The importance of previous education for foreign students entering studies in the western higher education system

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Abstract: The aim of the research is to find out the significance of foreign students' previous general education experience when beginning their studies in the 1ˢᵗ academic year of higher education abroad according to the Western education philosophy. The research question envisages finding out what academic difficulties foreign students face when starting their studies abroad in the 1ˢᵗ academic year and how to provide support in the academic study process. The research is based on the exploration of the reasons behind academic failures, and on ways how to improve academic performance. The research sample involves South Asian and Central Asian 1ˢᵗ academic year students studying in Latvia for bachelor degree (the European Qualifications Framework (level=6)). The study was conducted in 4 phases in the period from 2019 to 2022: 1) a survey of foreign students (n=89) was conducted in order to find out the self-assessment about the teaching and learning methods practised in previous education; 2) an observation method of foreign students (n=89) was conducted during classes with the aim to analyse with which academic methods the students performed better and which they performed worse during the 1ˢᵗ academic year; 3) interviews were conducted with nationals of India, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan (n=3) to learn about the teaching and learning methods in general education in particular countries; 4) interviews were conducted with representatives of Latvian higher education institutions (n=8), in order to find out whether previous educational experience causes difficulties for students and whether it affects the learning outcomes. The results of the research indicate that previous education: lack of diversity of methods, proportion of large classes, teacher-centred lessons, has a negative impact on learning outcomes.

Keywords*: academic methods, foreign students, higher education, learning outcomes, support*

Introduction

The research problem is justified by the fact that local and foreign students in the 1ˢᵗ academic year face issues of an academic and social nature. In Ramsay's study (1999), foreign students found it more difficult to adapt to their studies than local students did. Foreign students demonstrated more stress and anxiety, and they had to work harder to achieve the same results as local students (Ramsay, 1999). Many foreign students still report lower levels of adjustment at university than their peers do from the local culture (Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Andrade, 2006; Brunsting et al., 2018; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). Although Corradi and Levrau (2021) found that social adjustment is necessary for adjusting academically, and that it has a small, but positive effect on study success, the authors of this study will deliberately avoid socially and psychologically coexisting influencing factors.

In the academic literature several authors so far have reviewed the factor of students' previous experience in the general education system (Bone & Reid, 2013; Johnson & Kumar, 2010; Kukatlapalli et al., 2020; Kumar, 2004; Sevinc & Gizir, 2014; Trujillo & Tanner, 2014). Research to date has shown that students feel alienated, confused, frustrated and disappointed with their previous educational experiences (Andrade, 2006).

The aim of the research is to find out the significance of foreign students' previous general education experience when beginning their studies in the 1ˢᵗ academic year of higher education abroad according to the Western education philosophy.

Academic learning methods

A common belief among educators is that foreign students are insufficiently adjusted to higher education in their host country, both academically and socially (Andrade, 2006; Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013).

Lebcir et al., (2008) indicate that factors influencing the academic achievement of foreign students are related to learning techniques, the English language and assessment methods (Lebcir et al., 2008). By

learning the methods, the conditions of tasks, as well as the need to make notes and participate in seminars are understood. Foreign students have difficulty understanding the terms of the assignment and the grading system (Ridley, 2014; Valka, 2015). J. Ryan (2005) concluded that teachers often perceive foreign students as a homogeneous group with the same learning skills and methods (Ryan, 2005). In the study of V. Vevere (2017), foreign students do not hide the fact that the different evaluation systems of countries and universities are confusing. It is pointed out that there are several tests in Latvia during the semester, but there was only one test in the students' home countries (Vevere, 2017).

The researcher H. Fox (1994) observed that Western views on writing academic articles are incomprehensible to foreign students. She concludes that what professors perceived as the inability of foreign students to analyse and logically develop a written argument was the result of cultural communication styles, not a lack of knowledge of English (Fox, 1994). Differences in writing style across cultures can also lead to signs of plagiarism, as students may not understand the true meaning of plagiarism or the meaning of referencing, which may not be well developed in different cultures (Bamford et al., 2002). The author M. K. W. S. Kumar (2004) also concludes that there is a mismatch between plagiarism in the Western education philosophy and how it is classified by some Eastern societies (Kumar, 2004).

