

**Perceptions of international students regarding equality at a private college  
in the United Kingdom**

**Brian Kanengoni**

## **Abstract**

**Objective:** The aim of the study is to examine the perceptions of students regarding equality at a private college in the UK.

**Design:** The design involved carrying out qualitative interviews with students to record their views and perceptions. Five questions guided the interviews.

**Results:** Two main themes were generated from the analysis of the interviews. They were "Behaviour" and "Communication".

**Conclusions:** The findings showed there is a relationship between the behaviour of staff and perceptions of students. The research also highlighted the impact of health, resources, stigma and needs. The research also concluded by recommending further studies in other populations are needed to enhance generalisation of the results.

## **1.0 Introduction**

My area of study seeks to find out the perceptions of international students studying at a private college in the United Kingdom regarding their views and experience of equality as a learner. The research aims to explore any issues which will be addressed by the researcher. As this is action research, the researcher will be part of the study and will be responsible for measuring changes and the implications. This will involve carrying out an additional follow up probe to explore if the intervention of the researcher has had an impact on the original views of the students. Data collection and data analysis are on going throughout the action research process (Schostak,2006).

This study will now start by exploring the meaning of active research and its relevance to my specialist teaching area. There will also be a discussion on the inspiration which has led the researcher to explore this area. The study will also discuss methodology, results, intervention ,ethical dilemmas before concluding with some recommendations

## **1.1 What is action research?**

My understanding of action research is that it has the potential of identifying real time opportunities as it involves working with individuals or groups in their natural environment. As a result it leads to change or improvement to be achieved at the same time while gaining a greater understanding or knowledge about the topic. Whyte (1991) defines action research as a handy approach that attempts to measure real life experiences with the hope of doing something about it. While on the other hand, Schostak (2002) suggest action research is a practical approach to professional inquiry in any social situation. Carr and Kemmis (1986) also suggest action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices. Carr and Kemmis (1986) further explain action research aids understanding of practice, and the situations in which practices are carried out. These definitions blend very well with my health and social care specialist subject area where as a practitioner, I have to continuously reflect and look at any situation holistically to ensure best outcomes for learners or service users. I am aware teaching is not static,so are the needs of learners. Based on these definitions as a teacher,I sought to carry out primary research to find out the thoughts of my learners with the view to discover factors affecting learning. There are various theories such

as systems theory, social learning, socialisation and objects relations that suggest that an individual is affected with their environment (Adams et al (2002). This is what this study seeks to find out , measure the impact and possibly assist to adjust the views of the learners which will possibly influence a positive result. This will involve following the action research cycle which has defined roles at each stage. The first stage involves identifying a general or initial idea preferably linked to professional and personal development. This is similar to what has been done in this research by deciding to explore a topic which involves identifying the perceptions of international learners. The second stage is fact finding which involves examining the issue at hand to ascertain strategic features and preliminary surveying of the research (Stringer,2007). This is the stage that involves formulating a hypothesis and exploring a suitable methodology. For this study, this stage involves some literature review to find out what is already known about my topic. The third stage is planning followed by taking the first stage of the research such as carrying out interviews or focus groups (Reason and bradbury,2001). This is the stage where I hope to engage with the learners and use some research instruments to find out about their views. The next stage will involve evaluation of the results of the first stage of the research. Depending on the results, the initial plan is adjusted and a follow up research is conducted and the first results are tested to see if the intervention had any impact. Susman(1983) highlights this stage as quality control where the research aims , objectives and process is scrutinised to examine if they are fit for purpose. Depending on what is revealed the research model could be modified or an alternative approach will be deployed. For example changing the data collection method from interview to focus groups or to start using electronic questionnaires if paper based are found to be less effective. Many scholars link this stage with modifying the hypothesis and planning follow up or further research (Stringer,2007). The cycle ends by drawing conclusions and identifying further areas for research. As can be seen from the steps discussed above, action research appears to encourage learning by experience and problem solving in areas such as my teaching area. This is very good in a teaching environment when a teacher has to be flexible to change in order to meet the needs of the learners and be able to address any identified problems to facilitate an inclusive learning environment. The study will also contribute to my continuous career development (CPD) as it has the potential of drawing themes that have implications on professional or personal development (McNiff,2002). For example reflecting and looking at my behaviour if it alleviates or further enhances learners views on equality within the learning environment.

