggle more to understand and they feel uncomfortable participating in classroom activities or taking more time to understand a new course. But after some time, they get used to it and become more flexible. This study also shows that international students having insufficient language skills are prone to have a dissatisfied study abroad experience.

A. Significance of the study- With the increasing interest of foreign students towards China, the Chinese education sector, both private and public, must pay attention to both the opportunities and challenges that such a high density of international students poses to university administrators. For instance, student-faculty interaction in social and academic settings and instruction language are key aspects influencing international students' learning experiences. In China, professors are viewed as respected authorities who are not meant to be doubted or questioned, and students are taught to be quiet listeners who follow the rules set by professors, while in other countries classes are interactive and sometimes informal. The primary goal of this study is to identify the problems in the academic sector. The findings of this study provide insights and implications for international students as well as language instructors and program coordinators in a Chinese university setting. For international students, this thesis gives some suggestions regarding how to adapt to a new academic environment and improve their academic achievement. The study also comes up with some recommendations for improving the academic and service quality so that Chinese universities can attract more international students.

This study was limited by the fact that the number of individuals who took part in this study was a small number in the first place. This is mainly because of the small international student population at the technical university where I conducted the survey. Because of the still ongoing pandemic, the researcher had to conduct the surveys and interviews online, which was sometimes difficult due to the Internet problem. For instance, some students did not respond to their messages timely and others may have felt impatient to complete the questionnaire. Consequently, the findings, based on such a small sample size, may not be transferable to international students in a different context. Secondly, I only counted the frequency of the participants' answers to the questions in the questionnaire. More sophisticated statistical analysis, for instance, correlation analysis, would yield more convincing results.

It is therefore recommended that, in the future, more international students in the same or other contexts are recruited in order to collect more direct and constructive feedback for in-depth analysis. Considering that this study focused solely on academic adjustment, further studies may need to be undertaken to investigate the students' social, personal and attachment adjustment management as well.

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