University Administrators Serving International Students During Social and Organizational Change

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Attracting full fee paying international students to higher education institutions in the United States has become a central issue for university administrators in the era of globalization. With current decreases in international student enrollments, it is more important to understand how to strengthen international student support services to both increase international students' retention and satisfaction with their educational experience abroad and to recruit new international students from a dwindling pool. This study investigated how university administrators served international students at a private, nonprofit, four-year university in the Northeast United States. Using a single case study methodology, the researcher examined how the types of support services administrators provided for international students evolved during changing global, social, and organizational contexts, and the ways institutional administrators communicated with international students regarding the support services available to them. The researcher conducted three focus group interviews with international students, twelve interviews with university administrators in a leadership position and one interview with a partner institution's administrator, observed five information sessions for international students, and analyzed twelve documents, websites, and similar artifacts related to international students. The data revealed that administrators at the institution anticipated some new initiatives, such as reviewing the role of the International Student Office, establishing the Deportation Defense Clinic, partnering with an external organization, and integrating professional development. The research also identified some challenges administrators faced in providing and communicating with international students about support services, and suggested some strategies to expand the delivery of programs and services for international students and improve international student satisfaction with their education experience while abroad.

Keywords: international students, support services, student satisfaction, partnership

Introduction

Attracting full-fee paying international students to higher education institutions has become a central issue for university administrators in the current era of globalization. One of the reasons for this is institutions' need for additional revenue. International students contribute financially to U.S. institutions (Altbach and Knight 2007; Cantwell 2015; Wu, Garza, and Guzman 2015), providing resources for the educational system (Chatfield and Lee 2015). According to NAFSA (2020), international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contribute nearly $38.7 billion to the economy and support 415,996 jobs in the United States**.**

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International students expose U.S. students to new ideas and cultures (Tran and Pham 2016) and "diversity of thought" (Hegarty 2014, 223). They bring new ideas and capacity for problem-solving, engage in innovative activities, and their stories help educators cultivate empathy and understanding (Streitwieser and Madden 2019). Many U.S. universities rely on international students to maintain their graduate school programs at a high level (Klimova et al. 2016), contributing to institutions' academic prestige (Wu, Garza, and Guzman 2015). International students also develop a network of informal ambassadors and recruiters (Beech 2019) turning into "the best bridge for future international students that will continue their contributions, if their needs are met" (Wu, Garza, and Guzman 2015, 2).

Social/Organizational Changes

According to Storberg-Walker and Torraco (2004, 811), higher education now "finds itself in a new era and environment in which it is confronted with an array of challenges and forces for change" that are causing "significant shifts directly impacting higher education goals, processes, and decision-making." Some of the social changes currently impacting the higher education environment include declining overall student enrollments (Grawe 2018), decreasing funding (Mitchell and Leachman 2015), rising costs of higher education (Barr and McClellan 2018; Oachs 2017), declining international student enrollments (Bhattacharyya 2017; Heng 2017; Redden 2017), changing federal immigration policies (Trump 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d), and growing number of students proficient in the use of modern technology (Pucciarelli and Kaplan 2016).

The overall student enrollment is declining nationwide. According to Grawe (2018), when the financial crisis hit in 2008, young people viewed that economic uncertainty as a cause for reducing fertility, resulting in a declining birthrate. National Center for Health Statistics reports that birth certificate data for 2018 showed continued declines in childbearing in the United States overall; the provisional number of births for the United States in 2018 was 3,788,235, a two

percent decrease from 2017 and the lowest number of births in 32 years (Hamilton et al. 2019). What it means for future enrollments in higher education is fewer kids reaching college-going age (Lindberg, Santelli, and Desai 2016). In addition, overall student enrollment is declining as a result of students being pulled out of high school due to personal circumstances, such as pregnancy, by the need to support their family financially (Marchbanks III et al. 2015) or being pushed out due to inequitable disciplinary practices (Bradley and Renzulli 2011).

Meanwhile, state funding is decreasing. According to Grapevine report (2019), Ohio, Alaska, Minnesota, Kentucky and South Carolina provided less funding for higher education in 2018-2019 fiscal year. The drop ranged from 0.1 percent in Ohio and Alaska to 1.4 percent in Minnesota. In Kentucky, it dropped by 2.4 percent. South Carolina reported the largest one-year drop of all states at 3.7 percent.

Additionally, international student enrollment is declining in the United States (Bhattacharyya, 2017; Heng, 2017; Redden, 2017). According to NAFSA (2019), in 2018-2019 academic year, new international student enrollment was down 6.6%, double the decrease from the previous year. These decreases were in part due to several federal policy changes (Trump, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d), when President Trump issued some executive orders, prohibiting entry of citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) and severely restricting the admission of refugees into the United States.

Experiencing financial difficulties, higher education institutions have had to raise their tuition to survive (Barr and McClellan 2018; Oachs 2017). According to Brint and Clotfelter (2016), over the last three decades, average sticker price at private nonprofit colleges and universities has increased at a rate 3.5 percentage points faster than inflation. Feeling the pressure to keep tuition levels high, private, nonprofit colleges are facing a challenge of attracting enough

students to make their enrollment targets (Brint and Clotfelter 2016). Higher education institutions seek international students as a source of new enrollments and "as a means of generating revenue" (Cantwell 2015, 512).

Recruiting and Retaining International Students

Given the contributions of international students to U.S. higher education, as well as the need for institutions to increase enrollments at a time when national immigration policy has been uncertain, senior institutional leaders have attempted to expand their international recruiting (Fliegler 2014) and enhance the internationalization of their universities (Onk and Joseph 2017). On the one hand, high-level administrators utilize "traditional" international recruitment practices, such as recruitment fairs and passive marketing (e.g., online web-based advertising or brochures, utilizing alumni in recruitment methods, utilizing recruitment agents, and word of mouth) (Ozturgut 2013). On the other hand, senior executives develop collaborative partnerships to recruit international students (Altbach and Knight 2007; Bataille 2017; Redden 2018). In addition, institutional leaders utilize campus resources to provide tailored services to retain and graduate international students (Roberts, Dunworth, and Boldy 2018), and to recruit from a dwindling pool of international students.

