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Unity in Diversity: The Assimilation of Culture to Filipino Students in Qatar

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ABSTRACT

Background: The continuous progression of the world has inflicted a multitude of impacts on every nation. Due to the advancement of technology in a globalized world, Exposure to different cultures to various means has become prevalent, especially in a learning environment. Ever since Filipino students mixed in with other ethnicities, cultural diversity began to aggravate as international students provided a bank of cultural knowledge to Filipino students. **Methods:** This research employs a phenomenological approach to the idea of cultural assimilation to determine whether or not Filipinos retain their cultural identity and identify the extent of it. The researchers interviewed Filipino students that have been in contact with other foreign nationalities for an ample amount of time. **Findings:** The cultural presence of Filipinos are susceptible to changes, especially if adaptation in an unfamiliar environment becomes a necessity in livelihood and lifestyle. **Conclusions:** Filipino students in the school adapted to a multicultural environment due to the necessity of the circumstance that they have provided with to ensure an undisrupted flow in their learning process. **Recommendations:** The data and results found in this study could deliver more concrete answers if it utilized a more significant population to analyze the behavior in a more detailed and intricate way from which a more explicit cultural paradigm can form.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Phenomenology, Multicultural Environment, Cultural Assimilation, Filipino Students

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, it is essential to discuss how it affects the academe since it is a platform that molds children. The educational institution of Philippine School Doha has become more and more diverse over the years. In an academic setting, only about half of the student population respects other cultures (Kinzie et al. 2018). This data suggests that the disharmony of culture in an academic environment is possible. In the presence of clashing cultural upbringings, the flow of learning is susceptible to disruption. Students with a subservient cultural background could develop difficulties in bonding with other students or forming social bonds with others. In such cases, students might develop difficulties in learning as the environment become uncomfortable due to isolation or

racial discrimination. Thus, studying cultural diversity in an academic setting is crucial in a globalized world.

Though centered on students, the study also has applications on the teachers in diverse institutions. Teachers without preexisting service in a multicultural institution might hold an implicit negative attitude towards diverse school settings than those with experience (Glock, Kovacs, & Cate 2019). In the context of Philippine School Doha, which has been a predominantly Filipino school, the ever-growing presence of other nationalities and varying cultures may affect teachers in specific ways too. This study will provide a thorough insight regarding the presence of culture in a school setting to develop a coherent idea on the behavioral patterns that are brought about by the influx of international students in the school. With a growing multicultural study body, mapping out patterns of cultural behavior amongst students is a necessity to provide an equal educational competency without the hindrance of race nor cultural background. Understanding such behaviors amongst students will provide teachers a more precise insight upon handling multinational academe, especially those with no history of service in a multicultural environment before the study.

Since human behavior is dynamic, it is essential for the researchers to thoroughly understand the enabling factors that stimulate certain behaviors amongst respondents. Encouraging social interaction between different cultural groups will make students feel more comfortable and less discriminated (Schachner & Schwarzenhal 2018). This interaction not only lessens the presence of racial acumen but also promotes an exchange of culture, which will allow a more refined cultural sensitivity and tolerance. Students situated in diverse settings are more likely to improve their cultural competence (Wills, Morris, & Shields 2018). Shaping the students utilizes the increasing diversity in Philippine School Doha to mold the students to suit both international and local platforms.

The concept of assimilation that this study desires to bridge towards academic institutions is a culmination of the presence of different cultures. When properly faceted, diversity in the academe will create an environment where every culture can thrive independently and without fear of discrimination. To understand such matters, the researchers conducted the study through a series of interviews that encompass the daily lives of the respondents. The data gathered from the respondents are processed and analyzed to extract crucial and necessary information that will provide a more manifest cultural paradigm. With the conclusive data at hand, the applications are crucial to creating an academic environment where every culture grows with one another.

METHOD

Research Design

This inquiry is qualitative and classifies as a phenomenological research design. The researchers made use of phenomenology in the study to gather the response and results of the respondents. Qualitative research is primarily about exploratory analysis. It is known to gain an understanding of opinions and encouragement. Qualitative research is a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth knowledge of social phenomena within their natural setting well (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It focuses more on the “whys” comparatively than the “what” of social aspects.

The researchers aim to assure a bias-free, open-ended approach and staying alert to any potential sources of failure. The objective of this study is to possess profound and extensive knowledge in regards to the experiences of Filipino Students. Detailed research often requires understanding the experiences of others so that we can glean new insights about a particular phenomenon (Neubauer, B.E., Witkop, C.T. & Varpio, L., 2019). The use of a phenomenological approach is a need in this study because it fulfills the need to know why Filipino students expose to cultural assimilation.