## **1.2 Interest for the research topic**

My interest in the welfare of international students is due to the fact that I used to be one a few years ago and experienced the challenges of adapting to a new culture not only while studying but when engaged with the general community. My subject specialist teaching area involves assisting learners to adopt the care value base which should be part of their professional and personal practice. My learners work with vulnerable people and some of them are practising to be managers which means they will be directly responsible for the welfare of others and therefore needed to develop skills for promoting equality within their work place. As a result, I felt this had to start with how the learners felt in the classroom. The students had also hinted during normal classroom discussions about how they felt about equality within the college which I therefore decided to explore and find out to what extent and the impact. As a teacher, I have to be also a voice and fighter for those who might otherwise be unable to do so. I also have first hand practice of working in an environment which disadvantaged international learners and was not really interested in their welfare or recognised confounding factors affecting their studies. I have also witnessed a difference in culture when it comes to the welfare of international students compared to other settings such as teaching to the indigenous population. There are also various studies that touch on the welfare of international students (Deem and Brehony, 2000). Even some politicians such as the current home secretary of the United Kingdom, Theresa May has highlighted concerns with the poor education for international students in some colleges (UKinBurma, 2011).

## **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

This research aims to test the effectiveness of equality initiatives and college policies such as the use of interpreters for learners whose first language is not English. The knowledge gained from this study is important to inform my practice so that I ensure the needs of my learners are met. This could also inform me if the curriculum is suitable for the learners or if it needs adjusting. This could also involve exploring opportunities for the use of technology such as e-learning or implementing any new evidence-based practice. The knowledge could also help me test the impact of resources and college policies affecting the learners. The study will also help me to identify opportunities of motivating my learners and show some gaps in their learning such as the need to meet some cultural or religious needs. This is very important as the learners come from different parts of the world, have different

experiences and have their own unique learner needs. The study will also help me to develop and fulfil my duties under IIF code of practice, GSCC code of practice, college policies and awarding body regulations of striving to maintain an inclusive teaching environment. This will also ensure I am complying with the Equality Act 2010 and commitment of improving as a teacher by engaging in actions such as this study to reflect on my practice, impact on others and areas I have done well and those not so well. It is also expected the study will measure changes and the implications which in turn leads to findings that can be used to inform management or teaching decisions. However, it is important to also recognise that my audience of international students are affected by government regulations and immigration and therefore intervention from the teacher or college has to be realistic and within the boundaries set by the authorities.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

To prepare for this study, the researcher consulted a number of databases, both paper and electronic in search for literature on the topic. The aim of the literature review is to show gaps, inconsistencies and debatable concepts in the existing literature (Biesta, 2006). This study attempts to fill some of those gaps or discrepancies. The review identified some gaps and lack of available data relevant to the study population. There was hardly any study that touched on perceptions of international students on what they think about equality in the private college sector.

To carry out the review of literature, a number of questions were designed to guide the review and identify similar available literature. Some of the questions asked were what people thought of equality within the college, the key challenges of addressing equality, and what should the college do to address equality? Some limitations existed during the process of searching of data for the literature review, the main one being lack of available full text articles on the open World Wide Web. Those that were available on the Internet required subscription of about fifteen pounds (£15) and had limited information on international students in the United Kingdom let alone enrolled at a private college.

All studies identified for the review were selected depending on their relevancy to the study title. The relevancy criterion was applied after reading the titles and abstracts of the various studies. The studies meeting the criteria were then assessed using the review questions for quality. The studies deemed of a quality standard were based

on relevancy, study design and outcomes of the study. There is evidence of a large bank of research focusing on general students and equality but very little on international students. When reflecting about the scenario, I questioned if lack of research meant international students are less important and as teachers we should not worry about their needs or factors that could affect learning?

However there are still some studies that have been carried out to find out the views of international students (UKCOSA,2004). This study touched on equality but did not explore fully. The research was mainly carried out to find out the impact of international students without attempting to look from the perspective of the learner. Obery (1960) suggested international students, experience stress, anxiety, powerlessness, rejection and isolation. It is therefore important as teachers to find out the views and experiences of international students in order to meet their needs.

