

Surname and initials	Olujobi O. O
Student Number	201108095
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Name of Supervisor	Dr. Philani Moyo
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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This is to certify that this study was conducted by

Omobola Olaitan Olujobi

A student in the Department of Sociology and Industrial Sociology

University of Fort Hare

Under my supervision

Dr. Philani Moyo

Department of Sociology

University of Fort Hare

14th April, 2014

DECLARATION

I, Omobola Olaitan Olujobi, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted to this or any other university for any degree before.

I also declare that all sources cited in the study (as verbatim quotes, paraphrases or summaries) have been correctly and fully acknowledged by complete references, and that the responsibility for doing so, as directed by my supervisor and in terms of the University's policy on plagiarism, is my responsibility and mine alone. I absolve my supervisor and the university of any responsibility should this later be proved otherwise.

Signed:



Date: 14th April, 2014.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Victor and children: Hannah and John.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Philani Moyo for his advice and guidance at every stage of this thesis. Many thanks to the International Office staff at Rhodes University, most especially Lee-Anne Venter for providing those valuable information. I am particularly grateful for assistance given by Director and Administrator of International Affairs Office of University of Fort Hare, Arthur Johnson and Chevon Jacobs. I will like to express my sincere appreciation to all the international students from University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University who participated in the research, without you this work could not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

International students have become major role players in international education across the globe. Their enrollment in different universities has increased in the past few decades worldwide. Most of these students bring rich cultural diversity and skills to their various host institutions and countries. These trends signal the need to examine and understand international students within the South African context. Against this background, this study explores the factors that influence academic choices of international students, academic and social challenges they face and the role of social capital in influencing international student integration at the Universities of Fort Hare and Rhodes in South Africa. A qualitative research design was employed in this study. Thirty international students were selected (and interviewed) using purposive sampling and snowballing.

The study found that some of the main factors that influence the academic choices of international students include availability of scholarships and funding, recommendations of the institution by family and friends, availability of preferred course and the reputation of the institution. Some of the main challenges faced by international students in these two institutions include language barriers, financial difficulty, expensive but improperly maintained accommodation and culture shock. These challenges impede the smooth integration of international students into their new academic and social environment. However, the students employ several strategies in attempt to address the challenges they face. These include joining a student or community social organization, community engagement and making friends. These social networks and organizations serve as a support system and connection hub for the students. The study recommends that it is pertinent for the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University to meet the needs and expectations of its international students through regular surveys that give them room to speak about their experiences. The need for efficient International Offices at both institutions is crucial as well as the employment of open-minded multicultural trained staff in these offices. The study also suggests the need for the both institutions to provide affordable and comfortable accommodation for its international students.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education
IEASA	International Education Association of South Africa
LAU	Learning Advancement Unit
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RU	Rhodes University
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TLC	Teaching and Learning Centre
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

THE OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Internationalization is not a new concept (Sehoole and Knight, 2013), but the increase in its usage in academic circles is partly due to the wave and effects of globalization (Vikash, 2006; Wilkins and Huisman, 2011) in which the world is increasingly becoming integrated. The rate of internationalization and its effects can be seen across higher education institutions all over the world. According to Chen (2008), the effects of globalization and internationalization are significant on international education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (2006; 2012) reported that there has been a significant increase globally in the number of student enrolment in higher education institutions in the last few decades. There were 68 million students worldwide in 1991; 92 million in 1999 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006; 2012). This figure rose to 132 million in 2004 and by 2009 over 33 million more students were enrolled across the globe which brought the number of students to over 165 million (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006; 2012). International students comprised about 1.1million, 1.3 million, and 1.75 million in 1980 1990, and 1999 respectively (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006; 2012). In the subsequent years there was an unprecedented increase in the number of international students, the numbers rose to about 2.5million in 2004 and 3.4 million in 2009 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006; 2012).

Arkoudis (2006) states that globally, more people than ever before are choosing to undertake international education. According to Shanka (2006), besides the increase in the number of international students, export earnings through international education are significant. The Council on Higher Education (2009) notes that, globally, “higher education is becoming an increasingly international endeavour and South Africa is not immune to these developments”. Rouhani (2007); Aloyo and Wentzel (2011) concur, arguing that, the past decade has witnessed a significant increase in the number of international students applying to various South African higher education institutions. Since South Africa was welcomed back into the international community in 1994, its higher education institutions have witnessed drastic changes (Rouhani 2007; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012). The sector is open to people from all walks of life and the number of students admitted to different institutions across the country has continued to rise.

Rouhani (2007) explains that in the past, the response of South African universities to internationalization was varied. Rouhani (2007) further added that, in recent years, the institutions are more aware of the importance of internationalization of education and are making conscious efforts to internationally integrate their institutions. More institutions have links, cooperation and partnerships with other institutions across the globe. Exchange of students between institutions is on the increase, facilitation of visit of scholars to increase students’ knowledge base and many students are crossing borders to acquire degrees from South African higher education institutions.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) notes that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has the highest number of students globally studying outside their country of origin. The number was put at 6 percent and almost half of these students opted to study in one of the higher education institutions in South Africa. This helps to position South Africa as one of the emerging popular destinations for international students besides China, South Korea and Malaysia. The country is ranked as the eighth most popular study destination for international students (IEASA, 2009). This is corroborated by the International Education Association of South Africa (2011) which argues that “South Africa’s higher education sector is the strongest and most diverse in Africa”.

Against this background, this study examines the international composition of the student population at the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and Rhodes University (RU). It also unpacks the reasons behind these students’ choice of South African universities. It further examines the academic and social challenges that international students encounter in the selected universities and how they address challenges encountered. Lastly, the study investigates the role of social capital in influencing international students’ integration into university academic and social life.

1.2 Research Problem

International students are an important part of the higher education system in South Africa. A literature search on international students showed that there are few works that have been done locally and most of these focused on financial benefits and internationalization of higher

education (see Snowball and Antrobus (2006); Rouhani (2007); Skervin (2010); Aloyo and Wentzel (2011); Chimucheka (2012). However, none of them dealt with the students' academic choices, experiences and social integration in South Africa. Thus, the bulk of the literatures on students experience are works of the international scholars, such as Tannis (2010); Harrison and Peacock (2009); Huang (2008); Townsend and Poh (2008); Vikash (2006); Robertson *et. al* (2000) all which do not refer to the South African higher education sector. This therefore means that the academic choices, challenges, and integration into university student life have not been adequately explored in the South Africa context. This study begins to address this research and knowledge gap because it is pertinent to engage the students and document their academic choices, experiences and social integration challenges.

1.3 Research Questions

This study answers the following research questions:

- ❖ What factors influenced UFH and RU international students' choice of these universities?
- ❖ What are the academic and social challenges faced by international students and what strategies are they using to address them?
- ❖ What is the role of social capital in influencing international students' integration into university academic and social life?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are the following:

- ❖ To examine the factors that influence UFH and RU international students' choice of these universities.
- ❖ To understand the academic and social challenges faced by international students and the strategies they are using to address them.
- ❖ To understand the role of social capital in influencing the international students' integration into university academic and social life.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Scholars contributions on issues related to international students are basically shaped around different theoretical frameworks (Zhou et al, 2008; Vu, 2013). These frameworks include: acculturation theory; socio-cultural theory of learning; cross-cultural adjustment, culture shock, transformative theory, and positioning theory (Vu, 2013). This study is guided by acculturation theory and social capital theory as it answers the three research questions outlined above.

Acculturation theory can be broken down into three aspects. Firstly, culture learning theory pertains to socio-cultural skills and friendship networks that individual can acquire and create. This includes language (Sam and Berry, 2010), that will help in their integration process on a daily basis. Kashima and Loh (2006) notes that the more connected to the host institutions and communities the greater the cultural knowledge the student will be able to acquire which will in turn help them in navigating their new academic and social environments.

Secondly, stress and coping mechanisms explain how individuals acquire social skills that will enable them to adjust to their new academic and social environments (see Sam and Berry, 2010) and thirdly, social identification concept express inter-group perceptions and relations. This helps individuals to identify themselves with a particular group, through this group they are able to relate to their environment.