The purpose of this study was to examine how institutional administrators provide and communicate about services for international students at a private, nonprofit, four-year university in the Northeast United States during a period of social and organizational change. More specifically, the study examined the types of support services institutional administrators provided for international students, the ways administrators communicated to international students regarding support services available to them, and the challenges they faced in providing and communicating with international students about support services.

Literature Review

This literature review examined the research regarding types of university support services offered to international students at higher education institutions, institutional leadership's role in providing such services, and international students' perception of these services. Extensive research has been done on certain aspects of international students in the United States and abroad, although most studies of international students in the United States were situation-specific, dealing with a convenience sample at one university (Adewale, Amico, and Salas 2018), with students affiliated with a sponsoring organization (Alanazi 2016), or with issues associated with supervising international students in one or several post-secondary institutions (Pedersen 1991). In reviewing the literature on this subject matter, four themes emerged: (1) international students' needs and institutional support services (Banjong 2015; Deters 2015; Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer 2016; Wu, Garza, and Guzman 2015); (2) ways support services are communicated to international students (Chen and Bartlett 2017; Maringe and Carter 2007); (3) factors influencing international students' satisfaction (Hassan and Masri 2015; Ngamkamollert and Ruangkanjanases 2015; Syahrivar 2016); (4) challenges faced by higher education administrators (Hegarty 2014; Klahr 2015; Nicola 2017; Roberts and Dunworth 2012).

International Students' Needs and Institutional Support Services

Previous literature has shown that international students have faced many challenges while studying abroad. In his qualitative study, Deters (2015) compared the experiences and needs of postsecondary international students from China and South Korea, who had completed at least one semester (4 months) in a program at a Canadian postsecondary institution. The researcher identified international students' challenges associated with language and culture, academics, finances, and making local friends.

Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016) focused their qualitative study on the factors they identified as critical to the mental health of international students, which were derived from three broad dimensions: adjusting to unfamiliar academic practices, developing skills to manage everyday life in a different cultural context, and both recognizing and seeking professional help for mental health problems.

Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015) used qualitative research methods to explore international students' challenges in academic settings (i.e., different teaching methods than in home institutions, isolation from classmates, language barriers, and pressure of parents' expectations), social settings (i.e., different communication patterns leading to awkwardness in social interactions and difficulties in developing friendships with domestic students), and cultural settings (i.e., different value systems, signs and symbols of social contact and interpersonal relationship patterns, and behavior norms caused misunderstanding and uneasiness), which motivated them to develop strategies to solve problems. The researchers believed that a better understanding of international students' challenges would help university faculty and stuff offer more effective supportive campus resources.

To overcome their challenges, international students sought broad and diverse support based on individual needs. Banjong (2015) conducted quantitative research to understand what campus resources international students used to manage such challenges as financial issues, literacy and loneliness at a university in the Midwest. The data tool for collecting data in this study was an online questionnaire measured on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was broken down into three parts: student background, student challenges, and campus resources. The four constructed factors were lack of English proficiency, loneliness/homesickness, financial life and technology. The dependent variable was academic success, measured with the variable "How successful do you feel you are in your studies?"

The study revealed that English proficiency was the most challenging difficulty international students faced and found a strong positive correlation between English language barriers and visitations to campus writing and success centers, while counseling service center was negatively correlated with the academic success of international students. Financial pressure, paying more tuition than domestic students and unpredictable exchange rates, impacted the academic impact of international students. Because they could not handle the stress associated with the lack of finance, they ended up going to the counseling center to seek help. This study found that frustration caused by new unfamiliar technology impacted the academic impact of international students from developing countries and pushed them to go to the counseling center to get help. The study revealed the importance of campus resources to international students, that they should know about the campus resources early because this information would help them adapt to the American educational environment and improve their school performance.

Ways Support Services are Communicated to International Students

Previous research on ways that institutional support services have been communicated to international students is limited. Chen and Bartlett (2017) found that universities' official websites were one of the most convenient platforms for their international students to find the resources and information that they needed. Using conventional and summative content analysis, the researchers visited the official websites of six American universities and searched specifically for information about any services or programs that were available for international students' use or participation. Based on conventional content analysis of the official websites, the researchers found that several major services were widely offered to international students to help with their success in both academic and nonacademic aspects: immigration, orientation, language training, academic assistance, and cross-culture programs. Besides these five basic categories, some universities provided other particular services or resources in different ways according to

students' specific resources or needs. It was found that each university had a specific office or department that was responsible for serving international students. Most of the information or resources for international students were found on the webpage for that office or department. However, each university had its own unique way of managing and designing their website. The researchers discovered that on some websites, all the information for international student services and resources had been collected together and presented in one main section and could be easily located. On other universities' websites, that information was divided and placed in different sections of the website with other general school resources according to the theme of the service. In addition to the existing information on the websites, all six universities provided specific contact information for related offices or staff. International students could also get assistance or resources for their own issues by calling, emailing, or visiting those places on campus.

Maringe and Carter (2007) focused their studies on the decision-making and experience of African students in United Kingdom higher education and provided hypothesis for re-conceptualizing these processes. The study employed focus group interviews with 28 students studying in two universities in the South of England together with in-depth interviews with two students and semi-structured discussion with two staff members in those institutions with a specific remit for recruiting from Africa. The data suggested that African students came to study in England on the promise of getting a truly international higher education experience. Questions were however raised about whether this promise was delivered in full. Students claimed not to have adequate access to information they might require facilitating decision making at various points in the decision-making cycle. The researchers recommended higher education leadership of

host institutions to develop an information delivery strategy, as well as more information on student support during the post-registration period.

The literature review showed that the topic of how support services available for international students were communicated by institutional administrators during a time of social and organizational change, including shifting federal immigration policies, enrollment declines, and the use of innovative methods to attract international students, has not been studied as extensively.