Eastern education philosophy holds on to the concept of teaching. Students receive full knowledge from the teachers inside the classroom (Gurney, 2007). In Eastern education the students practice the concept of memorising, as this philosophy focuses mainly on book learning and memorisation within the teaching and learning process, while Western education supports and encourages students in self-management and in controlling their own learning process (Hassan et al., 2010).

According to the students, in their previous educational experience, the teachers provided the students with all the necessary reading material for the subject. Teachers are very reputable sources of knowledge and role models for their students. The teacher is always held in the highest esteem, so what the teacher says will always be correct, and students are not brought up to ask questions or provoke discussion. It is the student's duty to sit quietly and listen. Asian students are quiet in the classroom and rarely participate in discussions (Hofstede, 1995; Wang, 2004). Students in their home countries from Asia and Africa are accustomed to strict leadership and control. When they arrive in Latvia, they have to become self-directed and this has consequences for the learning outcomes (Vevere, 2017). Teaching methods such as Flipped Learning and Team-Based Learning require students to pre-learn course materials before a teaching session, because classroom exercises rely on students using self-gained knowledge. This is the reverse to "traditional" teaching when course materials are presented during a lecture, and students are assessed on that material during another session at a later stage (Balan et al., 2015).

In India, students used textbooks for knowledge, and learning was assessed through tests and exams, while in New Zealand, studies included independent literature searches, reading articles, writing essays and oral presentations (Kukatlapalli et al., 2020). It is important to note that a large proportion of Indian students already have general education in English in private schools. Most of the students' learning experience and life in Indian private secondary schools had many features in common with the Western education philosophy (Caluya et al., 2011). The findings of K. Templeman et al. (2016) indicated that students with Western backgrounds integrated better socio-culturally and academically compared to students with non-Western backgrounds (Templeman et al., 2016). Possible academic support could include: peer mentoring providing students with opportunities to establish good relations with peers, local students and schools in home countries (Ding & Curtis, 2021; Ferencz et. al., 2020; Nguyen, 2021).

There are cultures, such as India and China, which have been researched a lot. Many other cultures are widely represented among foreign students but information on these cultures is not yet available and this poses a greater risk of misunderstanding between academic staff and students. The novelty of this research is to include foreign students from Uzbekistan in the research.

Since the research issue involves providing an answer to the question of how to provide support in the academic study process, the author will turn to the literature regarding aspects of how a higher education institution can support foreign students. The main aspects that will be discussed are the support of teachers and administration, consultation times, and orientation activities as essential support.

Higher education institutions cannot simply admit foreign students and expect them to adjust to life in a new country and educational system without appropriate support (Andrade, 2006).

F. Shu et al. (2020) found that university and faculty support positively influence the adaptation to new demands at a new school (Shua et al., 2020). It is necessary to assume that it is difficult for students to adapt, because they do not know academic rules, requirements and processes in the academic environment. In addition, students are often late through no fault of their own, as they missed their visa application and the counselling/orientation program. This results in negative experiences (Liu & Winder, 2014; Townsend & Cairns, 2003).

Higher education leaders must strive to provide all necessary support services including promoting cross-cultural competence among professors and administrators to relate well with international students, while meeting their academic and social needs. Various resources and support services available to international students are instrumental to their success in universities and colleges. As the most valuable resources, faculty members should ensure they give international students additional attention and support by encouraging them to ask questions, take advantage of office hours, submit multiple drafts for instructor comments, pair international students with native speakers in class projects or group work, and also have regular informal conversations with them in order to build a good teacher-student relationship (Akanwa, 2015). Some authors call on university lecturers to promote the benefits of supporting learning from the very beginning of courses. There are opportunities to make greater use of online technology to inform and prepare students even before they arrive at the university. Students should be more actively encouraged to use learning support and to incorporate learning and support into academic writing courses (Fenton-Smith & Humphreys, 2017; Larcombe & Malkin, 2007; Meer & Chapman, 2014).