Research Locus and Sample

This study conducted took place at the Philippine School Doha (PSD), a learning institution in the State of Qatar that provides primary education for the Filipino. This location was preferred as it has all the necessary facilities along with the assistance of the researchers’ adviser, Dr. Julius M. Edrosolam.

Engaging the procedure of (Palmer & Strickland, 2016) and (Feitosa, Joseph & Newman, 2015), the method of assembling the information involves a minimum of three (3) and a maximal of thirteen (13) respondents thoroughly interviewed and administrated to seven (7) respondents. The chosen participants were Filipino students, notably those who are in the junior high school department. They were hand-picked, considering that they have established the ability to adapt to the diverse cultures in Qatar.



Figure 1 Map of Qatar

The data used in this study accumulated through a semi-structured interview. The outcome of the conversation presented as the data for the exposition of insights. These insights give providence to the causes and effects of cultural assimilation. The two-part research instrument consists of the robotfoto and the face-to-face interview with the twenty-five questions guide. A robotfoto is a Dutch term signifying the cartographic sketch of an individual (Kelchterman and Ballet, 2002 as cited by Macindo, J. R. B., et al., 2019), which profiled the respondents' age, gender, and semester of completing the experiential learning (Macindo, J. R. B., et al., 2019). It vindicated the perceptions of the different people in the phenomena. The data collected was then transcribed word for word with the help of the recorded interview. The respondents were issued a letter of consent before the meeting. A cellular device records the conversation with the respondent. It was to assure the extraction of information and scrutinization of the gathered data. The privacy of the data secures for the anonymity of the respondents.

Data Analysis

To emerge a theory out of the collected data, the researchers used the inductive approach. It is concerned with making generalizations from specific observations. The researchers looked for a pattern in the information which would help develop the theory. (Halliday, 2016) [1] Scrutinizing the transcribed data to understand the thoughts of the respondents; [2] Grouping the data into small units; [3] Formalizing the raw data (emic) into analytic statements (etic); [4] Allocating the meanings into data sets through a dendrogram; [5] Producing a visual representation of the findings using a simulacrum; [6] Allowing complex themes to undergo Quadrangulation and member checking process to extract credibility and validation of the data. (Birt, Scott, Cavers, 2016)



The picture exhibits the contributive factors of cultural assimilation to Filipino students. The themes are connected and interrelated with each other such as Sociability, Adaptability, and Hindrance.

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FINDINGS

This study aims to reveal the contributing factors confirming the Lebenswelt, which exposes Filipino migrants to cultural assimilation. "What are the

factors affecting the cultural identity of Filipino migrants?" This question unveils the three accumulated main themes that affect cultural identity. These are Sociability, Hindrances, and Adaptability. Sociability: a person's cultural identity influences their interactions and their exposure to their new environment. Hindrances: these are barriers that affect the students' interactions and their will to adapt. Adaptability: migrants must cross barriers in achieving unity that would help them interact despite differences.

Sociability

Sociability is how someone establishes what is acceptable in a society and what is not. Also, it defines the quality of being sociable. It impacts our culture the same way it influences other's perceptions around the world.

Sociability is present here in Qatar, wherein different nationalities work together and aim for a common goal. People are encouraged to socialize since they are in a multi-cultural country where diverse people come together to work. Interactions can become a benefit, as seen in one response that expresses,

"Education has made me open to foreign cultures. The school has taught us the history of other countries and the culture of the people in those countries. It helps students to socialize with other nationalities and foster understanding between peoples." (R7)

Figure 1 Factors Affecting Cultural Assimilation

A platform such as education is an excellent way to promote cultural diversity as expressed in one response,

"I was in a school with foreign students and being able to talk to them is a pleasure. The school is doing a great job in trying to let Filipinos socialize and let foreigners adjust to the dominant culture of the school so that there is coexistence between peoples." (R7)

Being able to coexist with different people would help build the students' knowledge and experiences.