Factors Influencing International Students' Satisfaction

A review of existing literature indicates that while many foreign and U.S. universities do measure the general satisfaction and engagement level of their students, only few studies were focused specifically on international student population. The literature review also revealed that there is shortage of previous research specifically about international student satisfaction in U.S. higher education institutions.

Hassan and Masri (2015) investigated the effect of student-lecturer relationship, university characteristics, service quality, and price and fees (independent variables) on international student satisfaction (dependent variable) at private universities in Malaysia. The researchers sampled 370 international students at seven Malaysian private higher education universities. The instrument of the research was a questionnaire adapted from other researchers. It consisted of two sections: demographic information of participants and information related to the variables of the study. Based on the result of the regression analysis, the relationship between international student satisfaction and service quality was found significant and positive. The researchers concluded that the service quality was one of the factors that influenced the international students' satisfaction in Malaysian universities.

Ngamkamollert and Ruangkanjanases (2015) conducted a quantitative study to identify international students' satisfaction factors towards the international programs in Thai universities. The researchers formulated a conceptual model, which consisted of one internal factor (student preparation) and seven external factors (academic and education quality, image and prestige of the university, administrative and staff support, environment and safety, financial and economic consideration, future career and retention reasons, and personal influences), as independent variables, which were assumed to have an impact on student satisfaction (dependent variable). To test their hypotheses, the researchers developed a satisfaction questionnaire with five-point Likert scale. The findings show that administrative and staff support, in addition to academic and education quality, financial and economic consideration, and image and prestige of the university have significant positive influence on overall international students' satisfaction toward international program in Thai universities.

Syahrivar (2016) examined factors affecting satisfaction of international students enrolled in NYZ University in Indonesia. The researcher assumed that International Student Services, in addition to other independent variables, such as Education, Social Orientation, Economic Consideration, Safety, Image and Prestige, Technology and Accommodation, affected international students' satisfaction (dependent variable). The researcher used Multiple Regression Analysis for his hypothesis testing. The findings demonstrated that all factors: Education, Social Orientation, Economic Consideration, Safety, Image and Prestige, Technology, Accommodation, and International Student Services simultaneously affected International Student Satisfaction. The t-Test results revealed that only Economic Consideration, Safety, Accommodation, Technology and International Student Services independently affected International Student Satisfaction.

Challenges Faced by Higher Education Administrators

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Some literature discussed challenges that higher education and K-12 administrators have faced in meeting international students' needs and serving them well. These challenges include navigating language and cultural barriers, engaging with third-party agents, and accessing training and professional development opportunities. Previous research on the specific question of challenges faced by college administrators in providing services for international students is very limited: the Hegarty (2014) and Klahr (2015) articles are scholarly conceptual articles that do not report research; the Nicola (2017) study was conducted at the high school level; and the Roberts and Dunworth (2012) study took place in Australia.

Roberts and Dunworth (2012) conducted qualitative case study to examine staff and student perceptions of support services for international students at an Australian university. The researchers used individual semi-structured interviews with six university administrators involved in the provision of student services and four focus groups with nineteen international students to collect data. In addition to ineffective information dissemination and promotion of services to international students that staff had faced, the researchers found that staff tended to believe that students had a negative attitude towards support services because of the cultural and linguistic differences between Australia and the students' home countries. Staff also tended to believe that the physical location of some services created issues of accessibility. Within the theme of "barriers to use," staff and students shared a number of concerns. Both groups believed that the campus was not student-centered. Of a total of 61 statements categorized as identifying barriers to use, 17 staff members made reference to this lack of student-centeredness. Staff imputed blame for the lack of student-centeredness to the "university"/central university management, the information managers, and to a lesser extent, the teaching faculties. Staff commented that the language used in institutional advertising, promotional material and documentation was not

written in a way that would enable students to relate the information to themselves. Staff stressed the difficulties faced by international students integrating into student life within the university. Staff believed that many international students lacked social and language skills, leaving them isolated, uncertain about the nature of the services available, and vulnerable, particularly with regard to their personal safety. Staff comments also included reference to the absence of services embedded effectively within schools and the faculties. The limited commitment of teaching faculties to this was seen as a factor in preventing the connection and integration of service delivery. The research revealed that providers of services for international students needed to be more aligned to students' expectations of service provision, and more centered on students' actual needs, if they were to increase students' levels of satisfaction with their international experience.

Gap in the Literature

The literature review revealed that international students have faced many challenges while studying abroad. To overcome these challenges, international students sought broad and diverse support based on individual needs. Unfortunately, while many institutions have well-developed programs for students in general, not all services were designed to specifically cover the needs of international students. Moreover, a review of existing literature indicates that while many foreign and U. S. universities do measure the general satisfaction and engagement level of their students, only a few studies were focused specifically on international students and their needs. As such, the feedback of international students had to be assessed in order to identify their needs and provide the best support service to increase their satisfaction. In addition, much of the previous literature on international student satisfaction was research conducted outside of the United States.

Moreover, the topic of how support services available for international students were communicated by institutional administrators during a time of social and organizational change, including shifting federal immigration policies and the use of innovative methods to attract international students, had not been studied as extensively. There is also very limited prior literature on the challenges that college administrators have faced in providing services to international students. This study addressed that shortage in the literature, as well as other gaps. More specifically, this study examined institutional administrators' role in providing and communicating about services for international students at an institution that has launched an initiative to bring more international students to campus. This study also examined the challenges administrators faced in providing services to international students, and institutional communications about services for international students.

Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions:

1. How have institutional administrators adapted the provision of support services for international students, in a context of social and organizational change?