Students come to the lecturers of the department during the scheduled hours for various reasons: to discuss a lecture topic, to get an explanation of the topic, to discuss the results and to get advice. A study by M. Guerrero and A. Rod (2013) found that 36% of students claimed they did not attend the lecturer's appointment because it did not fit with the student's planned schedule. It has been found that the set admission hours, visits for getting consultations positively correlated with the academic progress of the students. Each visit improves a student's course grade by 0.722 % (Guerrero & Rod, 2013). M. Guerrero and A. Rod (2013) offer 4 solutions for senior lecturers regarding consultations. First of all, for each following week, the appointment time should be scheduled at a different time, so that even those students who work or are absent at regular times can adjust. Secondly, at every opportunity, it is necessary to remind the lecturer about the date, time and place of the consultation during his classes. Thirdly, it is necessary to explain to students what the consultation time is, why this time is offered and that it is offered not only for fulfilling a promise, but also for consultation on the topic, in-depth questions and homework questions, so that students understand the usefulness of the consultations. Fourthly, the lecturer should personally invite students to visit his/her consultations, as this will make it clear to the student that he/she is especially welcome and that the lecturer will wait for the student, and this is an obligatory activity (Guerrero & Rod, 2013).

Adding to the above, the author C. McFadden at al. (2012) norāda, ka International students' need to have adequate faculty-student ratio in order for students to have access to professors whenever they have academic concerns (McFadden et al., 2012).

Some universities have established support services to help foreign students with their studies. These include English language courses, tutorials and additional courses focused on specific academic content and skills. In addition, an English language course program can affect English proficiency, academic achievement, and persistence (Mlynarczyk & Babbitt, 2002).

Q. Sun et al. (2020) point out that in addition to the above-mentioned support measures, it is important for the university to support the organization of cultural events, celebrating different festivals and events of the students' home country (Sun et al., 2020).

Scholarship support for students is also important. Autori E. Canton and A. Blom (2010) have found a statistically significant and stable effect of total financial support (amount of loans and scholarships) on academic achievements. A 10 percentage points increase in financial aid would increase a student's grade point average by about 0.2–0.3 points (on a 10-point scale) (Canton & Blom, 2010).

In order to facilitate adaptation for foreign students, universities can organize visits to companies, invite visiting lecturers and organize thematic meetings. The conversation should be organized in the format of a discussion, not a lecturer's monologue. Training of lecturers for working with foreign students should also be organized (Vēvere, 2017).

All of the listed support measures are logical and correct, unfortunately, most of them apply directly to the lecturers, for example, additional attention, informal conversation, taking advantage of office hours or submitting multiple drafts for instructors' comments. There is an overload among lecturers, and often lecturers do not have enough time, which does not create opportunities for additional in-depth counselling or free communication with foreign students after counselling hours. Preparation of high-quality digital materials is also a time-consuming process. The author believes that some of these responsibilities should be taken over by the administration of the faculty and/or external relations departments. More attention should be given to providing support and orientation weeks for students who arrive late.

Methodology

Research has been carried out in Latvia. Latvia (capital Riga) is a country in the Baltic region of Northern Europe. In 2020, 9342 foreign students studied in Latvian higher education for the purpose of obtaining a degree, which is 14 % of all students. In the case of Latvia, the largest education import regions are South Asia - India, Central Asia - Uzbekistan, followed by Central Europe - Germany, Sweden. Sixty eight percent of foreign students come from countries outside the European Union (Dati par Latvijas augstāko izglītību 2020. gadā, 2021).

Private higher education institution *Turiba University* was selected for the research in the 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ stages. *Turiba University* is the largest private university in Latvia, established in 1993. The first full-time study programme in English, established for attracting foreign students, was opened in 2003. The countries represented by students in 2020 were India, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. The total number of students in *Turiba University* in the academic year 2020/2021 was 2.681, of which 427 were foreign students (Data on Latvian higher education in 2020, 2021).