Stephan and stephan (1996) highlighted that positive views of international students are hardly in any media besides the benefits they bring to a country. Woodward (2011) further comments that the population has forgotten international students are customers and therefore are entitled to a good service just like any other student. Similar problems were reported in the study by Jakubowicz and Monani (2010) in Australia who highlighted a range of problems with equality of international students within educational settings and how they were perceived by their host country. It appears from the research there is a link between the perceptions of the united Kingdom and disappointment of reality which in turn has an impact on the views of equality in or outside their educational environment.

The current research does indicate some problems of international students and equality. For example the research by De Vita (2002) concluded by indicating the issues that affect international students such as stereotyping, stigma and a general belief international students require more input from teachers. De Vita also highlighted issues with international students affect other learners. Going through the literature shows there is also a general belief that the poor academic ability of international students is viewed by local students as a barrier to their own learning especially during group work (Harrison and Peacock,2007). These comments suggest there is no equality and extend the problem not only to international students but to local students whose needs we as teachers should also meet.

In order to balance the views of how international students and equality is perceived further literature was looked at. Zhao et al (2005) suggested that International students constitute an increasingly relevant and important source of diversity. Calleja, 2000 further suggest attending an educational institution with a substantial number of international students may advantage local students in the marketplace, to the extent that the experience increases their culturally sensitivities and skills in working with people from different backgrounds. However it is not enough to assume having international students is good and beneficial without working to improve equality. Harrison and Peacock (2007) suggest that the lack of integration between student groups and a realisation that the mere presence of international students does not constitute an 'international experience' at home.

The studies have shown there are various debates about international students that have an impact to teaching and the understanding of equality. They varied in design, aims and objectives. While there are areas such as sampling method, bias's, ethical issues, data collection, methods, study design and data analysis of the studies to criticise, what became apparent in this literature review was a lack of published studies concentrating on international students in the United Kingdom.

Most of the studies looked at in this review clearly outline the impact of international students on the country without looking at the actual needs of the students. What has been exposed by these studies is that finding about the views of international students is a crucial topic of ensuring equality is promoted for an inclusive learning environment. The research also exposed that views of international students should always been found out regardless of context and methods in order to connect with the wider learning environment. The aim of carrying out an audit of international students views of equality is to reflect on the effect of theories at play such as power and empowerment. This gives the teacher the opportunity of reflecting to ensure values and other roles within the boundaries of the profession are implemented.

Looking back at the studies examined in this review they were able to link personal factors and contexts that influence the nature and quality of equality within education. The studies also helped to identify reoccurring issues, which have an impact on equality. However, as the studies were mainly on general student affairs it is difficult to transfer these results and relate them to the private college sector as the private college sector has its own dynamics and influences.

This study will now aim to reflect the dynamics of the private college sector by examining the perceptions of students on their thoughts on equality. This research study aims to generate knowledge about how equality is perceived by international students in general with the aim of informing policy making on specific needs, perceptions and expectations which should guide innovative and culturally adapted interventions.

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

To prepare for this study a number of studies and literature were explored to inform this study. This was to gain a better understanding of the research process. Looking at studies such as Schroeder and Kuh (2003) knowledge was gained about how best to communicate goals and intentions and how to manage a research projects?I also looked at Pike et al (2003). which helped inform about the involvement of students in research. The researcher tried to identify any natural occurring opportunities to be incorporated in the study. The researcher asked the students during their normal classroom lecture on what they thought about equality as a general subject. The students were asked to present their findings to the class. This was to ensure the learners know and understood what is referred to as equality and any associated factors. The researcher felt this was a nonintrusive approach to data collection and also a way of improving the quality of the study as the students knew exactly what was going to be tested or examined.

The core research itself involved conducting six interviews. As a research methodology, interviews are a means of generating discussion and eliciting synergistic insights into particular questions (Silverman, 2000). The purpose of a qualitative methodology such as interviews is not to test predetermined hypotheses, but rather to elicit the perspectives of individual participants. Qualitative researchers are concerned in their research with attempting to accurately describe, decode, and interpret the meanings of facts occurring in their normal social contexts (Fryer, 1991). The study embraced action research and took consideration of all stages of the action research cycle. This also included examining intervention strategies,time scales and ethical consideration.