2. What challenges have institutional administrators faced in providing services to international students?

3. How have institutional administrators communicated with international students regarding support services available to them?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based in part on Abraham Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, and in part on Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik's (2003) Resource Dependence Theory. According to Maslow's theory, when students are concerned about certain

needs (i.e., physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization), their behavior is centered on meeting those needs. Based on this perspective, a review of literature, a quantitative pilot study conducted in Spring 2018, and qualitative pilot study conducted in Spring 2019, the researcher created a conceptual framework (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
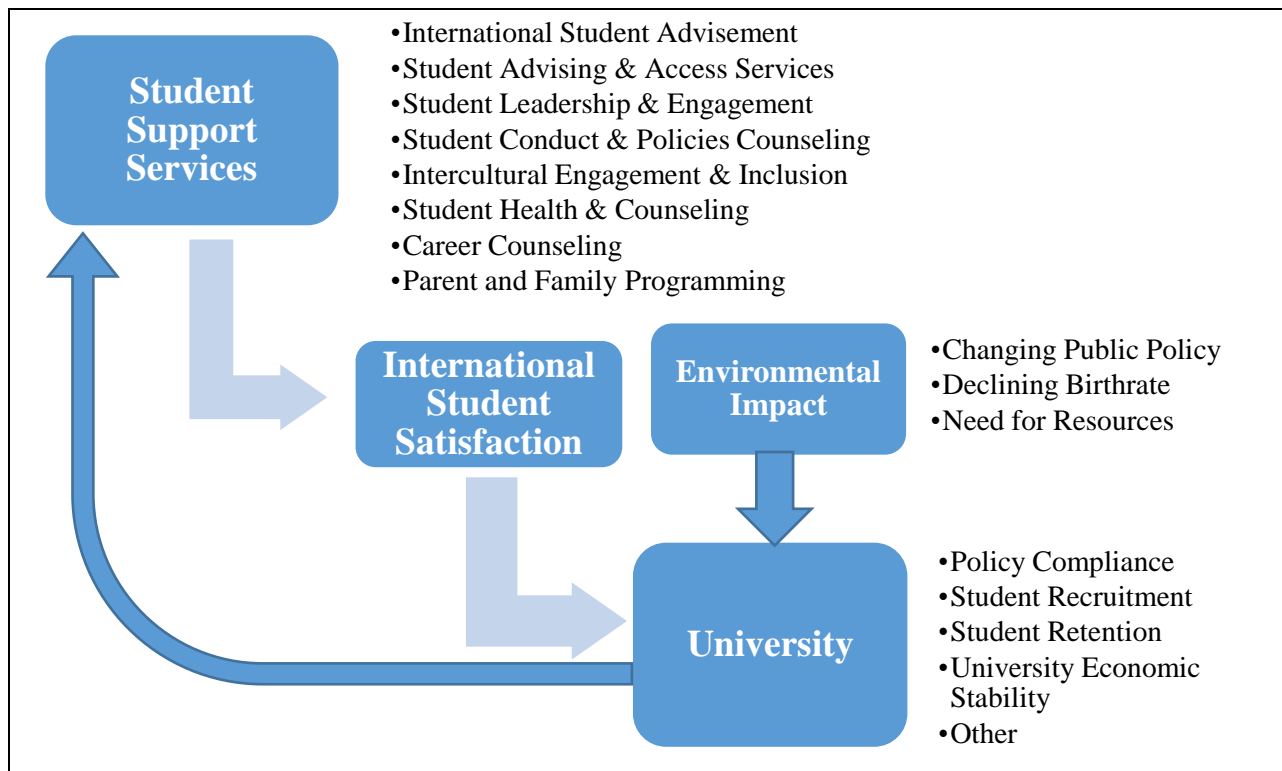
The conceptual framework shows not only what previous researchers have found or what theories have been proposed, but also "alternative ways of framing the issues" (Maxwell 2013, 35).

When higher education administrators understand what international students' needs are, and provide appropriate support services to satisfy those needs, they help students focus on learning and "achieved results" (Maslow 1970, 50), such as students' social and cultural adjustment, academic success, students' engagement, etc., which may lead to student retention, university economic stability, policy compliance, and other outcomes. Additionally, higher education in the United States is facing many challenges and changes. According to Garcia

(2015), and Mumper et al. (2011), higher education institutions are vulnerable to changes, as the environment (i.e., the federal government, state and local governments, accrediting organizations, donors, other colleges and universities) has a significant level of control. As such, it is important to understand the relationship between an organization and its environment since the environment "often affects the activities and structures of the organization, who it serves, and whether or not it will survive and thrive" (Garcia 2015, 84).

A number of scholars have used Pfeffer and Salancik's Resource Dependence Theory to better understand institutions of higher education, suggesting that it has significant value to higher education research (Garcia 2015; Mumper et al. 2011; Harcleroad and Eaton 2005). According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), organizations are linked to the environment through their dependence on other organizations for the many resources they require. As organizations are dependent upon resources derived externally, "internal power dynamics", organizational form and activities, become consistent with the demands of the resource environment (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003, xiii). When the resource environment changes, higher education institutions must adapt to fit the new environment. Following Resource Dependence Theory, as birthrates decline, state funding decreases, and federal policies change, higher education institutions become more dependent upon revenue derived from international student enrollment.

Using these two theories, the researcher examined the types of support services institutional administrators provided for international students to satisfy their needs, ways institutional administrators communicate about services for international students and challenges they faced at the institution during a period of social and organizational change, including shifting federal immigration policies and the use of innovative methods to attract and retain international students.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative case study design, which Yin (2018, 15) called "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident." In line with Creswell and Poth (2018, 96-97), a single-case study design was appropriate for this study because the researcher explored a real-life case throughout "detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" and reporting "a case description and case themes."

Field Setting

According to Maxwell (2013, 88), in qualitative research, the typical way of selecting settings and individuals is "purposeful sampling," when specific settings, participants, and activities are selected deliberately "in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices." The field setting selected for this study was a private, nonprofit, four-year university in the Northeast United States. This institution awarded undergraduate and graduate degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, education, health professions and human services, and other fields. The institution was purposefully sampled for this study because of its sizeable international student population and because the institution had launched an innovative approach to bring more international students to campus via a partnership with an outside organization. These characteristics were combined with changes at the national policy level regarding immigration policy—both micro-level and macro-level changes affecting international student enrollment.