To complement acculturation theory, this study also uses social capital theory and concepts. For Lin (1999), social capital is defined as “resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/ or mobilized in purposive actions”. Putnam (1995) refers to social capital as the “features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits”. The above definitions of social capital show that it is all about relationships that are built on mutual understanding for the benefit of individuals who belong to a particular group. As Field (2003), points out that the focal point of social capital is that ‘relationship matter’. He further suggests that affiliation with different networks makes achievement of goals and tasks a lot easier.

Social capital theory adequately provides explanations for the value of social networks and support systems that are required for international students to adjust to their new academic and social environments as Field (2003) states that ‘connections count’. Taylor (2012) indicates that the development of social capital helps the student experience. It helps to facilitate and improve their stay abroad while studying. Lin (1999) concur that social capital facilitates flow of information and enhances individual possibility of getting things done with less difficulty as a result of the networks they have created for themselves.

1.6 The Research Setting

According to the Southern African Regional Universities Association (2012) the University of Fort Hare was established in 1916 and is the first historically black University in South Africa. The University of Fort Hare has three campuses located in Bisho, East London and Alice all in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2009).

Rhodes is a contact university and offers its courses on contact bases (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics, 2011). Unlike the University of Fort Hare, Rhodes University has one campus located in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape Province.

1.7 Context of the Study

Currently, there are 23 universities in South Africa. The International Education Association of South Africa (2009) stated that qualifications offered by South African institutions are internationally recognized. This is a plus to the country's education sector.

There are 892 936 students in all the public institutions across the country. These consist of undergraduate and postgraduate students (Council on Higher Education, 2009). Aloyo and Wentzel (2011) and Rouhani (2007), note that the number of international students in higher education institutions in South Africa has increased tremendously in recent years. Recent data by the International Education Association of South Africa (2011) shows an increased in international students enrolment from 53 738 in 2006 to more than 64 000 in 2011. Approximately 70 percent of these are from Southern Africa, while about 15 percent were from

other African countries. The remaining figure was from other continents. The increase in the number of international students can be partly attributed to the diversity and quality of South Africa higher education institutions.

This research was done at the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University. One of the main reasons for focusing on these two institutions is because of their historical background. According to Rouhani (2007), University of Fort Hare is one of the historically disadvantaged higher education institutions while Rhodes University is one of the historically advantaged higher education institutions. The Department of Higher Education and Training (2012) stated that historically advantaged institutions have more links than historically black universities. During the apartheid era, the University of Fort Hare was meant for blacks while Rhodes University was predominantly populated by white students. However, the end of apartheid marked the end of restrictions placed on black people as to where they could study. This period ushered in a new era in that people of different races can study wherever they chose to.

In 2006, more than 8 500 students were enrolled at the University of Fort Hare (HEMIS data, 2006 cited in Southern African Regional Universities Association 2012). Out of these, 7 425 were of South African origin while over 1 000 students were from other Southern African countries, 89 students were from the rest of Africa and other part of the world (HEMIS data, 2006 cited in Southern African Regional Universities Association, 2012). Statistics from the University of Fort Hare (Academic Planning Unit) reveals a steady increase in international students enrolment. However, there was a slight decrease in enrolment in 2011 (1 505 students) and 2012 (1 388 students) (UFH, Academic Planning Unit, 2012). This could partly be

attributed to the global recession as well as political and economic unrest and upheaval in Zimbabwe which is the main sponsor of international students at UFH (emphasis mine).

Rouhani (2007) observes that the University of Fort Hare was historically limited in terms of both human and financial resources and as such was unable to fully participate in internationalization when compared with other institutions such as University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and University of KwaZulu-Natal. Work done at University of Fort Hare by Makura et al (undated) suggests that the institution is making every effort to help its students to achieve academic excellence. According to Makura et al (undated) the University of Fort Hare encourages internationalization, because of the institution's goal of raising and educating world class scholars through exchange of information, ideas and cultural knowledge. Its mission is to produce graduates who are not limited by the institution's historical background but are fully equipped to contribute to national and international development. This is clearly spelled out in the institution's mission statement:

The mission of the University is to provide high quality education of international standards contributing to the advancement of knowledge that is socially and ethically relevant, and applying that knowledge to the scientific, technological and social-economic development of our nation and the wider world (University of Fort Hare, 2012).

The Learning Advancement Unit (LAU) is one of the units under Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) instituted to carry out various programmes and interventions that will help the students

at the UFH. It was reported in the evaluation done by Makura et al (undated) that the LAU (and UFH at large) is achieving its objectives bringing people from different backgrounds together for the purpose of learning and integration.

Unlike Fort Hare, Rhodes University has one campus which is located in Grahamstown. Rhodes University Digest of Statistics (2011) shows that the institution registered 5 914 undergraduate and postgraduate students in 2006; this number increased to more than 7 000 in 2010. According to Rhodes University Digest of Statistics (2011) there was a slight decrease in enrolment of international students in 2008 and 2009, the number was 1 343 and 1 384 respectively. However, the overall enrolment for these years remained steady at 6 320 in 2008 and 7 005 in 2009. By 2010 the institution's international student enrolment increased to 1 452, Zimbabwean students made up a whopping 56 percent of this number while students from other SADC countries accounted for about 27 percent (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics, 2011). The percentage of students from other African countries was about 9 percent while those from other parts of the world constituted 7.6 percent of the total number of international students.

According to Rouhani (2007), Rhodes University has been participating in internationalization of education but not at the level of universities like the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and University of KwaZulu-Natal. In recent years the institutions has increased its level of commitment to internationalization. It has established an international office. It is stated in the Rhodes University Digest of Statistics (2011) that the international office serves as

a point of call for international students and sees to the welfare of the students as well as connecting them with other institutions for exchange and short studies purposes.

1.8 Significance of Study

This topic was considered worth researching because not much research has been done in this area. There is a dearth of academic and applied research in this area. Also, with the increase in the number of international students in the various higher education institutions across the country and continued internationalization of higher education activities, (Rouhani, 2007; Cross et al, 2011; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012) it was important to intellectually engage with international students. By doing so, firsthand information on their academic and social experiences and integration was obtained. These findings are a contribution to new knowledge and feed the policy recommendations outlined later on in this dissertation.

The study puts forward a number of policy recommendations that have potential to help international students make the most of their academic and social experience in South Africa. It also provides proposal that the concerned institutions could build on as they continue their internationalization efforts.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

Babbie (2007); Neuman (2000); Denzin and Lincoln (2000) outline some of the ethical considerations in social research. These include: voluntary participation, informed consent,

anonymity, confidentiality, avoiding deception by informing the participants the purposes of the research. They also add that in any research, participants should not be harmed physically, legally, emotionally, or financially, and the findings of the study must be analyzed and made available to the academic community.

All the above ethical considerations were observed in this study. All the participants were adequately informed about the purpose of the study and its voluntary nature. Participants' informed consent was sought for and obtained. They were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Confidentiality was paramount; hence no actual respondent names are used when referring to respondents. Data codes linked to individual respondents are used instead. Permission was sought for digitally recording and obtained from each participant. All the information collected was analyzed thematically and will be made available to whoever for academic purposes only.

1.10 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Below is a brief outline of each chapter.