### **3.2 Planning**

During the planning stage a number of factors were considered such as resources and time scales. The research had a time scale of three months from start to finish. To effectively plan, the researcher drew up a scheduling that identified every stage of action research cycle. The researcher took account of college policies which were factored in the planning. For example the use of data collected, confidentiality, health and safety and inclusion were also taken into account. The researcher decided not to use electronic questionnaires after realising that a number of the students did not have access to the internet while away from the college premises. The researcher ensured the study was open to all students and information about the research was available to all the learners through the notice board and information sheet. The students also had access to the researcher who could answer any questions or queries and provide information about the study.

### **3.4 Sample**

A convenience sample of students was recruited. Participation was open to all international students enrolled at the college. Sample size was determined by resource available and the amount of time, and on the availability and willingness of students to participate. There were eight students initially for the whole study. The number reduced to six after one student participated in the pilot and was therefore unable to carry on with the main study. The other student was recovering from illness and therefore not appropriate to pursue her participation. The sample can be said to be a theoretically representative as it reflected some demographic factors such as age and gender of all the students.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

The interviews were guided by questions designed by the researcher. Most of the questions were designed in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. For example the question "Do you feel valued as an international student?" was designed to give responses which identify factors associated with the perceptions of being valued and provide explorative clues of the required conducive environment. The research also used the following research instruments:

- Notebook
- Research questions (appendix 1)
- Information sheet
- Consent Form

-Demographics Form

-HyperResearch Software

### **3.6 Ethics**

This study required Ethical approval from the college. According to Bowling (2002) ethics form a central part in the maintenance of integrity and legitimacy of the research process? Permission was given by the college. Consent was sought from all participants. Bowling (2002) highlights informed consent from participants should always be sought. An information sheet about the research was given to all participants. The information sheet explained to participants that they can opt out at anytime if they wished to. The researcher ensured confidentiality and anonymity of data, and respected the human rights of participants. In addition, participants were made aware that the collected data was only for research purposes and was going to be destroyed. The researcher as the facilitator ensured no one was distressed during the interviews. The researcher also aimed not to exceed sixty minutes during the interviews to minimise fatigue of the students and the impact on the quality of the responses.

### **3.7 Procedure**

The core study was made up of six face-to-face interviews. A poster publicising the study was placed on the college notice board for two weeks prior to the research being conducted. The researcher also sent out an invitation and an information sheet which was included with the regular correspondence sent out to all students.

The researcher approached potential volunteers who had expressed an interest in the research in order to provide further information about the research. It was not necessary to have further recruitment campaigns as the first drive had attracted enough people. All potential participants were given two weeks to make up their mind on participation.

The researcher decided to carry out a pilot study by interviewing one learner to test the research questions and have a dry run of the interview process. The researcher reflected on the pilot to determine how the research methodology could be improved. During the review of the pilot the order of the questions were revised For example, one of the original questions had the potential of putting off interviewee's. There was

also a problem with some questions, which were closed therefore restricting the responses from the students. After the necessary changes to the questions the interviews were conducted as planned.

The general interviewing process involved the researcher introducing himself and giving more information about the study. The researcher asked the participant if they had any questions about the study. The researcher offered to speak in confidence with any individual at any point of the study. The researcher then gave out consent forms to be filled out by the respondents. Signed consent forms were handed back to the researcher before the start of the interviews. The researcher then asked about some demographical information such as age and previous occupation. The researcher facilitated the interview, which lasted approximately an hour, taking notes. The discussions were guided by some questions (appendix 1). Cohen et al (2007) suggests that regardless of the method of data collection, the moderator should make field notes to record fresh responses and facilitate data analysis.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The researcher analysed the data. The process involved six steps, which were skim question, review, question, conclusion and question. Common themes were identified during the skimming process. The themes were then analysed and a conclusion made. HyperResearch software was used to analyse the data. All data collected was only used for the purpose it was collected for and shredded at the end of the study. The interviews were used to collect detailed and spontaneous information on issues pertinent to international students enrolled at a private college based in the United Kingdom.

The data analysis in stages was made up of the following:

- o The skim stage involved going through the responses of the students. Themes emerged from the responses. For example in the research, themes' such as language, policies and trust emerged from the data collected.
  
- o The second and third stage involved selecting the themes that stand out to create a matrix in order to identify main themes. The main themes' emerging from the study were attitudes, legislation and media. The process involved reading through

the responses and highlighting key words or phrases and highlighting key words or phrases that seem related to each other. The findings were recorded using hyperResearch software.