Fundamentally, it shows how people, specifically Filipino students in Philippine School Doha, acclimatize new behaviors when exposed to a foreign culture. The collective responses from Filipino Students divulge socialization and its effects on acquainting behavioral changes when it comes to intercultural friendships. One affirmative statement says,

"My close friends influence me if, for example, they are too kind, I tend to do the exact thing as well, and when they do bad things, I realize that I should not do it." (R2)

This response is somehow seen in the claim,

"When I see my friends eating something, it influences me to try the same thing." (R6)

These replies are supported by one response that explains their views in interacting with different nationalities. *"I think intercultural friendships are put to good use if you want to know a people's culture. I believe that there are important and good lessons to learn from their culture if you try to get close with people from other countries." (R7)*

Filipino students have well adapted to the foreign culture. They have cultural sensitivity that allows them to interact with different people freely. It is present in one response that states,

"I would try to learn much about their culture because of their significant differences with our culture. They might have different ways to show respect and acts that may be deemed too disrespectful to them. It is important to observe these for these to prevent future conflicts." (R7)

Considering the respondent's insights, socializing with different ethnic groups changes their manners or customs on how to start and maintain a good relationship with others, leaving them with the impression of being friendly and amiable.

Hindrances

It is an interference to the students' ability to assimilate; these are barriers that slow down the progress of socialization and adaptation. Some hindrances limit the students to interact with foreign cultures. The responses from our respondents reveal the hindrances that restrain them from adapting toward the other culture. One response express, *"The accent and the pronunciation make it difficult to understand."* (R4) This response shows the hindrance of English proficiency that prohibits the student from having a better understanding of the foreigner. Cultural Differences are what sets a culture apart from another culture and perceived as a hindrance. This sub-theme is present in these four responses,

"I just try to understand that we have differences. Even though if I think that it is not the normal thing to do, it is still their culture." (R2)

"I ensure that we both understand each other, and I will adapt to his or her situation. If we get along, it is okay." (R3)

"As a child of an overseas worker, I can say that education has given me more understanding of the cultures of the world. It eliminated stereotypes that I used to believe in and encourage communication between different cultures." (R7)

"I have observed that we need experience before being stereotypical about a certain culture." (R1)

Despite the cultural differences, PSDians act for the betterment of the well-being of the foreigners. It is present in one response that claims, *"There are barriers, but we can eliminate this by being open-minded."* (R1) Another example of cultural differences in the students' partiality. Each culture has its preferences for food, commodities, and other necessities. It is present in these four statements,

"Because some cuisines are not on my likings." (R6)

"There are times when I seek a certain taste from other cuisines. Like in Arabic food, the taste is completely different compared to Filipino Food." (R2)

"It is based on my preference." (R3)

"You would not like a certain cuisine if you are not familiar with it." (R6)

Cultural differences are a significant barrier to cultural assimilation as each culture has a different set of beliefs and practices. The responses of the students proved that even in a different community, unity is still present. They have well adapted and understood the diverse culture through their experiences.

Adaptability

The interaction of Filipino students corresponds to their ability to adapt to the new environment. Adaptability achieves overcoming hindrances such as language and cultural barriers. Filipino students living in a foreign country do not adjust because they want to but because they need to get used to it to sustain their needs. The official statements of Filipino students are inconsistent as they have different experiences.

"I just do not mind them, like what I said a while ago. I will not mind it since their culture is far different from mine." (R2)

"I do not take any initiative." (R6)

These Filipino students display an ignorant quality as other cultures do not affect them prominently as they claim to.

"Cultural diversity has encouraged me to be outgoing and outspoken with people who have different racial and ethnic backgrounds. It has influenced me to be unprejudiced to foreigners." (R7)

"I do not make offensive jokes, and I speak English more. I have also established to be more appreciative." (R1)

"Whenever I talk to them, I understand them more." (R4)

"I have learned about the history of other countries, including tradition and clothing." (R1)

"It is enjoyable to learn about foreign cultures and their histories. We learn how a culture is born and how this culture molded people's perceptions on certain issues. It gives us a better understanding of a certain culture." (R7)

"My interest in other's cultures and the current situation of their country increases." (R6)

"I would try to learn much about their culture because of their significant differences with our culture. They might have different ways to show respect and acts that may be deemed too disrespectful to them. It is important to observe watch these to prevent future conflicts." (R7)

Although there are negative statements that appeared, there is a significant and collective response that displays a positive connotation. These seven responses imply that cultural assimilation is present due to the beneficial effects of assimilation. They have entailed that there is a need to follow cultural norms. It is also essential to respect the culture and beliefs of those around us to fit in.

Adaptability is well-established in Qatar. Different nationalities dress conservatively to respect the host country and what is culturally acceptable in society. Even though some foreign people are used to wearing skimpy clothes, they choose to adopt and follow their new environment to give value to the culture of Qatari/Muslim people.