Chapter one covers introduction to the study, research problem, research questions and objectives, theoretical framework as related to study on international students, context of the study, significance of the study and ethical issues. Chapter two presents the current scholarships views and debates on international students' academic choices, challenges, and their social integration. It shows the effects of internationalization of education. Chapter three focuses on how the research was carried; the sampling procedure and size, data collection

instruments. Chapter four focused on discussion and analysis of the findings of the study and proffer answers to the research questions. Chapter five provides succinct recommendations and conclusion for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2006; 2012) and Hendrickson et al (2011) note, that there has been a significant increase globally in the number of student enrolment in higher education institutions in the last few decades. There were 68 million students worldwide in 1991; this figure rose to 132 million in 2004 and by 2009 there was an additional 33 million students which brought the figure of students to over 165 million, international students enrolment constituted about 1.1 million and 1.3 million in 1980 and 1990 respectively (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). In the subsequent years there was unprecedented increase in the number of international students to about 3.4 million in 2009 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012; Altbach and Reisberg, 2013). According to Altbach and Reisberg (2013), states that international students' contribution to economies across the globe exceeds US\$ 75 billion. As pointed out by Asteris (2006), the number of international student is predicted to reach 5.8 million by 2020. This prediction implies that increase in the movement of international students will increase their contribution to the global economy.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) report shows that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has the highest number of students globally studying outside their country of origin. The number was put at 6 percent and almost half of these students opted to study in

one of the higher education institutions in South Africa. This contributes to the projection of South Africa as one of the emerging popular destinations for international students besides China, The Republic of Korea and Malaysia. The country is ranked as the eighth most popular study destination for international students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) cited in IEASA (2009).

The International Education Association of South Africa (2009) states, that all universities across South Africa have International students. Majority of these students are from African countries and the rest from Europe, Asia and the Americas (IEASA, 2011). Each institution is expected to have an international office. These offices are expected to provide needed support and necessary information that will help the students to integrate smoothly into their new environment. Thus, the questions are; are the students aware of these services? If yes, do they make use of the services? If no, what factors contribute to non-utilization of these services and how can access to these facilities be promoted?

Townsend & Poh (2008) argued that “international students can be considered from economic, social; and political perspectives”. The international students’ contribution to the South Africa economy was at 2.1 percent (IEASA, 2011). Aloyo & Wentzel (2011) study also suggested that if international graduates are employed to meet scarce skills shortage, the economy will be boosted in the long run.

The international student population at Rhodes University is composed of students from diverse background and from a wide range of countries around the globe. Rhodes University

Digest of Statistics (2011) stated that the institution registered 5 914 undergraduates and postgraduate in 2006, this number increased to more than 7 000 in 2010. According to Rhodes University Digest of Statistics (2011) there was slight decrease in enrolment of international students in 2008 and 2009, the figures stood at 1 343 and 1 384 respectively. By 2010 the number increased to 1 452 and it has been steady, out of which 816 were of Zimbabwe origin while other SADC countries accounted for 395. The number of students from other African countries was at 131 and 110 from other parts of the world. Recent data shows that Rhodes University has an enrolled student population of 6 000 and international students from 57 countries around the world make up 25 percent of this number, (<http://www.ru.ac.za/rhodes/introducingrhodes/>, 2013).

According to Southern African Regional Universities Association (2012) University of Fort Hare was established in 1916 and is the first historically black University in Southern Africa. Fort Hare has three campuses and they are located in Bisho, East London and Alice (Council on Higher Education, 2009). More than 8 500 students were enrolled in 2006. Out of which 7 425 were of South African origin, over 1 000 students were from other Southern African countries, 89 students were from the rest of Africa and other part of the world (HEMIS data, 2006 cited in Southern African Regional Universities Association, 2012).

Current statistics from the University of Fort Hare (Academic Planning Unit) reveals a steady increase in international students enrolment. The number rose from 1 312 in 2007 to 1 605 by 2010. However, there was a slight decrease in enrolment in 2011 (1 505 students and 2012 (1, 388 students) (UFH, Academic Planning Unit, 2012). This could be partly attributed to the global

recession as well as political and economic unrest and upheaval in Zimbabwe which is the main sponsor of international students at UFH (emphasis mine).

However, there are other debates from other scholars such as Snowball & Antrobus (2006) that cautioned about the costs and benefits of the international students. They explained this based on their study, that there are no much benefits for the economy of the host country. However, there might not be any significant and immediate financial contribution to South Africa but it's a major contribution to development of skills which is a needed tool for overall development of the region and African continent (see Sehoole and Knight, 2013). Cross et al (2011); Rouhani, (2007) also discussed some of the views about the internationalization of higher education.

In most developed and developing nations such as New Zealand, Australia, United States of America, United Kingdom and Canada, India, and so on, higher education institutions are seen as partners in development, Huang (2008); Townsend & Poh (2008); Brown L & Holloway L. (2008); Neri and Ville, (2008); Li et al (2010); Campbell (2012); Shanka et al (2006). These nations are making all efforts to attract international students as a means of generating revenue as well as meeting exceptional scarce skills shortages.

It was argued by Wiers-Jenssen (2008) that the increase in the number of students studying abroad is an important part of the development of the modern society that is characterized by internationalization and globalization (see also Skevin, 2010). Ramphele (1999) also suggests that presence of international students in an institution is an important integral part of any internationally recognized institution. Gu et al (2010) state that international students are seen

as one of the key group in the internationalization of higher education, because of the benefits they bring to their various institutions, communities and the host countries. The presence of international students in an institution is an indication of the reputation, quality of education and services offered by such institutions.

According to Chan & Dimmock (2008) the global movement of students across different international boundaries is seen from different perspectives based on the agenda, policies and motivations of institutions and countries. Some countries see internationalization of higher education as a means to boost their economy; some view this opportunity as an avenue to encourage social and cultural diversity in emerging globalised world as well as means of building its human capital (see Altbach and Knight, 2007). For instance, the Southern African Development Community countries see exchange of students between the region as a way on building their skilled workforce and by so doing fostering the development agenda of the region (Council on Higher Education, 2009).

The Council on Higher Education (2009) notes that, globally, “higher education is becoming an increasingly international endeavour and South African is not immune to these development”. Rouhani (2007); Aloyo & Wentzel (2011) concur, arguing that, the past decade has witnessed significant increase in the number of international students applying to various South African higher education institutions. It is obvious in the literature that South African universities promote internationalization. However, the institutions are very conscious of priority placement for South African citizens due to concerns that internationalization could limit the number of South African citizens that can be admitted by the higher education institutions

(DHET, 2012). Higher education institutions make every effort to ensure that South Africans have access to higher education before considering students from other countries. For instance, from 2006 Rhodes University reduced its international student intake from 24 percent to 20 percent in 2010 in order to accommodate more host students (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics, 2011). This ensures that the local students are not disadvantaged by enrolment of international students.

2.2. Internationalization of Education at University Fort Hare and Rhodes University

Rouhani (2007) argues that University of Fort Hare was limited by both human and financial resources and as such unable to fully participate in internationalization like other institutions such as University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and University of KwaZulu-Natal while Rhodes University has been participating in internationalization of education this has not been at the same level as in universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and University of KwaZulu-Natal. Rouhani (2007) study further shows that Rhodes University participation in international education in the early 2000s was at a greater level when compared to University of Fort Hare. Rouhani (2007) added that, in the recent years, there has been a number of changes in both institutions with respect to international education.

Rhodes University has increased its level of commitment to internationalization. It has a functioning international office to sustain this commitment and as well as appointment of a director to oversee the activities of the office (Rhodes Digest of Statistics, 2011). However, UFH

is also revamping its international affairs office in an attempt to meet the needs of its international students; in the third quarter of 2012 the institution established two more international offices and recruited more staff, (UFH International Affairs office, 2012). The international office serves as a point of call for the international students, it also sees to the welfare of the students and as well connecting students with other institutions for exchange and short studies. It is the mission of UFH to educate and raise international scholars, thus having an effective international office is crucial in this regard.

UFH mission statement:

The mission of the University is to provide high quality education of international standards contributing to the advancement of knowledge that is socially and ethically relevant, and applying that knowledge to the scientific, technological and social-economic development of our nation and the wider world (University of Fort Hare, 2012).

According to Makura et al (undated) University of Fort Hare encourages internationalization, because of the institution stance to raise and educate world class scholars through exchange of information, ideas and cultural knowledge who are not limited by the historical background of the institution but are fully equipped to contribute to national and international development. This is clearly spelled out in the institution's mission statement above. The university is building its students (Santed, 2009), one of the measures taken by the institution to improve the

writing, reading, retention and integration of their students was through the establishment of Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC).