Participants

There were two groups of participants for this study: (1) international students over the age of 18 currently enrolled at the institution, who had been at the institution for at least one

semester, and (2) university administrators in a leadership position, who provided services for international students at the institution. The participants included both men and women, and from a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. None of the participants were under the researcher's direct supervision.

Focus Group Participants/Students. Thirteen international students were recruited to participate in three focus groups. The table below describes the focus group participants.

Table 1. Demographics of Focus Group Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Country of Origin	School	Level	Time at School
FG1S	Female	24	Korea	Non-business	UG, GR	5 years
FG1A	Male	30	India	Business, Non-business	GR	4 years
FG1K	Female	21	Myanmar	Business	UG, GR	2 years
FG1Y	Male	20	Egypt	Non-business	UG	2 years
FG1G	Female	22	Italy	Non-business	UG	3 years
FG2W	Female	27	China	Business	GR	1 year, 4 ELP courses
FG2K	Female	23	China	Business	GR	3 months
FG2S	Male	23	China	Business	GR	9 months, 1 ELP course
FG3W	Female	26	China	Non-business	GR	1 year
FG3S	Male	24	Bangladesh	Non-business	UG	5 years
FG3D	Male	19	Kazakhstan	Non-business	UG	2 years

FG3J	Female	20	China	Pathway/ Non- business	GR		3 months
FG3Q	Female	32	China	Non- business	GR/EdD		1 year

After receiving the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the research, the

researcher sent email invitations to undergraduate and graduate international students who fit the

requisitie characteristics. Email addresses were obtained through the student directory, the Office

of Admissions, International Student Office, and personal connections with faculty. Students were

informed that they would be involved in a single focus group session, lasting approximately 60

minutes. The researcher also asked the students who agreed to participate to invite other

international students they knew. According to Lune and Berg (2017, 39), this method of

"snowball sampling" is sometimes the best method "to locate subjects with certain attributes or

characteristics necessary in the study."

Interview Participants/Administrators. The researcher recruited twelve university administrators

in leadership positions who provide services for international students to participate in individual

interviews, as well as a university administrator from a partner institution in a similar role. Thus,

there were a total of thirteen interviews conducted with higher education administrators.

Observations

The researcher observed five events related to international students: New International

Student Orientation, Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT)

information session, Life after F-1 information session, International Student 101 workshop, and

Intercultural Competence workshop. Four of the events lasted approximately 60 minutes each,

whereas the Orientation lasted three hours.

Documents and Artifacts

The researcher analyzed twelve documents relevant to the research questions, including applications, program flyers, the student handbook, the institution's bulletin, information sessions' PowerPoints, e-mails from the international student office, mass mail from university administrators, letters to families, the institutional website, the partner institution's website, websites of individual offices that provided services to international students, and similar documents and artifacts.Data Analysis

Data analysis was primarily inductive while guided by the literature, theoretical framework, and participants' responses. Focus groups, interviews, and events were audio-recorded using voice-recognition software (Voice Memo) and transcribed. All personal identifiers were removed during transcription. Transcripts, documents, and field notes were then coded through a process of open coding. Gibbs (2018, 54) describes coding as "a way of indexing or characterizing the text in order to establish a framework or thematic ideas about it." Emergent themes were analyzed individually as well as across all documents. Some *In Vivo* codes, "words or short phrases from the participant's own language… to honor the participant's voice" (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2020, 65), from the interviews and observation were also identified and matched with sub-categories.

Validity and Reliability

Validation in qualitative research is considered to be an attempt to access the "accuracy of the findings as best described by the researcher" (Creswell and Poth, 2018, 259). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested validity of qualitative research includes internal validity (or credibility) that deals with question of how research findings match reality and external validity (or transferability). They proposed several strategies for ensuring internal validity of qualitative research. Triangulation and member checks have been frequently employed to increase

credibility/internal validity of qualitative findings. Natow (2019) analyzed more than 120 peer-reviewed articles that reported the findings from qualitative studies using triangulation and found that most of the studies used multiple forms of triangulation. To enhance the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher also used multiple forms of triangulation to gather and analyze data. The most serious validity threats that the researcher was concerned with in this study were personal bias and reactivity. Below are some strategies included in this study in order to address these validity threats during data collection and analysis:

1) The researcher started the focus group interview with international students with an icebreaker/"*getting-to-know-you*" activity.

2) The researcher used open-ended questions.

3) The researcher followed up with focus group and individual interview participants in person or by e-mail to clarify responses and had a thick description of findings.

4) The researcher audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded the data according to the researcher's coding scheme to be consistent.

5) The researcher used multiple forms of triangulation to gather and analyze data (multiple data sources: different categories of interviewees, interviewees representing different geographic areas; multiple qualitative methods: interviews, focus groups, observations and document analysis).

6) The researcher maintained an audit trail of the research process. In the research journal, the researcher documented the research activities step-by-step as well as the reflection on data collection and data analysis.

7) The researcher shared the raw data without identifiable information and research progress with the dissertation advisor and other doctoral educational leadership students to get their feedback.

In addition, the researcher was concerned with potential for random or odd responding, or participants not responding in focus groups. Osborne and Blanchard (2011) found that unmotivated participants could cause substantial mis-estimation of results by providing random responses. Random/odd responding or not responding can be caused by lack of English language proficiency. Yildirim (2017) observed that international students gave more answers to the questions, which required short answers (one-word, or one-phrase) than "explanatory" answer questions.

To minimize this validity/reliability threat, the researcher used the following strategies in this study:

1) The focus group protocol supported the expression of varying opinions. Every participant was given an opportunity to participate/speak.

2) The Informed Consent form indicated that participants to be allowed to opt out of research at any point.

3) Participants were provided with a list of probes, such as a list of institutional offices and services they provided for international students.