DISCUSSIONS

In the ever-divisive world of humanity, understanding the importance of peace among racial and cultural groups has evolved to be of growing importance among leaders who pride themselves as peacemakers. The phenomena that surround the citizens of the world, such as increased globalization, mass immigration, and technological innovation, have impacted all sectors of society. The inherent discrimination of immigrants that is evident from the codexes of early historians has shaped the history of humankind. Prominent events in history that concerned racial and cultural prejudices such as the Holocaust in Europe, the racial segregation in the United States, and, more recently, the persecution of Muslims in China, India, and Myanmar, have shaped public policy and research studies for decades. One of the aims of this study is to uphold the value of unity amidst diversity. This study aims to prevent the horrors of the past from re-emerging from the graves of history. It is the peacemakers who have dug this grave and buried humanity's horrible past into the cold and dark coffin of ignominy. However, some seek to divide humanity and undo the work of the peacemakers. With the rise of the far-right in Europe and the authoritarian rule in other countries, inclusivity deflates in value. Inclusivity slowly becomes an exclusive privilege accessed through those few who uphold it. Without inclusivity, cultural assimilation remains a lofty goal. As such, it is crucial to study the cultural assimilation of immigrants, for they are the indicators for living in a better world and where one hopefully sees that faith in humanity restored.

The researchers investigated the lived experiences of junior high school students and Philippine School Doha. Through the conducting of this phenomenological inquiry, the researchers have woven an interconnected net of themes. The uncovered themes had two sub-themes. The main themes were: Sociability, Hindrances, and Adaptability. Sociability is the concept that deals with interactions and exposure of the student to different cultures. Hindrances refer to the barriers that affect the will to interact and adapt to a new context. Adaptability refers to the ability of the student to interact and work with cross-cultural individuals effectively. These concepts measure the assimilation of students in the Gulf country and determine if unity has taken hold amidst diversity.

Sociability

Friendship

Students who study internationally face the burden of the environment around them. Studying in a foreign environment strains international students that are primarily because of the great distance between their family and the need for friendship networks (Liu, 2016). International students have a hard time seeking friendships while studying in a foreign country due to language difficulty and the loss of established friendship networks (Byrne et al., 2019). The importance of intercultural communication competence and the promotion of friendships among international students is a consideration. These factors play significantly in the confidence, self-contentment, and integration within their host environment (Belford, 2017). Students are more likely to engage in same-ethnic friendships rather than cross-ethnic ones (Munnikisma et al., 2017). Although some international students would seek friendships that are homogenous (i.e., co-national) and abstain from seeking intercultural friendships, this cannot be unilaterally the same for other international students (Liu, 2016; McFaul, 2016). No singular and binding element would foster intercultural friendships between native students and international students; the reasons for forming a relationship is mostly nuanced and contextual (Wrightsmann, 2018). A welcoming classroom environment is also of great importance for students who are learning a language, which is a must to assimilate into another country fully. Intercultural connectors play a significant role in developing friendships among non-native students

and native students (Hendrickson, 2018). Interventions to create intercultural friendships must focus on reducing perceptions of cultural divisiveness (Schachner et al., 2015). It is also essential to monitor communication trends among international students (Schachner et al., 2015). Inclusivity should be the approach that educators must employ in multilingual classroom environments (Wandera, 2018). Conclusively, international students face the burden of establishing friendships while pursuing their studies in a foreign land because of several barriers, most notably, language barriers; however, this is not true of all students. A hospitable environment that is open to all cultures would ease the burden on these international students.

Furthermore, numerous barriers inhibit the development of intercultural friendships. Perceptions and social practices of local students are significant barriers to fostering friendships with international students (McKenzie and Baldassar, 2017). International students also face language and cultural barriers when interacting with local students (Li and Zizzi, 2018). Social distance and stereotypes are also barriers that inhibit cross-cultural friendships (Liu, 2016). The strategies employed by educational institutions further intensify the gap between students. Educational institutions would focus more on reversing the culture shock experienced by international students rather than using the experiences of international students to create and foster empathetic intercultural friendships (Pengelly, 2018). Intercultural friendships can only be maintained if students can grasp the English vernacular (Hong-Chi Shiao, 2016). Interactions and engagement with local students are essential because it will foster intercultural friendships that will help in the assimilation of international students into a host country (Chan, 2019). Summarily, the destruction of barriers to friendships by learning a common language and constant interaction with local students will aid in developing intercultural friendships.