The Learning Advancement Unit (LAU) is one of the units under (TLC) established to carry out various programmes and interventions that will help the students. It was reported in the evaluation done by Makura et al (undated), that it is achieving its objectives bringing people from different backgrounds together for the purpose of learning and integration. A significant number of participants in the programmes were international students.

2.3 Benefits of Internationalization and International Students

Sehoole and Knight (2013) suggest that internationalization of higher education in Africa has the capacity to strengthen the role of higher education in meeting educational demands and development agenda in Africa as well as the Millennium Development Goals. According to Edmonds (2010) internationalization increase the personal growth of students. Most students are exposed to latest educational technology; this also enhances competitiveness in their areas of specialization. It is believed that living and studying abroad can provide the students with a wealth of knowledge, new perspective to problem solving as well as enrichment with new experiences that can be beneficial to their home countries. Thus, internationalization also fosters awareness of cultural diversity, encourages self-development and innovation.

Rouhani (2007) stated that the South African academic environments is stable and basically free of disruptions that are common and notable in many African higher education institutions. The relative stability helps the students to complete their degrees on time. The cost of

education for international students is relatively cheap in South Africa when compared with the cost involved in studying in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia. South African qualifications are recognized across the globe and in addition to this the institutions offer diverse courses from which students can chose.

International students serve as source of human capital and as well contribute to the development of the host country most especially its economic development, (Shanka et al, 2006; Chen, 2008; Siddiq et al, 2012; Altbach and Reisberg, 2013). They contribute to research projects, research output (Wilkins and Huisman, 2011), teaching and other skills that they acquired over the years are being utilized in their new environments (Hughes, 2013; Altbach and Reisberg, 2013). The presence of international students in a particular country also serves as a means of attraction for families and friends of such international students thus promoting the tourism industry of the host countries, (Townsend and Poh, 2008).

2.4 Understanding International Students

According to Vu (2013), international students come from various cultural backgrounds and beliefs, with varying educational backgrounds and systems. It was explained that their experiences, purposes, (Vu, 2013) aspirations, expectations and needs (Arambewela and Hall, 2011) also vary. It was pointed out in the literature that international students have many needs that need to be met for them to adjust and achieve their academic goals (LI and Kaye, 1998). According to Li and Kaye (1998) one way to help and support international students is to understand them (see also Arambewela and Hall, 2011). They further suggest that is also

important to improve the quality of services offered them as well as provision of access to counsellors.

The work by Campbell (2012) also showed that practical efforts by the institutions to connect the international students to host students will help immensely. As pointed out by Kashima and Loh (2006) that international students seek friendship with the host students, Makura et al (undated) also made similar recommendations. This can be done through peer grouping which will expose the international students to the host students' and communities, thus enhancing their adjustment and integration into new environment. It is advised that the integration process must be done as soon the new semester begins because the first few weeks of the semester pose the most challenges to these students (see also Vu, 2013).

Mahmud et al (2010) recommend that efficient international offices, multicultural trained student personnel, and support programmes that focus on empowering international students will go a long way in service delivery to international students. This was noted by Briggs (2006) as a way of helping both the students and institutions; because having the right information will help the student's choice and this will ensure the institution retain its students. As Altbach and Reisberg (2013) stated that, "key to global student mobility is ensuring that the student is matched with the best possible study opportunity".

2.5 Social Integration and Social Capital

Social capital is viewed as a multidimensional concept, depending on what aspect that is being discussed. World Bank (2011) describes social capital as 'the institutions, relationships and

norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interaction'. Taylor (2012) indicates that the development of social capital will help student integration and overall experience and success. Umberson (1987); Mayo et al (1995); Berkman et al (2000); Ward (2001) asserted that social support, social integration, social relationships and affiliation enhances individual's well-being physically, mentally and psychologically. Ward (2001) argued that "social integration is linked to positive outcomes for students, institutions and broader community". According to Cruz-Saco (2008), social integration

Is the process of creating unity, inclusion and participation at all levels of society within the diversity of personal attributes so that every person is free to be the person she wants to be. Personal attributes include socio-economic class, age, gender, sexual preference and expression, political ideas, ethnicity and cultural traits, religion, citizenship (national origin) and geographical region of origin and so on. Social integration enables persons, regardless of their attributes, to enjoy equal opportunities, rights and services that are available to the so-called mainstream group.

It is believed that social integration of international students dependent on various factors such as language proficiency, academic success and capability, cultural adjustment, (Vu, 2013). Access to social support (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) as well as institutional support can reduce stress on these students (Lewthwaite, 1996). In the case of international students, it is obvious that, for them to achieve their goals, the importance of both institutional support and immediate community support in the achievement of set academic goals and integration cannot be overemphasized.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided information on the views of scholars and debates about the subject under study. The subsections cover the empirical evidence and theoretical facts on international students. It shows the change that has emerged and still emerging in higher education sector across the globe, increasing internalization of education and movement of students across different countries and the importance of international students in higher education sector.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

There is a wide range of alternative methodologies or approaches and criteria for understanding social phenomena, in the social sciences (Ogunbameru, 2004; Tewksbury 2009). These include qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This study uses a qualitative approach. Babbie and Mouton (2001) define qualitative research as the approach used in describing and understanding human action and social phenomenon. It is also seen as “unstructured, primarily exploratory methodology based on small samples intended to provide insight and understanding” (Ogunbameru, 2004). Qualitative methodologies include: ethnographic studies, focus group discussions, life histories, participant observations and different types of interviews and other approaches that involve researchers actively listening to what the researched say (Hood, et al. 1999).

This study chose to use a qualitative approach due to its many advantages. According to Tewksbury (2009), qualitative research provides more informative, richer and deeper understandings of social phenomena because of the way the data is collected and analyzed. It is also about learning because it reveals the unknown, it describes which helps to build knowledge (see also, Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Ogunbameru, 2004). Rossman and Rallis (2003) further state that it is “fundamentally interpretive and emergent, characterized by a

stance of openness, curiosity and respect". This helps to enhance the knowledge base of a particular subject matter.

3.2 Gaining Entry into the Research Communities.

The study was conducted at two universities in the Eastern Cape Province, University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University. The unit of observation was the international students. To gain access to the students the researcher made enquiries from the International Affairs offices of both institutions and provided the offices with letter of introduction from the University of Fort Hare. The offices were willing to assist; however, due to issue of confidentiality the office at Rhodes University could not give the contact details of its students to the researcher. At University of Fort Hare international office, there was no database of international students' contact details.

At Rhodes, the researcher was advised to send a letter of request through the international office. The request letters were electronically mailed to the international students through the international office. This letter informed them about the research and requested for voluntary participation. Interested students responded through electronic mails to the researcher. The researcher then liaised with the students and a convenient date, time and place for the interviews were arranged.

However, at the university of Fort Hare it was not easy connecting with the students. The University of Fort Hare International Affairs office could not connect the researcher with the students because the office did not have the contact details of international students. In view of

this setback, the researcher decided to send electronic mails to the students via their university registered electronic mailing addresses with the help of the web administrator. This yielded some result, however the number of students that responded was below number needed. To address this shortfall, snowballing was then used. The researcher went to the students' residences in order to identify more respondents through snowballing. Snowballing is a method in which each person interviewed can suggest another person to the researcher for the purpose of possibly interviewing them.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

3.3.1 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth interviews were used in the data collection process. A total of 30 participants (15 international students from each university) were interviewed. Ogunbameru (2004) describes a semi-structured in-depth interview as largely unstructured, direct, personal interview in which a single respondent is probed by a skilled interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a topic. According to Guest et al (2013), in-depth interview provides depth and detail information on particular phenomenon and its characteristics to stimulate people to narrate their individual experiences. It also has the ability to create openness. In other words, it helps and encourages people to expand on their responses. In doing this, the respondents clarify unclear questions so also the researcher is able to clarify unclear responses given.

The instrument is considered suitable for the topic under consideration because of its ability to probe respondents which helps in unveiling some important and detailed information. Through this inductive manner knowledge can be generated (Guest et al, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) that can develop theory which might not be known if some of other instruments are used such as focus group discussion and so on. Due to the flexibility in asking questions in-depth interviews gives room for respondents to clarify unclear questions Neuman (2000); Sarantakos (2005) and allowed the researcher to probe for deeper quality data. Guest et al (2013) stated that generalization of data collected through qualitative methods can be difficult because of the limited sample involved. However, qualitative data provides a great starting point for any research. It can also be challenging to make a systematic comparison.