The research question envisages finding out what academic difficulties foreign students face when starting their studies abroad in the 1st year and how to provide support to foreign students in the academic study process. Only students studying for a degree (European Qualifications Framework (level=6)) in the 1ˢᵗacademic year in the 1st semester are considered in this study. The research consists of qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (survey and structured observation) scientific research methods. The study was conducted in 4 phases in the period from 2019 to 2022. The quantitative data analysis software *Ms Excel* 2016 was applied for data processing.

In the first stage, groups of foreign students were surveyed over a period of 3 years (2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022). The aim of survey was to find out the self-assessment of foreign students about the academic methods used in previous education. 89 students participated in the survey. The survey took place during the 1ˢᵗ lecture of the study course 'Food and Beverage Service' at the beginning of February, when the semester for foreign students begins. The study course was implemented in the 1ˢᵗ academic year (1st semester), which allowed the author to reach a target audience that had just started studies.

In the second stage, groups of foreign students were observed over a 3-year period (2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022) and one group of local students was observed (2019/2020) for comparison. All four groups of students were observed within the study course 'Food and Beverage Service'. The study course was implemented in the 1ˢᵗacademic year (1ˢᵗsemester), which allowed the author to evaluate the students' initial preparation for the Western education philosophy and methods, and to analyse with which academic methods of Western education foreign students performed better and which they performed worse. A group of local students was included in the observation in order to better assess whether the learning habits of foreign students are related to the previous education system or not. A total of 89 foreign students and 26 local students were observed in the study. The observation period was as long as the study course - from the beginning of February to the beginning of May. Structured observation was based on previously set criteria what are based on literature review. The following

academic methods were observed during the observation: 1) understanding of the conditions of the tasks (asking additional questions, attending consultation); 2) presentation (presentation design, presentation style, defence, post-presentation discussion, compliance with the time allowed); 3) discussions (level of involvement, the English language); 4) taking of notes (design of notes, method of making notes); 5) reports (academic language, written English, references, signs of plagiarism); 6) practical visit of the company (level of involvement, critical approach, analysis).

In the third stage, interviews were conducted with nationals of India, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan (n=3) to learn about the teaching and learning methods in general education in particular countries. Interviews were conducted in 2022 via the *Webex by Cisco* platform.

In the fourth stage, interviews were conducted with representatives of Latvian higher education institutions (n=8), in order to find out whether previous educational experience causes difficulties for students and whether it affects the learning outcomes. Interviews were conducted in 2021 and in 2022 both via the *Webex by Cisco* platform and phone calls.

Results of the foreign students' self-evaluation survey

In the academic year 2019/2020, 32 students participated in the survey, in the academic year 2020/2021, 30 students participated in the survey and in the academic year 2021/2022, 27 students participated in the survey. The students' countries of origin were India 63 %, Sri Lanka 16 %, Uzbekistan 17 %, Kazakhstan 3 %, and Nigeria 1 %. It can be concluded that on average 90.6 % of students have only the experience of general education in their country; the remaining 9.4 % of students already have some other study experience - they have not been included in the results. On average, 80.6 % of students noted that they had learnt to create presentations in their previous education and 36.3 % noted that presentations had been given as well. In addition, on average, 55 % of the general education was reading textbooks at home in the amount of the defined pages, which also explains why the taking of notes is not strange to an average of 55 %. On the other hand, on average 47 % of students indicate that they have never written essays and reports, and on average 31.1 % of students indicate that formatting rules should always be followed. Group work is relatively less common, as evidenced by the high average number of students of 62.3 %, who indicated that there was none. The same proportion - 66 % of students on average, indicate that they did not tend to ask the teacher questions during the lecture. On average, 53.3 % of students said they knew what academic honesty meant, while on average 46 % said they had heard of it but did not know exactly what it meant. When asking students whether they have had to critically analyse, evaluate things, processes and substantiate them with their opinion, on average 26.6 % of students indicated often, a relatively large number of students 53.3 % indicated rarely, but 16 % indicated never.

Results from the observation of academic methods used by foreign students

The aim was to observe how foreign students cope with Western academic methods. The observed groups of students were the same students as in the first stage.