In the fullness of time, international students face challenges while pursuing their studies in a foreign country. These challenges arise because of the language and cultural barriers that create a divide between local students and international students. However, a welcoming environment that recognizes multicultural values and fosters freedom of expression can make international students seek friendships with their local counterparts.

Cultural Sensitivity

In the era of globalization, cultural diversity is the new norm and reigns supreme throughout the Earth; as such, it is just as crucial for students to be well-equipped when coming into contact with these cultures. However, not all students can grasp cultural sensitivity, and local students are more likely to have higher levels of cultural sensitivity as compared to their international counterparts (Morales, 2017). Students are selectively tolerant to specific cultural groups that most likely share a similar cultural identity and level of educational attainment (Tabatadze and Gorgadze, 2018). Students who embody the values of servant-leaders have a positive relationship with cultural sensitivity (Norman, 2018). Students who are receiving education tend to have average cultural sensitivity; however, students that interact with and learn the language of international students tend to have higher cultural sensitivity (Meydanlioglu et al., 2018). Meydanlioglu et al. (2018) further recommend that language proficiency be implemented into an educational curriculum to increase intercultural understanding. Unver et al. (2019) further note that simulation-based education is an effective method of increasing cultural sensitivity. In totality, cultural sensitivity is vital in living in the globalized world, and some specific values and conditions increase cultural sensitivity. Language, educational attainment, shared values, and, most of all, the willingness to interact are signifying factors that must be taken into account to achieve cultural sensitivity.

Furthermore, the influence of educational institutions in achieving cultural sensitivity serves as a changing tide in acquiring cultural sensitivity. Lyken-Segosebe (2017) recommends “raising faculty sensitivity to cultural differences among international students, early adjustment counseling and obtaining regular feedback.” Educational programs should cater to cultural differences and cross-cultural settings (Saiki et al., 2017). To make lessons culturally sensitive, educators must adopt strategies such as the use of culturally-related cases and examples, such as the use of local proverbs to deliver lessons effectively (Forkuor et al., 2019). It is essential to know a culture’s ways of living to effectively disseminate education to cultural groups and produce culturally-responsive educators (Bennet et al., 2018). Despite the best efforts of educators to implement a culturally-sensitive learning plan, they often have to meet the demands of national curricula that put capable strains in the delivery of lessons (Nutti, 2018). Faculty behaviors and approaches towards international students will ultimately be beneficial for students overall (Wang and BrckaLorenz, 2018). Wang and BrckaLorenz (2018) state that cross-cultural interactions would sharpen the intercultural communication skills of faculty members. Wang and BrckaLorenz (2018) further recommend that

institutions provide sufficient resources for intercultural engagement to create a culturally inclusive environment. Ultimately, these data have shown that educators are essential in developing minds that are culturally sensitive in the globalized society. However, these subsequent research have also shown that most educational systems have not implemented such measures.

In the fullest degree, cultural sensitivity is a necessity for a student living in the globalized era. Cultural sensitivity creates intercultural friendships, but several barriers challenge the acquisition of this value. Moreover, educators need to be fully-equipped for the cross-cultural setting to create a culturally-responsive student population. Educators need to adapt methods of teaching that both local and international students can fully relate easily.

Hindrances

English Proficiency

English language proficiency has mostly been crucial in the assimilation of immigrants into a host country's cultures. Throughout the world, English sees itself as a universal language that has daily academic, economic, and, more importantly, cultural exchanges. The intervention of educators when it comes to teaching the English language is crucial in achieving the cultural assimilation of students. Kanaan (2018) stated, "the English language writing instructional intervention positively affected the level of students' positive self-identity, which enabled them to write in an inclusive English language classroom setting successfully." The learning of students on how to write the English language can help build the cultural identity of students (Kanaan, 2018). Passing a standardized English proficiency test such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) will not suffice to measure the difficulties that non-native students experience in academic life (Mei, 2017). The mastery of the English language is not only a part of academics but also a part of intercultural communication and identity construction (Mei, 2017). It is, therefore, essential for an educator in the English-as-a-Foreign-Language subject to know their knowledge base, skills, and limitations (Dávila, 2018). Dávila (2018) further asserts the need to disseminate information effectively through conferences and seminars to lessen the future burden of professionals in this field. Non-native students would heavily favor a system of English learning that would raise cultural awareness and the integration of culture into English language lessons to maintain intercultural communication (Belli, 2016). However, the standards of an academic institution can strain and profoundly affect the language proficiency of students. Cowdrick (2018) states that educators "feel pressured to focus their instruction more on academic content, such as social studies and science, than on the four facets of language proficiency: speaking, listening, reading, and writing." There is also a need for English programs to accurately explain words and phrases in tasks to support the delivery of lessons and a safe environment for students to engage in activities (Seaton, 2017). Although perceived to help students, the use of technology does not have a significant impact on language learning. Research suggests that the development of English language proficiency in students through the use of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) does not differentiate from students who did not (Ysquierdo, 2018). However, scores are significantly different when it comes to reading tests, where students in CALL performed excellently compared to their non-CALL counterparts (Ysquierdo, 2018). To the fullest degree, English language proficiency can help in the assimilation of culture, but educational systems face problems and challenges to achieve proficiency.