3.3.2 Non-Participant Observation

Non- participant observations were also used as data collection instrument. Sarantakos (2005) explains that observation is one of the oldest methods for gathering information in social sciences. It involves collection of data by using vision as its main source (Sarantakos, 2005). Basically, observation involves using all the senses (Neuman, 2000). Through observation, the researcher takes note of body language and other gestures, Denzin & Lincoln (2000) as well as the physical environment. Non-participant observation involves observing the activities of people without intruding or participating in the activities (Ogunbameru, 2004).

3.4 Sampling Procedure

3.4.1 Non-probability Sampling

The 30 respondents in this research were selected using non-probability sampling. According to Babbie (2007) sampling is a way of selecting observation units. Sarantakos (2005) also describes sampling “as the process of choosing the respondents and the units of the study in general”. This can be done through non-probability or probability sampling. Non-probability sampling was used in this research because of the limited time. A large number of respondents could not be adequately accommodated and engaged within the allocated time frame for research at this level of academic research. Non-probability sampling involves sampling techniques such as snowballing and purposive sampling.

3.4.2 Snowballing and Purposive sampling

Babbie (2007) described purposive or judgmental sampling as the sampling in which the units of observation is selected based on the researchers judgment of which subjects and respondents will be suitable, useful, available or representative. Following purposively sampling techniques, enquires about international students were made from the International Affairs office of both institutions (UFH and RU). This provided foundation for the identification and connection with international students who eventually became study respondents. Snowballing is a method whereby each person interviewed can suggest another person to the researcher for the purpose of possible interviewing.

Table 3.1 Sample Characteristics

Institution	Gender	
	Male	Female

University of Fort Hare	7	8
Rhodes University	4	11
Total	11	19

Table 3.2 Sampling Techniques

Institution	Sampling Techniques	
	Purposive	Snowballing
University of Fort Hare	2	13
Rhodes University	15	0
Total	17	13

3.5 Study Respondents

Using the above sampling techniques, 30 respondents were selected and interviewed. Their socio-demographic are as follows.

Table 3.3 University of Fort Hare Respondents

	Postgraduate	Undergraduate	Gender	Age Range
Respondent 1	X		Male	35-40
Respondent 2	X		Female	35-40
Respondent 3	X		Female	30-35
Respondent 4		X	Female	20-25
Respondent 5		X	Female	25-30
Respondent 6	X		Male	35-40
Respondent 7	X		Female	20-25
Respondent 8	X		Female	40-45
Respondent 9	X		Male	35-40
Respondent 10		X	Male	20-25
Respondent 11		X	Male	20-25
Respondent 12		X	Female	20-25
Respondent 13		X	Male	20-25
Respondent 14		X	Female	20-25
Respondent 15		X	Male	20-25

Source: Field data

Table 3.4 Rhodes University Respondents

	Postgraduate	Undergraduate	Gender	Age Range
Respondent 1	X		Female	20-25

Respondent 2		X	Female	15-20
Respondent 3		X	Female	20-25
Respondent 4	X		Female	30-35
Respondent 5		X	Female	20-25
Respondent 6	X		Male	45-50
Respondent 7	X		Female	30-35
Respondent 8	X		Female	25-30
Respondent 9		X	Male	20-25
Respondent 10		X	Male	25-30
Respondent 11	X		Female	55-60
Respondent 12	X		Female	20-25
Respondent 13		X	Male	15-20
Respondent 14		X	Female	20-25
Respondent 15	X		Female	25-30

Source: Field data

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that begins as data is being collected rather than after data collection has been completed (Stake, 1995 cited in Schutt, 2012). Schutt 2012 states that data analysis in qualitative research starts right from the field, when the researcher observes and takes notes. This provides background in which themes can

be identified and solutions can emerge for the research questions (see Schutt, 2012), the steps above were observed in this study. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) indicates that data analysis and interpretation brings ‘order and understanding’ to the data collected. In other words it involves giving meaning and significance to the responses through detail and rich descriptions of the data.

Table 3.5 Data Analysis Steps

Procedure	Purpose
Field notes	This helped to keep track on how the events emerged at the field and where follow-up was necessary.
Transcription	It is involves transfer of digitally recorded data to texts
Data cleaning and labelling	This helped to arrange the data according to dates and places of interviews in order to avoid mix up.
Coding	Helps to reduce the data and identify emerging themes
Theme creation	Helps to give meaning to the text by creating patterns and themes
	This helps to give meaning to the data

Data Analysis	collected. By connecting the empirical findings with the literature and provides answers to the research questions.
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3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research communities, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, socio-demographic characteristics of study respondents and how the data was analyzed and interpreted. Non-probability sampling (purposive and snowballing sampling) was employed to identify the study respondents. The main instrument of data collection was semi-structured in-depth interviews which were complemented by non-participant observation and field notes. The sampling techniques and data collection methods were use in order to have in-depth information on the subject matter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The findings are arranged in themes that address the objectives of the research. These include the academic choices of international students, the challenges they face, the strategies used by the students to address these challenges, their social integration and the role of social capital in this integration.

4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

A total of 30 respondents were interviewed from the two institutions. This was made up of 15 international students from University of Fort Hare (UFH) and 15 from Rhodes University (RU). The interviews were conducted between October and November, 2012. The majority of the respondents from UFH are from Zimbabwe and mostly undergraduates. Others are from different parts of the African continent except one respondent from Canada. The respondents from Rhodes University cut across different continents and cultural backgrounds. Two-thirds of them are from various countries across Africa while the remaining one-third are from Australia, Italy, Ireland, United States of America, and the Netherlands.

From both universities the age of most respondents ranged between 18 and 42, with one respondent aged 60. There were twelve participants from Rhodes who were single, with two

married and one divorced. While at UFH 10 respondents were single while 5 were married. It is important to bear in mind that the majority of international students from both institutions are from Zimbabwe.

4.3 Factors Influencing International Students' Academic Programme Choices

Shanka et al (2006) note that there are various factors that affect the academic choices of international students which include: the academic reputation of an institution, the variety of courses offered, the quality of education, campus safety, costs/fees, campus location, the opinion of others, proximity and international qualifications, and student financial state. (see also, Briggs 2006; Hemsley-Brown 2012; Altbach and Reisberg 2013). In this study it was found out that there are different factors that contribute to the academic choices of international students. The points discussed below are some of the determinants pointed out by the interviewed international students. These include: (I) the historical background of the university (II) availability of scholarships and cheaper tuition (III) availability of the course of study and its rating (iv) presence and experiences of relatives and friends (v) credibility of the institution and its courses (vi) the admission requirements for the course (vii) proximity to country of origin and international qualifications.

4.3.1 Historical background

Students from Zimbabwe indicated that they are at University of Fort Hare because of its historical background. One respondent noted that

It has more to do with the background of the institution itself. It has produced a lot of renowned African leaders and inspiring leaders. (Respondent 10, UFH 12/11/2012)

To buttress the view above, another Zimbabwe student's response showed how passionate they are about the Africa leaders graduating from the institution.

“My President studied here” (Respondent 4, UFH 19/11/2012).

The above views by UFH students are embedded in history. The University of Fort Hare was founded in 1916 and known for its role in educating black students (Alan, 2000; <http://www.ufh.ac.za/history> (2013)). According to Alan (2000) the institution has “educated and prepared a large number of black graduates for future leadership roles”. Some of the notable alumni include: Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Ntsu Mokhehle, Robert Sobukwe, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Charles Njonjo, and Herbert Chitepo (Alan 2000; <http://www.ufh.ac.za/history> (2013)).