Ethics

According to Gibbs (2018), ethical research practice adds to the quality of the data analysis. Researchers face ethical challenges in all stages of the study, from designing to reporting. The protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is imperative because qualitative researchers focus their research on "exploring, examining, and describing people and their natural environments" (Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden 2000, 93). These include anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, researchers' potential impact on the participants, and vice versa (Sanjari et al. 2014). The following actions were taken to enhance ethical practice

in this research and to minimize the risk of harming the participants in this study: 1) completion of the CITI Program (foundational training in human subject research that covered ethical issues); 2) IRB approval of the study; 3) Inform Consent explaining the study; 4) confidentiality of transcription (i.e. all personal identifiers were removed during the transcription, each participant was assigned an individual code, the record was password protected); 5) disposal of records after a specified time.

Findings

Adaptation of International Student Support Services

The first research question asked: How have institutional administrators adapted the provision of support services for international students in a context of social and organizational change? The data showed that organizational changes within the case-study institution were a response to broader social changes. This study confirmed that institutional administrators were, in fact, providing support services to students during a period of great change, and in some ways adapting the provision of international student services as a result of such change. Some respondents indicated that current U.S. immigration policies made administrators' regulation compliance work "more cumbersome and challenging" (Interviewee Je), but "a huge effort from different offices across campus help administrators in student services reduce the concerns and the barriers they may have on how to engage with international students" (Interviewee G) because they used every possible opportunity "to be as effective and efficient with the resources that they have" (Interviewee H). The data revealed that administrators reviewed the role of the International Student Office (ISO) in response to changing federal immigration policies, "covering most of the [international students'] needs, in terms of work, immigration, culture, study, and individual complex needs" (Interviewee M) through the Student Success Connect app of the institution's portal or one-on-one. The data also showed that ISO started addressing issues

such as unauthorized employment and its consequences, all sorts of violations, and how to maintain F-1 status more to help international students avoid problems that could interfere with their program of study or employment benefits.

> A lot of explanation is needed: what happened, why that happened, what could happen. … We have International Student News, [a mass email sent to all international students], when we remind [them] of all things happening, immigration wise and what to pay attention to. (Interviewee M)

In addition, the ISO implemented various programs and services for international students such as the Global Mentors Program, facilitating these students' adaptation to the new environment and creating opportunities for them to achieve academic goals. According to Interviewee H, "Global Mentors follow-up [with mentees] in a less formal, less intimidating way, for example over lunch." There was some disagreement among interviewees regarding the usefulness and timing of orientation for new international students. While one administrator in student services was glad to have orientation a few days before opening the school because international students had enough time to "absorb at least some important information" (Interviewee Je), an administrator from the partnering institution argued that orientation was too close to the beginning of their first semester because students did not have much time to select appropriate courses after their placement (Interviewee F).

In response to changing federal immigration policies, as part of adapting the provision of support services for international students in a context of social and organizational change, the institution launched the Deportation Defense Clinic (DDC). This initiative was reaction to the Trump administration's executive order in 2017, which barred travel for individuals coming from certain countries. The executive order caused deep concern over growing uncertainty and anxiety around issues involving international students and scholars. It also demonstrated the institution's commitment to the community, to the values of civic engagement and tolerance, and as an

administrator in communications pointed out, "showed its respect and promoted diversity, reflected in [the institution's] mission statement, which you could not do without an international population" (Interviewee C). The same interviewee stated that services were provided to those who needed legal support with immigration policy and deportation defense. The additional data, found on the institutional website, showed that the clinic concentrated on two vulnerable populations: immigrants with removal orders against them and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients - undocumented immigrants, who came to the United States as children and spent most of their lives in the U.S. The clinic has provided support in such areas as client representation, impact litigation, and community advocacy.

Following the DDC launch, the institution partnered with an external corporate organization, and its pathway programs became integrated with academic programs and student support services at the institution. Interviewee Y hoped that an external recruitment organization would help bring more students, "as [our new partner] had big arm all over the world: China, India, Southeast Asia, and Latin America."

The final finding in response to the first research question was creation of several professional development/cross training opportunities for administrators to gain the skills, knowledge, and tools to be more effective in their job and their work with international students. Interviewee B stated: "It's a global world, and it is changing. We have to catch up. Otherwise, we are not going to be able to serve our students, and they are going to leave."

Challenges Institutional Administrators Faced

The second research question asked: What challenges have institutional administrators faced in providing services to international students?

The data revealed that administrators faced various challenges. These included challenges associated with changes in political situations and immigration policies. Specifically, administrators working in recruitment and the ISO spent more time on visa-related matters than on transition programs. In addition, administrators faced challenges associated with growing options international students had in terms of other schools worldwide and locally.

> I'm facing big challenges when I am trying to introduce [the case study institution] to international students as a lot of internationals never heard of it. The first question they ask, "What's your national ranking?" It's really hard for me to explain sometimes." (Interviewee Y)

Administrators also faced challenges associated with funding and staffing shortages, needing autism specialists, social workers, and specialists with experience working with international students. Another challenge was associated with the distribution and access of information to international students (i.e., how much information to provide to students, how to provide it, when to follow up, etc.). This latter factor was a challenge related to two of the other challenges identified by this study: language barriers and cultural differences. In addition, the data showed that the Student Handbook, one of the main sources of information for students, has not been adjusted in response to either a new partnership with the external organization or changing U.S. immigration policy. As such, more work needed to be done.

Institutional Communications with International Students

The third research question asked: How have institutional administrators communicated with international students regarding support services available to them?

The data showed that administrators used various strategies, initiatives, and modalities. One of them was "electronic outreach" (Interviewee G) through mass or individual emails or digital newsletters. Five main types of information delivered to international students electronically were identified: 1) regular/informative, 2) practical/detailed, 3) professional, 4)

situational/immediate, and 5) motivating/reassuring. Administrators also advertised student

services on the institutional website, social media (i.e., Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Facebook

Live, WeChat, Sina Weibo, or Weibo, and Youku Tudou), and in institutional printed materials.

Table 2 lists the types of printed institutional materials that served as sources of information for

international students regarding institutional policies and support services available for them at

the case study institution.