- o The fourth stage involved recording patterns that emerge by looking at the matrix to come up with conceptual or attitudinal patterns. Conceptual patterns refer to relationships between entities and problem solving while attitudinal patterns refers to motivational factors.

- o The fifth stage involved drawing explanations and conclusions of the findings. For example in the research poor communication was a confounding factor, which had an impact on the views of learners. The research came up with initiatives to improve communication and empower learners.

- o The researcher took the last and sixth stage by again questioning if the intervention had worked and planning the possible next steps such as revising research questions or another interview to address any gaps.

### **3.9 Aims and Objectives**

This descriptive, and exploratory research managed to show the perceptions of international students through the coded themes. The researcher was able to achieve the aims and objectives of the study by analysing the perceptions of the students regarding their understanding and feelings regarding equality. Some factors associated with the perceptions included time, behaviour and attitude of staff. The study was able to provide explorative clues on potential opportunities of implementing equality initiatives in the learning environment.

### **4.0 Results and Discussion**

This part of the study is to summarise the results of interviews with learners who were asked to give their views on equality. Five questions were asked which generated a number of phenomena and themes. An analysis of the data was carried out generating two main themes. They were “behaviour” and “communication”. The main themes were linked and related to some sub themes that emerged from the data.

#### **4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics**

Six people participated in the study (Table 2, Appendix 2). Four people were male while the remaining two were females. Among the participants three were between the ages of 21-30 while the other two were 31-40 and the last one between 41-50. There is no significance with these demographic factors other than just an indication of participants, their age and gender, without suggesting anything beyond that.

All six learners generally felt they were not valued as the indigenous population. One learner even felt there was an unwritten rule that international students are not important and there are of less value. One learner stated it was difficult not to feel targeted or a second rate citizen when politicians and the media spoke negatively about international learners at every opportunity. From these views there is an agreement with Adams et al(2002) who suggested that perceptions are informed by the wider environment, in which people live.

The students felt there were a number of behaviour patterns that had an impact on their feelings of equality. For example staff always threatened to contact the UKBA on issues that they felt can be better resolved internally such as late payment of fees. The learners felt the staff did not value their experience and qualifications and were often asking learners to do substandard work such as being asked to take English lessons whilst there was proof of a good command of English. For example one student who had an NVQ 4 in health and social care and often acted as a deputy manager for his part time job was asked to attend a pre-English class for about a year before he could start on his level 5 course. The student felt this was a waste of time and an insult to his intelligence. From these learners responses it was clear prior learning was not being taken into account in contrast to the encouragement from awarding bodies and college policies and therefore impacting on feelings of equality. Zhao et al (2005) in their study suggested there was evidence international students educators often got away with behaviour that would not be acceptable in institutions that cater for local students.

The learners also reported that staff including teachers have also often not been serious with them as they often turned up late or missed classes without any notice. The staff also joke and treated cultural needs as a joke. The student felt the management ignored complaints and appeared unconcerned about their views. There had been endless meetings without any real progress being seen. As a result the students felt they had no rights and therefore there was no equality. There was a

lack of faith and trust from the students. To address this situation, the researcher shared the findings with the management to see if there was something we could learn as an organisation or as individuals. The management were excited by the research and requested a change of behaviour and also introduced an anonymous letter system to be used by students. The management were willing to introduce initiatives to improve learning and engagement with the learners. This is similar to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2004) who in their study went about finding out how students learn, understand barriers and promoting an inclusive environment.

As a teacher I reassured the learners that they were valued and were at the heart of the college. I provided them with information about the complaints procedures including details of where they could gain independent support such as the awarding body, Citizens Advice Bureau, local member of parliament or councillor and any organisation that accredits the college such as the British Accreditation Council (BAC). From a carry on discussion with the learners they appeared to have more faith with the staff and management and they reported they were empowered and knew where to get support. The staff had also stopped threatening students with contacting the UKBA and reported they had not realised the impact the words had on the students.