4.3.2 Availability of scholarships and cheaper tuition

Nine out of ten respondents from Zimbabwe at UFH are on government scholarship. The Zimbabwean government has a working relationship with some universities in South Africa thus allowing its citizens to study in these universities on scholarship. Two respondents from Malawi are also being sponsored by the Malawian government. The remaining respondents (one-third of the total respondents) are being sponsored by their parents, relatives or by themselves. However, they are studying in these institutions because the tuition is cheaper when compared to other universities in South Africa and other countries. As one respondent commented “It is

cheaper to study here. I was in Malaysia before". (Respondent 1 RU, 17/10/2012). Another respondent also indicated that "the tuition is affordable" (Respondent 10 UFH, 12/11/2012).

A study by Chen (2008) also revealed that students are conscious about the cost implication of their study when choosing an institution; students sought for institutions with lower tuition and cost of living. The OECD (2011) also made similar observations that international students compare institutions tuition fees, other expenses and financial assistance they can receive. After weighing the options available to them, these options will either encourage or discourage the international student in choosing a particular country and institution. (Lawley and Perry, 1998 cited in Townsend and Poh, 2008).

4.3.3 Availability of preferred course of study

Some students are in these universities because the universities offer the course they want to study. As one respondent commented:

I am here because the course I wanted to study was available here, because of what I am doing in my country Malawi. I wanted a course that was relevant this was where I found a course that was relevant. (Respondent 3, UFH 1/11/2012).

A respondent from Canada highlighted that,

My focus is on rural development in Africa, so it makes big sense for me to come to Fort Hare... it is a predominantly black university and basically focuses on social and economic transformation. I did not want to study Africa from abroad. (Respondent 1 UFH, 5/11/2012).

This is in line with Huang (2008) who noted that students are attracted to an institution because of its course. Altbach and Reisberg (2013) also stated that students decided to study abroad in order to increase their employability in their country of origin. (see also Townsend and Poh, 2008).

4.3.4 The presence and experiences of relatives and friends

Some students also decided to study in these universities because they have or had relatives and friends who had studied there or still studying in the institutions who recommended the institution. Wilkins and Huisman (2011) note that if students are satisfied by an institution they recommend the institution to others such as family and friends. The presence of a family member or a friend in a particular place also has impact on the students choosing a place to study. A respondent from the Netherlands had this to say about her academic choice:

My boyfriend is from here (South Africa) and he is doing his diploma, after we had studied together in the Netherlands we decided to come to South Africa.

(Respondent 8 RU, 17/10/2012)

Another respondent said that: “my brother studied here and it is an interesting place to study” (Respondent 7 RU, 17/10/2012), while another one indicated that. “My brother was staying here and he asked me if I wanted to study because of the crisis that was going on in Zimbabwe. The education was kind of going down and there was a strike every now and then”. (Respondent 7 UFH, 7/11/2012).

The above comments show how the experiences and presence of family and friends can affect the decision making of prospective students, (see Huang, 2008; Townsend & Poh 2008).

4.3.5 The credibility of the institution and its courses

Academic reputation of an institution is one of the top reasons for students choosing a particular institution (Shanka et al, 2006; Briggs, 2006; Hemsley-Brown 2012). The findings in this study confirm that academic reputation is still a major determinant when choosing an institution for students. As one respondent noted, “Rhodes Fine Arts department is one of the best in the country and Africa. They are giving international standard and experience to the students”. (Respondent 5 RU, 15/11/2012). Another student added that, “The Accounting department is widely recognized and it is affiliated with the national Accounting body”. (Respondent 11 UFH, 12/11/2012)

4.3.6 The admission requirements for the course

The entry requirements for the course are considered to be fair by the students at UFH. Some of the students were of the opinion that the university is giving the students opportunity to build their academic career. A respondent said that, the acceptance standard, which is the academic requirements to enroll in the institution, is fairly acceptable and someone can work around it. (Respondent 10 UFH, 12/11/2012). According to Briggs (2006), the entry requirements were one of the issues students critically check in making their choice in Scotland. Townsend and Poh (2008) also stated that easy admission process has impact on students choice.

4.3.7 Proximity to country of origin and obtaining international qualifications

Some students are in these institutions because it is close to their country of origin. “It is closer home”. (Respondent 1 RU, 17/10/2012). Proximity is one of the reasons there are a lot of Zimbabwe students in these two institutions. Briggs’ (2006) findings in Scotland show the importance of distance to students; out of the twenty two factors he looked at proximity to home was part of the top ten (see also Hemsley-Brown, 2012). Also, some of students are pursuing their degrees in order to have an international qualification. As one respondent put it, “I wanted to have an international qualification”. (Respondent 14 UFH, 13/11/2012). This is supported by Townsend & Poh, (2008); Huang (2008), findings that international students want to boost their employability by obtaining their degrees from other countries.

4.4 Academic and Social Challenges faced by International Students

It has been noted widely in literature that international students face different challenges (Li and Kaye 1998; Robertson et al 2000; Carroll and Ryan 2005; Rouhani 2007; Huang 2008; Aloyo and Wentzel 2011). It was observed in this study that there are variations in the factors that predispose international students to these challenges and how they can cope with them. There are various underlying factors that will determine what type of challenge a particular international student will face. These factors include: firstly, the socio-economic background of the students plays a major role in this regard. Secondly, whether the student is on scholarship or has a sponsor is another determining factor that contributes to their ability to cope and adjust to the challenges faced in their day to day academic pursuit. Thirdly, it was also observed

in this study that the students' departments and field of study contribute immensely to their integration and academic success. Fourthly, the networks that the students are involved with have significant effect on their academic and subsequent integration into the university and the larger society.

It was noted that if a student's parents or sponsors are stable and financially buoyant it reduces the financial hardship on the students and vice-versa. Those students who are comfortable financially do not complain about the high tuition fees. As one respondent commented "my parents are comfortable so I don't have any problem financially". (Respondent 1 RU, 17/10/2012). On the other hand, it is more of a struggle for some students in financial need to get through their education. Gu et al (2010) identified in their study that the international students' personal histories, backgrounds and experiences affect their educational environment.

This study also found that sometimes, even those students who are on scholarship tend to face some financial hardships because most sponsors like Malawi and Zimbabwe government relate directly with students institutions and not with the individual students. There are strict rules governing their funding and most of the time it does not cover their research projects. Thus, these students have to source for funds for their research work. As one respondent noted: "though, I am under government scholarship, they do not pay for my research. Lack of funds has in a way limited me. I have not been able to carry out my research the way I will love to due to lack of funds". (Respondent 2 UFH, 1/11/2012).

Some of the students from University of Fort Hare and some post graduate students at Rhodes University complained about their accommodation. The accommodation challenges faced range from the rental price, state of the property, and the distance from campus. The students feel that some accommodation should be reserved for international students, since most of them are coming to South Africa for the first time and do not have relatives or people that can accommodate them. As one of them puts it:

Accommodation is very expensive. The accommodation here in East London is very expensive when compared to Alice campus. I had to move out of the residence to look for a cheaper accommodation. (Respondent 2 UFH, 1/11/2012).

Furthermore, the issue around language creates a big barrier in an attempt by the international students to reach out to the host students and broader community. This in a way limited the social and academic integration process. As one student observed, “most local students do not communicate in English, this makes building relationship with the host student difficult”. (Respondent 4 UFH, 19/11/2012). Another one added that the: “majority of people you come in contact with cannot speak English fluently”. (Respondent 1 RU, 15/10/2012).

Some of the students also experience culture shock. This culture shock is reflected in the following observation:

The way most things are done here (South Africa) is different from what some students are used to and where they come from, most especially students that are not from SADC countries. Though, some SADC students find some of the cultural practices strange

but think that the people must be accommodated because that is who they are and nobody can change them. (Respondent 2 UFH, 19/11/2012). Another student also added that:

There is a big difference in the cultures especially the fashion of miniskirts, ladies drinking and smoking in campus, students touching and kissing each other in open spaces, the rate of pregnancies was a nightmare to me. (Respondent 6 UFH, 08/11/2013).

It was also noted that most young students tend to face more challenges than their older counterparts. These students sometimes fail to plan their academic work properly and often get distracted and influenced by their friends' choices. One respondent who was nineteen years old showed her concern with regards to peer pressure.