Understanding the conditions of tasks

Foreign students did not ask questions about their independent tasks from their place in the classroom, and after the lecture there was regularly a queue of students with questions in person. Within 3 years, 3 % students sent homework on time to the lecturer to confirm that the homework had been done correctly according to the instructions. There is no such a barrier for local students to ask questions in the class.

Presentation, discussion method

It can be concluded that 80 % of foreign students create presentations on PowerPoint for the first time. Students' presentations are very cluttered with colours, animations and the content is not perceptible. Students should be encouraged to experiment, as this is the only way they will understand which presentation style is most appropriate. In eighty percent of cases, the text on the slides is copied from the source in small print and is not paraphrased. Students mostly read the entire text on each slide from start to finish. Students also very often have difficulty reading fluently, which shows that they have not tried to work on the pronunciation, have not read it out loud to themselves several times, have not

checked the pronunciation of unknown words. In ninety five percent of cases, students are not ready to say the presentation in their own words, in ninety five percent of cases students have not prepared notes that would help. In seventy percent of cases, foreign students did not have eye contact with the audience. Foreign students presented the presentation to the lecturer only, not to the rest of the audience. The students only look at the lecturer, and even then the gaze indicates that confirmation is awaited that everything is being done correctly. Within 3 years, in 10 % of cases, a course member asks another course member a question to create a discussion after the presentation has been completed. Among foreign students, the English accent is an obstacle to the smooth running of the discussion. Quite often, there have been situations where students feel uncomfortable because they have not been understood. In ninety seven percent of cases, foreign students do not focus on the time spent in minutes, but ask how many slides are needed. In ninety percent of cases, foreign students mostly exceed the given time because they read every sentence on the slide. Local students make presentations transparent and understandable. In thirty percent of cases local students have prepared notes to help themselves to speak in their own words. In thirty percent of cases, local students ask each other questions about the presentation to provoke discussion. Receiving questions after the presentation is still associated with errors in the presentation (for both local and foreign students).

Note making method

The author concludes that, depending on the region, 80 % of foreign students are not used to taking notes at all. Students from East Asia took notes very carefully, but they did not meet the definition of notes because students rewrote every phrase; every sentence from the slides. Nothing was highlighted or marked in a different colour. Everything was monotonously rewritten. For students from Central Asia, the notes are more natural, and students have tried to write down what is most important. There are no such challenges for local students.

Reports, formatting, academic honesty

 Foreign students write very little in their own words; they try to use the internet more and even copy what they can write themselves. The author has observed that 60 % of foreign students lack related expanded sentences. Foreign students like to use phrases through bullet-points, much like on presentation slides. From the 1ˢᵗpresentation, the lecturer must also use correctly formatted references in slides, thus providing a sample. The report formatting style is very individual for each student; students perform formatting according to their own idea. Although the university has a carefully designed regulation for independent reports, it is very extensive and students are obviously unable to read and comprehend it. Signs of plagiarism are common, but this is due to students still learning to use references. In the 1ˢᵗyear, it is also very difficult for foreign students to evaluate an academic language, because it is just beginning to develop. Neither foreign nor local students have experience in using academic language. Local students are much better at understanding and adapting formatting requirements in their writing. This is certainly, because general education, overall, has similar requirements in Latvia.

Critical evaluation

Foreign students desperately asked for a table of criteria to know what to evaluate in the company visit project. Foreign students are not able to apply new/additional criteria by themselves. It is also difficult for half of the students to make proposals. It is much more difficult for foreign students to give a critical assessment, to make conclusions and suggestions about the company's visit and its improvement than for locals.

It can be concluded that the unacquired skills to discuss, defend one's opinion, and prepare reports respecting academic honesty have a significant impact on learning outcomes.

Results of interviews with nationals of India, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan

Interviews were conducted with nationals of India, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan (n=3) to learn about the teaching and learning methods in general education in particular countries.

