International Students' Reflective-Integrative Learning: Variation by Geographical Regions of Origin

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Background

- An existing practice that often lump international students into one group (Anderson, Carmichael, Harper, & Huang, 2009)

- Focusing too much on international students' challenges (Zhao, Kuh, and Carini, 2005)

- The importance of integrative-learning for both international and domestic students (Brockbank & McGill, 2007)

Objectives

1. To what extent do international senior students' reflective-integrative learning vary by the [geographical regions of origin[1]]?

2. How do international seniors from different geographical regions compare to U.S. seniors in term of reflective-integrative learning?

[1] Geographical regions of origin refer to Version 6.15 of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) which was developed by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Theoretical Framework

- Reflective-integrative learning: A learning style in which students reflect what they have learned and integrate their comprehension to build a larger understanding of a certain concept (Brockbank & McGill, 2007)

- Compared to domestic students, international students:
  - value academic success as their first priority (Chen, 1999; Yi, Lin, & Kishimoto, 2003)
  - are more engaged in academic work (Zhao, et al., 2005)
  - scored higher than domestic students in reflective-integrative learning (ACER, 2010)

- A missing piece: International students from which region?

Data Source

- 2015 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
  - **What**. An annual survey that measure students' experience in undergraduate education in the U.S. and Canada
    - ❖Consists of 10 Engagement Indicators, other items related to students' behavior/opinion, some students' background characteristics, and some institutional characteristics
  - **Why**.
    - ❖The need of "process indicators" (McCormick, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2013)
    - ❖The need of assessing university quality from students' perspective
  - **How**. NSSE administration is about 12-month time span
    - ❖Summer: Registration and planning
    - ❖Fall/Winter: Survey preparations
    - ❖Spring: Survey administration
    - ❖Summer/Fall: Data and reports

Sample

Groups	Count	%	RI Mean	RI SD
Africa Sub-Saharan	242	3.71	41.71	12.02
Asia	1440	22.07	37.58	12.07
Canada	191	2.93	38.47	12.66
Europe	454	6.96	40.26	12.80
Latin America & Caribbean	555	8.51	39.84	12.37
Middle East & North Africa	253	3.88	37.24	12.29
Oceania	43	.65	39.12	15.19
Domestic	3262	50.00	39.46	12.85

Measure & Analytical Approach

- Measure = Reflective-Integrative Learning (RI – Cronbach's alpha = .89)

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?	Response Options
a) Combining ideas from different courses when completing assignments	
b) Connecting your learning to societal problems or issues	
c) Including diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments	Never Sometimes Often Very Often
d) Examining the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	
e) Trying to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	
f) Learning something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	
g) Connecting ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge	

- Analytical Approach
  - ANOVA and ANCOVA (with major as the covariate)

Findings

- Senior students from Middle East and North Africa have the lowest score on RI compared to senior students from other regions (n = 253; mean = 37.24; SD = 12.29)

- Senior students from Africa and Sub Saharan have the highest score on RI compared to senior students from other regions (n = 242; mean = 41.71; SD = 12.02)

- Domestic students score 39.46 in average on RI (n = 3,262; SD = 12.85)
  - Compared to domestic students, senior students from Asia are the least comparable in terms of RI score (n = 3,227; mean = 39.46; SD = 12.85; $p<.05$)

- After controlling students' major, the analysis did not statistically change the results

Discussion & Implications

- Addressing the limitation of a study by Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005)
- Confirming studies from Gudykunst and Hammer (1988) as well as Olaniran (1996) who hypothesized there are differences among international students from different geographical regions of origin
- Treating international students similarly is unwise.
- Implications
  - Disaggregating data of international students based on geographical regions of origin
  - Creating intercultural orientation that could support students' reflective-integrative learning
 - Office of international services as a one-stop-shop for international students

Future Research

- Focusing on international students from Middle East and North Africa region

- Studying international students by country of origin

- Including a proportional number of sample in each region

- Including other key variables in the equation

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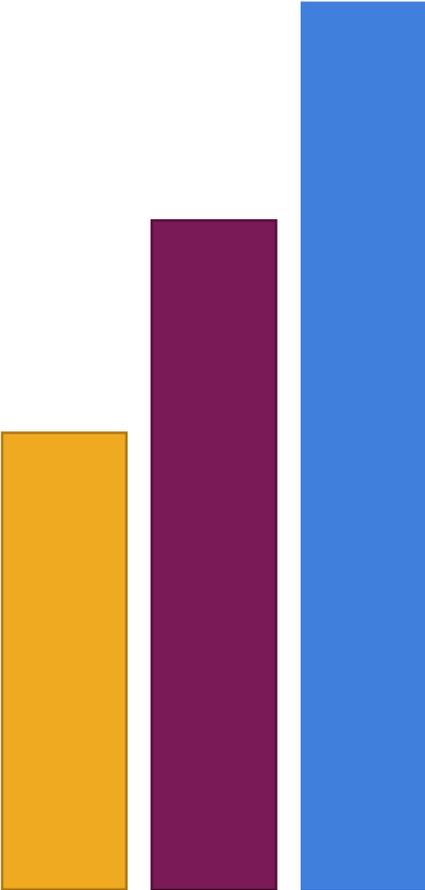
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