Furthermore, casual encounters can help in the furthering of English language proficiency among students. Casual conversations with parents and friends, often in informal places, also affect the advancement of language skills (Peguro, 2017). Peguro (2017) further stressed that a positive attitude towards American culture and the English language are essential factors in the ability to acquire proficiency in the English language. High levels of Family influence in English learning and non-school-related activities significantly influence the learning structure of students (Chanjavanakul, 2017). Additionally, the soaring popularity of Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) amongst the youth has further boosted their English language proficiency by employing a range of vocabulary learning strategies (Bytheway, 2015). Online social networking sites, especially Facebook, were found to be effective artificial teachers in building English knowledge on vocabulary and communication skills (Ahmed, 2015). Social media positively affects the education, optimism, and learning attainment of the English language for students (Haque et al., 2019). Summarily, there exists a multitude of ways to learn the English language that does not relate to the school or any academic setting.

However, despite the great importance of the English language in assimilating into a foreign land, it also works as a

double-edged sword. Singh (2017) asserts that the English language will continue to “play its colonizing role” and will remain “the language of power that purposefully ignores the culture, language, and history of the linguistically subjugated groups.” There is much effort to do to educate teachers on their multilingual and multicultural responsibilities to avoid the linguistic colonization of foreign minds (Singh, 2017). Indeed, imperialism has never ended and that it has just transformed itself into something that is vastly acceptable to the peoples of the world and dominates discourses and forces people to compel against their will (Abdul Aziz, 2016). History has demonstrated that numerous pre-colonial languages have either been exterminated or transformed due to the imposition of European languages (Da Silva, 2019). Restrictive government policies continue to be a burden in the translanguaging (a process of using code-switching and other methods to make a mixed communication system) of multilingual students in the classroom ecosystem even in bilingual programs, which tend to separate languages (de Los Rios et al., 2017). Degollado (2018) notes that “translanguaging creates spaces for students to value their language, culture, and identity.” Conclusively, the English language can serve as a medium for cultural interaction. However, ironically, it is also the source of cultural division as government policies and educational programs perpetuate the dominance of the English language without consideration for other cultures.

Ultimately, recent and conclusive pieces of literature have proven that proficiency in the English language is crucial for the intercultural interactions in the ecology of the classroom. However, the current system of educating the youth on the English tongue is facing challenges that need overcoming and that educators need to be aware of these implications and resolve or to adapt to them. Further research has conclusively seen that language proficiency is through extrinsic factors. Non-academic or informal encounters with peers and families can bolster language proficiency. Familial influence also plays a role in the building of English language proficiency. However, the English language can be a wild card when it comes to cultural assimilation. As history has proven, the colonization of communications has taken a toll on cultures all over the world. It is then essential for governments and other institutions to foster Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) to prevent the English language from domineering foreign minds.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences are a roadblock when it comes to cultural assimilation. It is of great importance that classrooms and educators are well-aware of how to tackle cultural differences in a school. Children whose cultures and values are unrepresented in the school are often the most disadvantaged compared to those represented (Yigit and Tarman, 2016). Educational institutions that assimilate minorities into their ecosystems do not usually take into account the culture of these students (Yigit and Tarman, 2016). As such, it is a necessity for educators in cross-cultural settings to develop cultural awareness competencies to map out lecture content thoughtfully and increasingly value a student’s interests, needs, and values from a culture (Trimble, 2019). Dack et al. (2015) state that “a teacher who differentiates robustly creates environments and processes that make room for students’ varied approaches to learning— including those shaped by culture.” Teachers need to be adaptable when it comes to dealing with cross-cultural students, especially if the students’ culture may affect their academic life due to differences in study culture (Kyser and McKenna, 2017). Some international students do not positively associate with intrinsic and extrinsic factors when it comes to academic motivation (Mugabe and Catling, 2016). Summarily, environmental factors affect the cultural interactions within a culturally diverse classroom.