In India and Sri Lanka, in private educational institutions all subjects are taught in the medium of English, which explains the different levels of English among students, even from the same country. In Sri Lanka students are always required to perform pair and group activities during the subject of English,

in order to improve communication skills among them. In Uzbekistan, English is taught as a subject in both public and private schools, but the emphasis is on grammar and not on the oral aspect.

Foreign students are used to classes of 40-50-60 pupils in general education in State schools. In Private schools classes are significantly smaller.

Students in general education have not learnt to study independently. Students crave more control, more certainty and textbooks in each study course. Students in Uzbek families are brought up very strictly. There are strict requirements in schools and strict adherence to deadlines, and the start of lessons should not be delayed. Students in the Western education philosophy are confused; they are given too much freedom if the course of study is not strictly structured. They are not used to self-directed learning.

In the mentioned countries education is still teacher-centred, and everyone must strictly follow what the teacher says. Students expect the teacher to be present and to determine how to learn and to guide the course strictly.

In India, teachers use textbooks and tests. The tests were mostly only written, due to the large number of pupils. An accurate answer from the textbook is still expected. This is the easiest way for teachers to check the work of a large number of pupils. Teachers in Sri Lanka use diverse, interesting methods in teaching, specifically in private schools, where the number of students are fewer and hence easy to manage. In Uzbekistan, textbooks were the main tool used by teachers to teach lessons. There were no presentations because the classes were not equipped with projectors and other technical facilities.

Pupils in the mentioned countries have to learn classically from textbooks. Teachers usually indicate which pages should be read from textbooks for each subsequent lesson. Nationals from Sri Lanka admitted - it was very rare for pupils to need to search for extra information from other sources. In Uzbekistan, in humanities, texts had to be memorised by heart. All works are handwritten. Presentations in schools in all countries were never required, so presentations and oral opinions were not relevant.

Pupils in India are not able to express their creativity; it is not permitted to express their opinion or paraphrase the concept of the definition in their own words, and instead they must strictly follow the definition as written in the textbook. In Uzbekistan there was no need to critically analyse things. In Sri Lanka pupils needed to read literary texts and critically analyse them to prepare their own short notes in addition to the notes provided by the teacher. Nationals from Sri Lanka admitted that pupils did plenty of group work and projects as classroom activities and homework, but not any research, academic papers.

In all countries, formatting requirements were mostly not required, and only hard copies of hand-written answers were produced to the teachers. It was very rare for typed documents to be submitted for teachers. Project work, group work, scientific papers were not requested.

Pupils in India are encouraged to memorise accurately, and rewrite texts rather than paraphrase them, which also leads to misunderstandings in the context of plagiarism in Western education philosophy. References, academic reports, academic integrity was not taught at school in any of the countries.

It can be concluded that students have not mastered the skills to independently study, collect, search, analyse and evaluate information, which is also the main obstacle.

Results of interviews with representatives of higher education institutions

Leading higher education institutions in terms of the number of foreign students were interviewed (n=8), in order to find out whether previous educational experience causes difficulties for students and whether it affects the learning outcomes.

The initial stage of studies is difficult and students look for opportunities to communicate and work with their nationals. Students need to be given time, and it must be taken into account that students will take time trying to observe and understand what is happening. The level of self-motivation is important (1st, 2nd, 5th respondent). Students have not learnt to study (3rd respondent). Pupils are already taught in schools that the teacher's opinion is the main one, so pupils do not tend to have their own (4th respondent). The culture of writing papers is very difficult for foreign students. There are big problems with unconscious plagiarism. There is a lot of resistance to group work. Students from Central

Asia understand better how to study independently than students from South Asia. According to the observations, the students of the former USSR countries, for example, Belarus, Russia, Uzbekistan, have the most difficulties (6th, 7th, 8th respondent).

All the representatives of higher education institutions acknowledged that the factor of previous education has a great influence on the learning outcomes, especially in the 1st semester and in the 1st academic year when studying according to Western education methodology. The student's own determination and motivation to integrate into Western education is very important.