The second theme which had an impact was poor communication. The learners did not know their rights and responsibilities. They felt they were treated as second rate citizens including pressure from the media which always portrayed a negative picture of international students to the community. The students felt this could have also affected the thoughts or views of staff as they often behaved like any member of the community and often spoke negatively about international students. My intervention as the researcher was to reassure the students that members of staff were expected to behave according to college policies of inclusion and equality. They were also required to be professional and not allow personal views to affect their judgement whilst at work. I also informed the learners that the college and teachers had an obligation to promote equality. This is supported by awarding body regulations and code of practice from the IFL. The students had a right to complain internally and externally. The management agreed to also have an open door policy in order to meet learners. However although there appeared to be improvement from the first phase of the study and intervention, the learners were reluctant to utilise the available resources due to cultural influences. For example, they felt it was not

appropriate to approach and report anyone that could result in them getting in trouble or losing their job. However regardless of this, they were reassured by the systems in place which encouraged equality as they felt their voice was now being heard and staff were also aware of their needs. From the research, the staff also got to understand the views of the learners and the impact of their behaviour. The research also managed to identify the impact of external factors such as the media and legislation. Although this was beyond the reach of the college and study, teachers and staff were made to understand they were needed to help to minimise the impact instead of adding to it and work more towards improving equality.

#### **4.2 Limitations**

The study was limited by a number of factors such as the study design itself. Interviews can sometimes deter discussion of sensitive topics and not allow for “outlier” concerns to be raised especially when the researcher is known to the participants in another capacity. Interviews can be influenced by group dynamics and bias due to researcher participation (Silverman, 2000). This can be in the form of participants giving answers, which respondents think the researchers want to hear such as good knowledge of equality within a college setting. Other problems will be the very nature of interviews. There could be failure to consider or control for other possible causal factors affecting findings. For example Harrison and Peacock (2007) in their study highlighted that students were uneasy discussing issues of difference and diversity due to fear of causing offence.

The other disadvantage of using the qualitative technique of interviews is the use of fewer people. The participants of the interviews were not entirely representative of all students from the college or the general student population although their feedback is vital. The other disadvantage is that information gathered from the interviews is difficult to aggregate and comparability with other research is compromised (Cohen, 2007).

A number of limitations were experienced in the general study and at the data collection stage. Lack of a readable database on international students views of equality in the private college sector was also a problem. Those that were available were scanty in quality and quantity, incomplete, and in some cases data were based on estimates.

The study might suffer from bias arising from the selection method. Such bias can have an impact on findings and results. Bias from own interpretation of data is also possible. There might also be bias to suit the needs of my employer or my own needs as a teacher. Such bias can affect results and conclusions.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research explored the role, emotional impact and views of equality and came up with some interesting results as discussed earlier in the results and discussion. This research has exposed some deficiency in the current set up at the college where not only the attitude or behaviour of teachers is paramount. The behavior of all staff including management was paramount and influenced the students views on equality.

This study has provided some information that will help planning and implementing interventions, which tackle the root, causes and possible influential causes when designing the curriculum or services for international students. This study has linked some negative influence such as the poor quality resources as impacting equality. The research has clarified the contribution that students can make, for example by raising new research questions, by ensuring interventions are kept 'user friendly,' and the selection of outcome measures. As a result the management decided to ensure there was a general meeting with all staff not just for teachers at least every month. Some opportunities for development were also identified and prioritised for all staff. For example all non teaching staff were now encouraged to shadow a teacher for at least five hours per term. Further in house and external training was identified for all staff including team building exercises as the management believe a strong team results in better services for the students. The management also started to encourage activities between staff and students such as end of term parties to try and encourage informal interactions and better relations which will in turn improve equality.

To conclude teachers and colleges need to encourage better understanding of international students needs and the impact of equality of this population with a view to tackle any barriers. As a recommendation, while there is already some research touching on some of these negative influences and their association to equality further research is needed in this area to fully understand their impact.

Research is also needed to further examine some of the findings in this study such as the views of students who have been in the country for a substantial time such as five years. Surely there might be differences of views compared to students who have just arrived. An additional research is also recommended to find the views of local students and possibly teachers in order to form a comparison with the findings of this research.

## **References**

Adams R, Dominelli L, and Payne M (2002) *Social Work 2nd Ed: Themes, Issues and Critical Debates* Basingstoke: Palgrave

BIESTA, G.J., 2006 *Beyond learning*. London; Paradigm Publishers.