Sometimes it is not easy to keep up with academic work and deadlines because of a lot of social events in and around the campus. My friends will want me to come along with them for different activities but the individual need to choose. (Respondent 3 RU, 15/10/2012)

These findings are in line with Briggs et al (2012) who stated that undergraduates have difficulties in the transition from college life to university life. This group of people needs to be assisted by their respective universities once they enter university in order to make the transition as easy as possible.

4.5 Strategies Used by International Students to Address Academic and Social Challenges

In an effort to address the above challenges, students at UFH and RU implement a number of strategies which include: 1) joining student and religious organizations 2) making new friends 3) community engagement programme 4) asking for assistance from lecturers 5) seeking help from other international students

The majority of the students from both universities said being part of a student organization (academic, social or religious society) is very important and helpful. As one student noted:

A social organization especially when you are in a new place is a type of organization that helps to orient us (international students) to the place. Whenever you are in a strange environment when you belong to a group, they treat you as a brother and as a sister. Being part of a religious group has helped me to excel academically. (Respondent 2 UFH, 1/11/2012)

Another respondent said:

Being involved in a wide range of hobbies helps a person become more rounded. You get a greater understanding of different fields and different kinds of people. Most of the time you learn social skills which are vital in all aspects of academics, as it will teach you to network and most importantly ask for help from the networks.(Respondent 12 RU, 18/10/2012)

For international students, making new friends is like a social survival skill. Through the friends they are able to navigate the new social and academic environment. As one respondent further explained:

It is important to make new friends. For instance, the issue of transportation I had to make friends with my classmates that have cars but when these people are not available we have to walk and face whatever comes our way. It is quite risky. (Respondent 3 UFH, 1/11/2012)

Maistry and Thakrar (2012) argue that students serve as agents and beneficiaries of community engagement. It was observed in this research that the students who were involved in community engagement said that it has helped them to explore and learn more about South Africa and most especially their immediate environment. This helps in their integration and provides valuable historical information about the community they live in. The students also said it was a way of giving back to the community.

Some of the students also ask their lecturers for assistance when they have academic challenges. A respondent highlighted that, “most of the lecturers are accommodative and willing to help”. (Respondent 4 UFH, 19/11/2012). Most international students also seek help from other international students. They highlighted that most of the international students have similar challenges and solutions are being proffered when they engage one another.

4.6 The Role of Social Capital in International Students Social Integration

The majority of the respondents believed that being part of any recognized group on campus or outside campus has helped them to integrate into the university life and get the needed support when they are in need. One respondent said that,

I belong to the Rhodes Community Engagement/student volunteer programme, and this has given me the major satisfactions I have had here, helped me to connect with local people and to mentor them and work together with them on their plans and projects. It adds variety, expands ones thinking, gives one a rest from the intensive research of the higher degree and allows one to use all of my skills and interest set.(Respondent 12 RU, 18/10/2012). Another student said: “through social life you can improve your academic life. I think it is a learning experience for me; it depends on individuals and what you make out of such gatherings”. (Respondent 2 UFH, 1/11/2012)

It was observed that the students who have someone known to them who is studying in the same institution or who have relatives within the geographic location of their institution before coming to the university find it easier to integrate into the system. This was because to a large extent they have someone they can share their experience and challenges with. Lewthwaite (1996) findings support the above statement that institutional and family supports reduce the stress and challenges student face. This type of support system has helped a number of students to solve some of the challenges they are facing in their day to day activities or reduce the strain they face. One respondent noted that, “I knew some students who graduated from my high school. This made integration and interaction with other students to be easy as they connect me with their friends”. (Respondent 10 RU, 17/10/2012). Another one said, “I am a

volunteer in the community engagement programme, and I therefore interact with other volunteers who tend to be like-minded about giving to the community. This makes for larger networks of people on campus, across study disciplines. Being part of a group boosts my confidence and gives me hope". (Respondent 12 RU, 18/10/2012).

The few students who are not part of a social organization due to their academic work loads, have a way of making up by relying on the support from their peers or other international students. A respondent from UFH said:

Though I do not belong to any social organization but someone from my country was studying the programme I registered for. She has helped me a lot to integrate into the system and as well assist me in my studies whenever I have difficulties. (Respondent 3 UFH, 1/11/2012).

A respondent from RU said: I am not part of any social organization for now but I have a plan to join one next year. I wanted to focus my attention on my study in the first year.

I think there is a way social organizations can improve student academic life. There are so many ways of learning not just being in the classroom. Students should not just learn from the class but from different other means especially if you are a foreign student. Like joining Rotaract, this will help you to understand the people and the environment, (Respondent 10 RU, 18/10/2012).

It is clear from the above comments that being part of student organizations helps the students to develop their social and academic life. Lewthwaite (1996) indicated that being part

of an organization helps the student to adjust. Even the students who are not part of any students' organization as a result of their school workload also believe that student organization helps students to integrate into their new academic and social environment.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there are various factors that prompt students to decide to study outside their country of origin. These include: the historical background of the university, availability of scholarships and cheaper tuition, availability of preferred course of study and its rating, presence and experiences of relatives and friends, credibility of the institution and its courses, proximity to country of origin, the need to acquire an international qualification and the admission requirements for the chosen course.

The study reveals that international students are faced with several challenges. These include: accommodation problems, culture shock, financial challenges, language barrier, transport problems and peer pressure. The students however employ various strategies to address the challenges they encounter while studying abroad. These include: joining a student organization, making new friends, community engagement, asking the lecturers for assistance, and engaging or seeking help from other international students.

The study also found that students from both institutions believe that social capital plays a significant role in integrating and meeting the needs of the students through the links and networks the students are able to create. This serves as a support system and guide in the

unfamiliar terrain and as a means of acquiring other skills that are needed for their survival in the new environment and the larger society.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

It will be recalled that this study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors influenced UFH and RU international students' choice of universities?
2. What are the challenges faced by international students and what strategies are they using to address the challenges?
3. What is the role of social capital in influencing international students' integration into university academic and social life?

5.2 International Students Academic Choices

The study established that there are various factors that influence academic choices of international students. In general, about two-thirds of the respondents from both universities have more than one reason for choosing to study in their various universities. This is in line with Briggs (2006) assertion, that there are multiple factors that influence the academic choices of international students. This study found that the majority of the respondents were influenced by one, some or all of the following factors in their academic choices:

- the historical background of the university

- availability of scholarships and cheaper tuition
- availability of their preferred course of study and its rating
- credibility of the institution and its courses
- the admission requirements for the course
- proximity to the country of origin and international qualifications

In the sub-sections that follow, the study briefly reflects on some of the above mentioned factors. The rich academic and political history of the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University seems to attract students for a variety of reasons as detailed in chapter four. In addition, the availability of scholarships, cheaper tuition and other funding opportunities for students were mentioned by many respondents as a pull factor. As one Rhodes University student indicated: “I choose to study at Rhodes because there was an offer for scholarship. The availability of fund for my study was the main reason” (Respondent 9 RU, 17/10/2012). One Fort Hare student said “I wanted a place where I could get a scholarship and I got scholarship from my government” (Respondent 14 UFH, 17/10/2012). This suggests that taking the financial burden off the students by securing scholarships seems to be a major bait for studying in these universities. Some of the students confirmed that their governments provided scholarships for them. The governments that provided financial support for its students include Zimbabwe, Malawi and Rwanda.

The experiences and opinions of the students’ relatives and friends have a significant effect on the university choice and academic course choices of the international students. This was

confirmed by a Rhodes University student who said that “my brother studied here and it is an interesting place to study. The institution is highly recommended by my friends” (Respondent 7 RU, 17/10/2012). Similar sentiments were expressed by a UFH student who said that “I was looking for a place to study and someone that was already studying here encouraged me to study at UFH”. (Respondent 2 UFH, 1/11/2012). These findings echo the work of Shanka et al (2006) who argue that the opinions and experiences of relatives and friends influence students’ choice of higher education institutions. This shows how important it is for the host institutions and country to meet the expectations of these students in order to ensure the inflow of future students through family and social network referrals. The more satisfied the graduating students are the greater possibility that they will refer other people to that university hence increasing the inflow of prospective students.