Moreover, cultural biases and prejudices that exist in the classroom setting tend to affect the cultural assimilation of students in a classroom. It is pivotal to study the effects of racism in a society that will develop the cultural competence to create cross-cultural dialogue effectively (Torino, 2015). Students go beyond the meaning of lectures and think of the contexts behind the purposes of the talks and further realize the amount of culture gained from reading, learning, and education (Meadows and Sheila, 2017). Belet (2018) states that classrooms with limited ethnic diversities tend to be more prone to cultural prejudices. Openness to experience, heightened knowledge about a condition, quality of contact, and reduced acceptance of inequality lowered stigmas associated with different cultures and conditions (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2019). The environment must be hospitable to socialize to bridge the gap between different cultures (Rodriguez et al., 2017). Cultural prejudices also influence other non-cultural biases to occur that will further increase the difference between peoples (Chung et al., 2017). Research suggests that the transmission of values and beliefs from parents has been a growing trend in the development of ethnic pride; that makes familial influence an inevitable factor when it comes to socialization (Cohen, 2015). It is vital to reject assumptions and stereotypes because diversity exists within and between cultures (Perso and Hayward, 2015).

Ultimately, cultural prejudices can lead to other cultural biases but alleviated through openness and acceptance.

Conclusively, the environment plays a significant role in influencing the perceptions of the students. Unequal representation in the academic setting leads to the marginalization of students. It is thereby of great importance that educational institutions make themselves hospitable to intercultural exchanges. Educators must also develop cultural awareness competencies to further address the distinct cultural differences present in the classroom ecology.

Adaptability

Ignorance

Cultural ignorance can often destroy efforts to assimilate into different cultures. Culturally ignorant students are more likely to recognize friendships as reciprocal friendships rather than real ones (Green, 2019). The distancing of students has adverse effects on them, such as misrecognition or ignorance on their complicity towards committing injustices (Whitt, 2016). Educators should once again fill the role of educating students on committing injustices and prejudices, as well as establishing a knowledge-seeking attitude for students to have better ways of acquiring knowledge (Whitt, 2016). As a result of cultural ignorance on the part of local students, international students faced barriers in satisfying human needs (Newsome and Cooper, 2016). International students also experience other barriers in adapting to different contexts, such as racial discrimination and economic exploitation (Newsome and Cooper, 2016). It is essential to eradicate stereotypes among international students and to document the progress of their learning to better adapt methods of instruction for culturally diverse classrooms (Wu, 2015).

Moreover, an inclusive learning environment and an educational system based on openness and acceptance can further erase cultural ignorance. Ignorance in the school setting is sometimes considered structural, and the need to consider religious diversity destroys the perpetuity of certain privileged elements in society (Markowitz and Puncher, 2017). Programs geared towards achieving cultural intelligence and awareness expunges the prejudices and discriminatory behavior of students (McCowan, 2017). School actors perceive that culturally diverse schools should focus on building cultural inclusivity, raising the opinion of students, and increasing involvement among parents (Hajisoteriou et al., 2018). Educators must adapt to learn how to adapt to intercultural students to better serve them academically (Wu, 2015). Studying Cultural ignorance in the context of international politics and relations in the fields of racism should be expanded to serve the needs of policy-makers, who have attempted to alleviate discrimination in all settings (Subotic and Vucetic, 2019).

Ultimately, cultural ignorance has fostered cultural division in several countries. However, developing cultural literacy, intelligence, and awareness can alleviate the effects of cultural ignorance and the discrimination that accompanies it. Educators play a significant role in implementing programs for cultural awareness and should adjust accordingly to the needs of international students. Cultural ignorance is one of many barriers towards the adaptability of international students and should be given attention by policy-makers and institutions to implement an inclusive society fully.

Awareness

Awareness and weariness of how foreign cultures affect other cultures is crucial in the integration process of immigrants in a foreign land. Further research has demonstrated that students blame culture shock on extrinsic factors such as foreign culture, language, communication, and surroundings (Goldstein and Keller, 2015). However, students with high cultural awareness competencies, and are culturally intelligent, are more likely to blame intrinsic factors such as reduced stress management and identity confusion (Goldstein and Keller, 2015). Immigrants should overcome barriers to cultural awareness because it is these barriers, such as language, information, and cultural barriers, that prevent an immigrant from seeking much-needed services such as healthcare (Kalich et al., 2016; Montayre et al., 2017).