Table 2. Types of Printed Institutional Materials

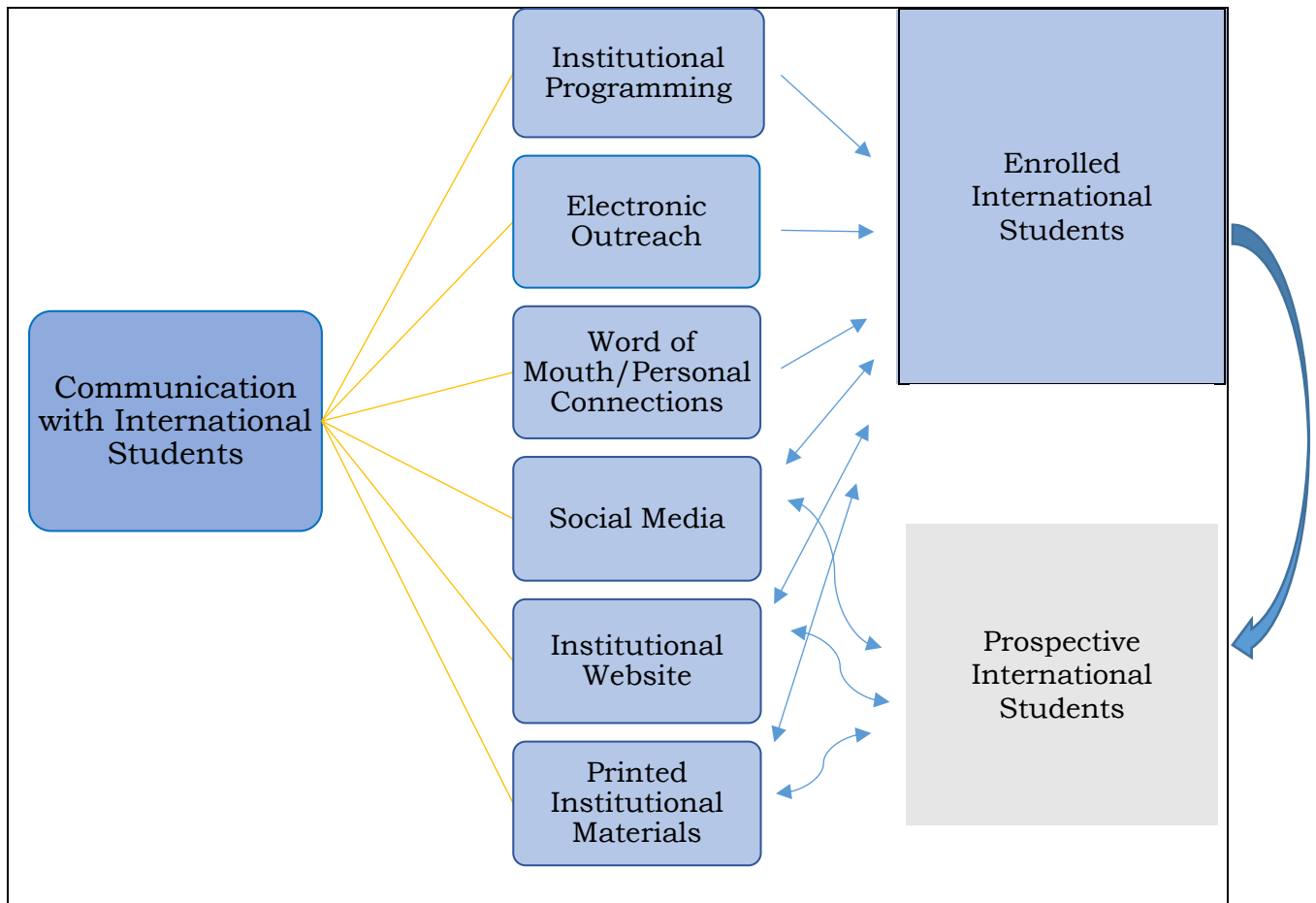| Types of Printed Institutional Materials	Study Participants Who Reported
• Institutional Core Documents, such as Student Conduct Code, the Living Factor/ Guide to Living on Campus, etc.	Interviewee B, Interviewee C, Interviewee S
• Reports, such as Campus Safety Repost, Annual Security and Fire Safety Report	Interviewee M
• Printable Forms, such as Application for Travel Signature, F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Application, STEM OPT Extension Request Form, Voluntary Disability Disclosure, etc.	FG1S, FG3D, Interviewee J, Interviewee L, Interviewee M
• Academic Materials, such as Academic Honor Code, Course Syllabus, Pathway Program Brochure, etc.	FG1A, FG3D, FG3Q, Interviewee F, FG1S, Interviewee S
• Advertisement Materials: Enrollment Guide, Event Calendars/Flyers, Health Plan Flyer, Visitors' Guide, etc.	Interviewee B, Interviewee Y
• Other, such as Family Handbook, Safety Booklet, Campus Map, Campus Bus Schedule, etc.	Interviewee C, FG3W

One of the main sources of information for international students regarding support services was

word of mouth and personal connections, which was noted by some focus group participants as

well. Results showed that the circle of international students' connections included 28 different

contacts, which were summarized into seven main groups: family/friends, classmates/student-

leaders/alumni, course instructors/tutors, college administrators/mentors/staff, agents/high school counselors, professional networks (memberships associated with professional organizations), and others (students could not identify the source and reported it as "I heard"). For example, FG1A/an international student from India said:

> My friend used to go here. And I spoke to her, and I asked her how [the institution] was. Since I heard good things about it, I applied for it and got good scholarship, plus it was close to the city.

The research found that the institution communicated with international students during programs designed for them which included immigration regulations workshops, lunches with Global Mentors, EdTech manager presentations about technology support and a portal tutorial, workshops regarding safety on and off campus, cultural adjustment panel, workshops on academic integrity, field trips, family orientation for international families, and so on. Important information for international students was provided by institutional administrators at these types of student programming and events. Figure 2 summarizes various strategies, initiatives, and modalities institutional administrators used to communicate with international students about support service available for them.