For some of the students, the desire to have international qualifications and experience, learn about other cultures and way of life attracted them to UFH and Rhodes. This finding resonates with Chen (2008) who notes that some international students decide to study in other countries in order to acquire international qualification and learn new languages. Furthermore, some students were attracted to UFH and Rhodes because of the quality of the courses being offered by these institutions. As one student indicated, “I am here because the university is good. My department is efficient; the curriculum is aligned with the real world”. (Respondent 8 UFH, 28/10/2012). Another one added: we have been equipped. They have taught us both the practical and theory and how to interact in the world. (Respondent 11 UFH, 12/11/2012). This finding is not peculiar to these two institutions; a study done by Wilkins and Huisman (2011) in

United Kingdom revealed that students were particular about the quality and the credibility of the institutions they were attending and its courses. (see Moogan and Baron, 2003).

5.3 Challenges Faced by International Students

Previous studies have shown that there are various challenges that international students experience in their host countries and institution, Robertson et al, 2000; Ryan and Carroll, 2005; Karuppan and Baran, 2010; Hughes (2013). In this study a number of challenges were identified. These range from sub-standard expensive accommodation, financial constraint, culture shock, language difficulty, weather differences and transportation constraints.

Postgraduate students from both universities expressed their concern about substandard accommodation. They are dissatisfied with the type of accommodation allocated to them. This can be largely linked to their privileged background and social status. Most of them are independent, working middle class individuals who are used to more comfortable housing in their home countries. According to them, the state of some of the residential properties was deplorable yet the rental fees are very high. As one respondent noted, “accommodation is very expensive. It is not easy to get accommodation especially when you are just starting. I am talking about this from my experience. I had to move out of the residence to look for a cheaper accommodation”. (Respondent 2 UFH, 01/11/2012). Furthermore, some of the residences are far from campus as pointed out by one student: “my accommodation is far from the campus which created another challenge; transportation”. (Respondent 10 RU, 17/10/2012).

Financial difficulty is one of the challenges that most international students often experience. Robertson et al (2000) argue that international students without scholarships tend to have more financial challenges than those that have other support. This was found to be the case in this study as one of the students explained: "I did not have any funding, and the economy in my country was going down, so there were financial challenges". (Respondent 7 UFH, 7/11/2012). However, some of the students on scholarships also complained about the inability to convert their daily voucher allowances to cash. One student explained: "Money is a problem since the bursaries consist of money which is difficult to convert to liquid cash". (Respondent 6 UFH, 08/11/2012).

The variation in cultural practices and beliefs is something that is often expected whenever there is movement from one country to another (see Ryan and Carroll, 2005). In general, the students appreciate cultural diversity in the host country. However, some of the students highlighted the huge differences in the way things are done.

There is a big difference in the cultures especially the fashion of miniskirts, ladies drinking and smoking in campus, students touching and kissing each other in open spaces (Respondent 6 UFH, 08/11/2012).

Closely linked to culture shock is language barrier which international students' face. Language barrier is one of the challenges faced by international students during their period of sojourn (Carroll and Ryan, 2005). This was confirmed by one of the students who said that: "during the first days it was difficult to cope with the Alice community because I could not understand their language which they want to speak quite often even during time for academic studies or

lectures” (Respondent 6 UFH, 08/11/2012). Another student said “most of the students cannot communicate in English this makes building relationship with them difficult” (Respondent 10 UFH, 12/10/2012).

However, whoever is able to learn the local language will be able to adapt more easily to their new environment because of language proficiency. Mahmud et al (2010) confirm that when students understand the local language, it puts them at ease. It is an added advantage in their integration process with the people around them.

5.4 Strategies Used by International Student to Address Socio-economic and Academic Challenges

The students indicated that they use a variety of methods to address their socio-economic and academic challenges. These include joining an organization, making new friends, participating in community engagement programmes, engaging other students and asking the lecturers for advice and guidance. The role of different student and community organization in the integration and finding solutions to challenges international students encounter on daily basis cannot be over-emphasized. The students, even those who were not part of any organizations during the period of the interviews admitted that these organizations give students added advantage and edge during the integration process. Those students who belong to one or more organization indicated that their affiliation with these organisations have contributed immensely to their academic experience, integration, and survival; by building them up socially, physically, academically and spiritually.

5.5 Recommendations of the study

It is important to note that all higher education institutions stakeholders have a role to play in order to ensure that international students get the best possible value for money as well and a life time experience while studying away from their country of origin.

Generally, students from the University of Fort Hare commended the effort made so far by the institution's management. Thus, it was in the students' opinion that a lot can still be done to improve the student experience. The school should consider making arrangement for transportation at subsidized rate for the students who will like to stay back in school in order to study till late in the evening. This will assist students who live far from campus in commuting to and from school because most respondents stay far from the campus and it is risky to walk alone in the night. As one student said, "most time we have to leave the campus when it is not dark at the expense of our study". Some of the students suggested that the residences without internet access should be provided with internet access as this will help them in their academic work when they are not on campus. The students also stressed the need to have well trained and equipped staff to deal with international students because sometimes some of the staff are sometimes uncertain on how to help these students.

Postgraduate students from both institutions expressed the need for their institutions to intervene on the issue of accommodation and provide comfortable affordable accommodation which is not too far from campus. Some students think that giving back to the community

should be part of what international students should be involved with. This will also help the students to understand South Africa as a country through contact with the host community.

It is pertinent that host government creates an environment that supports internationalization and student's mobility. The government needs to ensure that the travel and visa regulations and requirements are clearly stated and can be easily accessible for students. Host government can also provide some funding for the exceptional students and as well improve their relationship with the sending countries.

International students should be more open and ready to adjust to their new environments. Students should avail themselves with the necessary information and service that are available to them in order to make their experiences worthwhile and less stressful.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, international students' mobility has continued to rise in the last decades and it will continue to do so. Students are looking for institutions that will offer quality academic that is globally recognized with great support services at a competitive price. The importance of high quality teaching and learning should be prioritized and building a good reputation is crucial to attract potential student across the globe, the graduating students are like ambassadors of their various institutions. Their experiences will go a long way in putting their alma mater on the world map. It is not surprising that international students have challenges but how these challenges have been addressed by their respective institutions is quite important in order to reduce the restraint these challenges pose on them so that they can focus on their main

objective which is study without much constraints and distraction. Creating a forum that caters for the international students' integration is an aspect that should be given an utmost attention, most especially activities that postgraduate students can participate in.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Demographic Information

1. Are you an? [] Undergraduate [] Honours [] Masters [] Doctorate
2. How many years have you been studying at this University?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your age range?
5. What is your marital status?
6. What is your Department?
7. What is your major?
8. What is your country of origin? (Which country are you from?)

Factors influencing academic choices of international students

9. Why did you choose to study at this University and not other universities?

Challenges faced by international students

10. What are the challenges you have faced during your time in this university?
11. Who do you talk to when there are challenges?
12. What strategies do you use to address them?
13. Do you think there is a way your institution can help with these challenges?

International Student's integration

14. What is your experience with academic and social life in this University? (Classes, residence hall, lecturers, involvement with student societies...)Please give example
15. Do you have problems integrating? [] Yes [] No. If yes, why? If no, how?
16. Who are the major people you interact and communicate with?
17. Do you belong to any organisations on campus? If yes, please list the organisations and describe how they have contributed to your integration into the university life
18. Do you think being involved in organizations and activities on campus help you develop your social and academic life? If yes, how? If no, why?
19. What is your experience in interacting with academic and administrative staffs and other students (local and international) at UFH/ RU?
20. How is your relationship with your lecturers in term of communication and academic guidance?

21. How is your relationship with other students in term of communication and academic guidance?
22. Do you receive any type of support (academic, social, financial) when you are in need?
23. Who are the people that have supported you when you had difficulties?
24. Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve this institution and international student's experience?
25. Do you have any other experiences you will like to share? The end. Thank you.