Bowling A. (2002). *Research Methods in Health. 2nd Edition*. U.K: Open University Press

Calleja, D. (2000). The world at your door. *Canadian business*, 73(20), 108-111.

Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming Critical. Education, knowledge and action research*, Lewes: Falmer

Cohen.L, Manion.L, Morrison.K (2007) *Research Methods in Education (6th Edition)* Routledge, London

Deem, R. and Brehony, K. J. (2000) Doctoral students' access to research cultures - are some more unequal than others? *Studies in Higher Education*, 25(2), pp. 149-165

De Vita, G (2002) "Does Assessed Multicultural Group Work really pull UK Students' Average down?", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27 (2), pp. 153-161.

De Vita, G (2005) "Fostering intercultural learning through multicultural group work", in J Carroll and J Ryan (eds) *Teaching International Students: Improving learning for All* (Abingdon, Routledge).

Fryer. D. (1991). *Qualitative methods in occupational psychology*. London: SAGE Publications

Harrison, N. and Peacock, N. (2007), 'Understanding the UK response to Internationalisation', *World Views*, Summer, Issue 23. London: UKCISA.

Jakubowicz.A and Monani.D (2010) *International Student Futures in Australia: A Human Rights Perspective on Moving Forward to Real Action*, The Academy of the

Social Sciences in Australia, Canberra

McNiff, (2002) *Action research for professional development*.

<http://www.jeanmcniff.com/ar-booklet.asp> Accessed online 10/08/2011

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environment. *Practical anthropology*, 7, 197-182.

Pike, G. R., Kuh, G. D., & Gonyea, R. M. (2003). The relationship between institutional mission and students' involvement and educational outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 44 (2), 241-261.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (Eds.) (2001) *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, 512p

Schostak, J.F. (2002) *Understanding, Designing and Conducting Qualitative Research in Education. Framing the Project*. Open University Press

Schostak J.F. (2006) *Interviewing and Representation in Qualitative Research Projects*, Open University press

Schroeder, C. C., & Kuh, G. D. (2003). How are we doing at engaging students? Charles Schroeder talks to George Kuh. *About Campus*, 8 (2), 9-16.

Silverman, D. (2002). *Doing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications

Stephan, W & Stephan, C (1996) *Intergroup Relations* (Boulder, US, Westview Press Ltd).

Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Susman, G.I. (1983) "Action Research: A Sociotechnical systems perspective," in *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Science Research*, G. Morgan (ed.), Sage Publications, London

UKCOSA (2004) Broadening Our Horizons; Report of the UKCOSA Survey (London, UKCOSA).

UK in Burma (2011) UK Government outlines major overhaul of student visa system <http://ukinburma.fco.gov.uk/en/visiting-uk/visas/visa-announcements/student-visa-major-overhaul> (last accessed 05/05/2011)

Umbach, P. D., & Wawrzynski, M. R. (2004, June). Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. Paper presented at the annual forum of the Association for Institutional Research, Boston, MA.

Ward, C et al (2005) Interactions with International Students: Report prepared for Education New Zealand, Center for Applied Cross-cultural Research, Victoria University of Wellington

Waters-Adams.S (2006) Action Research in Education Faculty of Education, University of Plymouth, <http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/actionresearch/arhome.htm>, last accessed 10/07/2011

Whyte, W.F. (ed.). *Participatory Action Research*, Sage Publications, New York, 1991.

Woodward. S (2011) International student movement rising, paper warns, Campus Review, <http://www.campusreview.com.au/pages/section/article.php?s=News&idArticle=19689>, last accessed on 08/07/2011

Zhao, C. M., Kuh, G. D., & Carini, R. M. (2005). A Comparison of international student and American student engagement in effective educational practices. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76 (2), 209-231.

## **Appendix 1**

### Interview Questions

1] What does the term 'equality' mean to you?

2] What would you like to see to encourage equality within the college environment?

3] Do you think the college values equality?

4] Do you think the meetings and any other ways of student involvement results in improvement or better services that support equality?

5] What are the main obstacles to service user involvement?

## Appendix 2

<b>TABLE 2</b>			
<b>Participant Demographics</b>			
Gender	Male	4	Female 2
<b>Age Range</b>			
21-30	Male	0	Female 2
31-40	Male	3	Female 0
41-50	Male	1	Female 0