Figure 2. Communications with International Students

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                          ┌────────────────┐                            │
│                          │  Institutional │                            │
│                          │  Programming   │          ┌──────────────┐  │
│                          └────────────────┘          │   Enrolled   │  │
│                          ┌────────────────┐          │International  │  │
│                          │   Electronic   │          │   Students    │  │
│   ┌──────────────┐       │    Outreach    │          └──────────────┘  │
│   │Communication │       └────────────────┘                            │
│   │with          │       ┌────────────────┐                            │
│   │International  │       │   Word of      │                            │
│   │  Students     │       │Mouth/Personal │                            │
│   └──────────────┘       │  Connections   │                            │
│                          └────────────────┘                            │
│                          ┌────────────────┐                            │
│                          │ Social Media   │          ┌──────────────┐  │
│                          └────────────────┘          │  Prospective │  │
│                          ┌────────────────┐          │International  │  │
│                          │ Institutional  │          │   Students    │  │
│                          │   Website      │          └──────────────┘  │
│                          └────────────────┘                            │
│                          ┌────────────────┐                            │
│                          │    Printed     │                            │
│                          │ Institutional  │                            │
│                          │   Materials    │                            │
│                          └────────────────┘                            │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Discussion

Given the contributions of international students to higher education in the United
States as well as the need for institutions to increase enrollments at a time when national
immigration policy has been uncertain, senior institutional leaders have attempted to expand their
international recruiting efforts and enhance the internationalization of their universities. To
increase international students' satisfaction with their educational experiences, higher education
institutions have also attempted to strengthen support services available for international students.
While many institutions have well-developed programs for students in general, not all services
were specifically designed to address the unique needs of international students. The topic of how
support services available for international students were communicated by institutional

administrators during a time of social and organizational change, including shifting federal immigration policies and the use of innovative methods to attract international students, had not been studied extensively. There was also limited prior literature on the challenges that college administrators face in providing services to international students. This study has addressed that shortage in previous literature, as well as other gaps. More specifically, this study examined how university administrators adapted to social and organizational change when providing services to international students. This study also examined the challenges administrators faced in providing services to international students, and institutional communications about services for international students. This research found that administrators at the case study institution undertook some new initiatives with regard to international student services, such as reviewing the role of the International Student Office, establishing the Deportation Defense Clinic, and partnering with an external corporate organization. Also, the university's international student pathway programs became integrated with academic programs and student support services, and staff were provided with professional development to gain the skills, knowledge, and tools to be more effective in their work with international students. Challenges administrators faced in providing to and communicating with international students included challenges associated with changes in political situation and immigration policies, growing options international students had when choosing an institution of postsecondary education, resource shortages with respect to staffing and funding, language barriers, and cultural differences. When administrators communicated with international students about services during periods of social and organizational change, they used a variety of communication modalities. Social changes manifested in a variety of ways; understanding what they were and how they affected international students was vital for adapting services and communication strategies to best reach students.

Limitations

Glesne (2011) indicates that part of demonstrating the trustworthiness of data is to realize the limitations of the study. This research had some limitations. First, the researcher's familiarity with the case study institution likely resulted in some preconceived notions about how some interview participants (university administrators in a leadership position) might answer the interview questions and describe their work, as the researcher had been working at the case study institution for the past 15 years. Second, findings could be biased by the selected sample of students and administrators, as well as the bias of the researcher. Third, this study was limited in scope to one location, time, and specific group of participants and, as such, the results cannot necessarily be generalized. Fourth, the data collected by conducting a focus group and individual interviews were self-reported. Participants might provide the more socially acceptable answer rather than being truthful. Finally, there was no execution of the questions during the focus group activity in other languages. Providing questions in other languages would have ensured that participants clearly understood the questions and their rights as participants, and potentially elicited different responses from the participating international students.

Implications for Practice

When adapting international student services to changing immigration policies and enrollment declines amid the pandemic, U.S. higher education institutions should consider new innovative strategies to raise their institutions' visibility both locally and overseas to bring more international students. For example, higher education institutions might optimize their websites by using attractive and interactive visual design and offer more up to date institutional content and alumni experiences in languages other than English.

To minimize the challenges institutional administrators face with providing international student services and communicate more effectively with international students, it is suggested to expand cross training opportunities for institutional administrators, which will strengthen personnel's skills, broaden their knowledge, help them gain confidence in themselves, reduce the concerns and barriers they may have on how to engage with international students and provide better service; to revise the content and timing of programming and events related to international students; to reexamine the use of electronic outreach and social media platforms for information distribution to international students; and to gather additional campus wide data before making staffing and budgeting decisions.

Future Research

There is a variety of pathways to be considered in future studies. Research could be conducted in a new context (e.g., a new location or culture) or with larger sample sizes, which could potentially yield results that are more generalizable to the broader student population and other institutional administrators. Research could investigate how higher education institutions have adapted their services for international students following the COVID-19 pandemic and discuss their effectiveness. It would also be interesting to qualitatively capture the experiences of institutional administrators who partnered with a similar external organization to get a better understanding of how services are delivered to international students and how to improve service delivery if needed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of support services institutional administrators provided for international students, the ways administrators communicated to international students regarding support services available to them, and the challenges they faced

in providing and communicating with international students about support services during a period of social and organizational change.

This research significantly contributes to the field of international education. By considering the findings of this research, higher education professionals can expand their understanding of international students, improve the delivery of programs and services for this student population and improve international student satisfaction with their education experience abroad. When administrators communicate with international students about services during periods of social and organizational change, they should use a variety of communication modalities. Social changes manifest in a variety of ways; understanding what they are and how they affect international students is vital for adapting services and communication strategies to best reach students. This research also contributes to institutional strategic planning as the findings might lead higher education administrators to revise student services, adjust resource allocation, improve marketing strategies to attract the best international student and scholar talent, and raise an institution's reputation on the world market. All of these matters are important in time of globalization, shifting immigration policies, and the need for more student enrollments.

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