Furthermore, cultural awareness can pummel cultural divisions in an environment. Students who adopt a colorblind racial attitude have negative or less favorable attitudes towards immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants; therefore, students must learn the value of multiculturalism that can lead to better interactions with future co-workers and professionals (Rodriguez and Lam, 2016). Students who have experienced living in a cross-cultural environment before joining an education institution are more likely to develop friendly relations with international

students (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood, 2018). However, education offers limited opportunities for students to learn cultural awareness; it is a necessity to expand these opportunities into practical and theoretical tasks that involve cultural awareness by incorporating cultural behaviors into lessons (Hultsjö et al., 2019). The acceptance of a student's culture, identity, and languages are essential for intercultural citizenship (Anna et al., 2018). Anna et al. (2018) further assert the valuable intervention of language educators in achieving acceptance of students in different settings. Indeed, educators need to do more than introduce holidays, food, and other prominent objects of another culture to gain cultural awareness fully. Educators must proliferate the understanding of the social aspects of the other culture (Dolidze, 2016). Dolidze (2016) further notes of the importance of using the students' "cultural antennas" to fully grasp cultural awareness and realize fully the role that they play in the local communities that are constituents of the greater global community. Cultural education must center on how common values that students can actively relate, instead of portraying other cultures as growing differences (Sarraj et al., 2015). Sarraj et al. (2015) further cite the need for "teaching about various cultures at an early age" that will help "students amend the misconceptions that they may have already formed about other cultures." Social and emotional education can reduce the number of bullying incidences that occur on school campuses (Sarraj et al., 2015). As cultural diversity grasps society, it is essential to foster knowledge and awareness of other cultures, especially at an early age (Quach, 2018). In totality, cultural awareness can pummel cultural prejudices by uniting students; however, there are ongoing challenges to achieving that goal.

Fundamentally, cultural awareness is of grave importance in multicultural settings such as the modern and globalized classroom. Cultural awareness is essential in the adaptation process of student-immigrants. However, barriers such as language and stereotypes plague the process of achieving adequate cultural awareness. Educators and other institutions must implement measures to foster cultural awareness and effective cultural education in academic settings.

CONCLUSION

Human beings, being in a state of constant change, has always been dynamic. The youth, exposed to various cultural presets, have had significant behavioral changes due to the increase in exposure to a foreign culture. Philippine School Doha has always been a shelter for Filipino students, to learn and embrace their own culture in a home away from home. The school has been a platform for such students to emanate their creativity and culture-bound traditions. With the recent influx of international students, the academe received drastic changes.

The researchers extracted the data from respondents by asking them questions anchored to the lived experience of students. In that case, the respondents have given a set of answers ranging from the changes in food preference to the fascination over other cultures. In terms of cuisine preference, the students tend to prefer Filipino food still since it had been the staple cuisine in their respective homes. The respondents had taken a liking over foreign cuisine, but the culture of Filipino cuisine remained their primary preference. The insight of the respondents towards different races had been about their sensitivity towards them. Some felt uncomfortable over foreigners since they were unused to dealing with other international students nearby. Even if that was the case, all of the respondents have displayed profound respect towards other religions as they have chosen to be more sensitive when seeing or communicating with a foreigner. The presence of foreign culture had taught the students how to revere different races and be more mindful of their actions as it could be deemed offensive.

The inclinations of the cultural identity of students had always been to their own identity, a Filipino. Even in a great distance far from the Philippines, the respondents still maintained their sense of identity as a Filipino without compromising the concept of cultural sensitivity towards other nationalities. The main problem discovered by the researchers was the idea that, though the respondents have identified themselves as Filipinos, a significant number of respondents were unaware of how abundant Philippine culture is. The respondents were mostly unaware of the events happening in the Philippines, nor the different festivities and the displays of Philippine culture. Respondents were significantly knowledgeable over foreign cultures due to their prolonged exposure to social media and other platforms of media. Filipino students have merged their own culture with foreign culture as they have been physically, mentally, and digitally exposed to multiple cultures all at once.

This research study is limited to a few respondents only. It only tackled the perspective of Filipino students regarding their exposure to different cultures. Future researchers may acquire a more significant sample space, with multinational participants, to garner more data and more perspectives regarding the study. In such a way, a universal

result can gather to map out a more transparent cultural paradigm.

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