Discussion

The results of the research indicate that previous education: lack of diversity of methods, proportion of large classes, teacher-centred lessons, has a negative impact on learning outcomes. According to research question on how to provide support in the academic study process - some aspects are debatable. Most authors (Akanwa; 2015; Fenton-Smith & Humphreys, 2017; Guerrero & Rod, 2013; Larcombe & Malkin, 2007; Meer & Chapman, 2014) delegate ancillary activities to lecturers such as additional attention, informal conversation, taking advantage of office hours or submitting multiple drafts for instructors' comments. All of which put an undue burden on lecturers. This responsibility and support must be transferred from the lecturers to the advisors.

Preparatory courses for foreign students in Latvia, in higher education institutions, for example, 3 month-long, prior 1st study semester, during which students are prepared for Western studies, would be highly desirable. But this is not a popular view as it raises issues of competition among universities in Latvia and even among universities in Europe (where there won`t be such requirements).

There are aspects where the previous education experience cannot be blamed, as local students also present shortcomings, even though they have studied general secondary education in a competence education and a student-centred approach. Local students also lack skills such as oral presentations, defence practice, adherence to time, and preparation of notes for the presentation. Neither foreign nor local students have experience in using academic language in research a lot.

Both authors D. W. Y. Liu and B. Winder (2014), P. Townsend and L. Cairns (2003) both representatives from higher education outlined a problem, namely the late arrival of students in the 1st semester (due to a visa, due to late exam results, etc.). Students miss orientation week. It obliges the foreign student to study the already overdue subject independently. It is not clear whether a later start to the semester would be a solution, for example, for foreign students to start the semester not in September, but in October, or even in November. This aspect is also poorly studied in the literature. This will change the course of the program on an annual basis. This will also affect the workload of lecturers in semesters, administrative time plans on an annual basis. It is possible that there will be fewer joint study courses and various academic activities for local and foreign students, as the semesters will not coincide. It is worth exploring it in further research.

Conclusion

The significance of foreign students' previous general education experience is the determining factor for learning outcomes. The biggest academic difficulties faced by foreign students when starting their studies abroad in the 1st academic year are based in previous education (experience in the lack of diversity of methods, proportion of large classes, missing critical evaluation, reports and following formatting troubles, plagiarism, provoking discussion, western and eastern differences in teacher and student centred education.

- Since there are significant differences between Eastern and Western educational systems, it would be worth emphasizing these differences even more and offering corresponding materials to students in advance. It may be available in digital format. It should be emphasized which methods will be used during the study process – there will be group works and debates, and arguments will have to be presented and defended.
- Higher education institutions need to educate and inform their academic and administrative staff that foreign students will have academic difficulties because students have not yet studied using Western education methodologies and principles.

- Academic staff need to be educated on how foreign students study in the general education system in their home countries. In this way, awareness will increase among lecturers as to why students make the same mistakes. The lecturers will already anticipate what the students will find difficult and be able to highlight it more.
- Higher education institutions may request the support of their foreign guest lecturers in organising educational seminars for local academic and administrative staff to educate them on foreign students` previous educational system.
- Since the academic staff are already quite busy, the administration of the faculty should be more involved. It is better for the faculty to decide whether to give more responsibilities to program leaders and program facilitators, or to hire separate staff who advise foreign students on issues that the faculty can answer, which would not be an additional burden on the lecturers.
- The support would include: 1) regular reminders to the lecturers about consultation times, 2) explanations of where the regulations of the university are available, 3) explanations of how to maintain academic honesty, 3) explanations of how to work with the students' internal information system, 4) creation of digital materials (including samples), 5) maintenance of the website, 6) submission of a draft for review, 7) advising on academic issues both in person and remotely, etc.
- Some staged video fragments should be added, showing how each of the methods looks like in a studio setting. Samples of reports are to be added, showing correct and not so well prepared reports with explanations, where, why and how references, paragraphs, structure, consistent formatting are to be used, as well as academic language style.
- A separate section - study academic consultations - should be maintained on the official website of the university.
- To integrate peers more. The buddy should actively participate with 2nd study course local students, which in the beginning would help with the study process, literature, self-directed learning, as well as with the preparation of references and reports.

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