

Article History: Received: 25 April 2019; Revised: 21 July 2020 ; Accepted: 9 September 2020

Original Research

Re-Examining the Value of UK University Business Studies Courses for Post-Graduation Nepalese Graduates

Paul H. Gilliam^{1*} , Simon Pratt-Adams² , and Mark J. P. Kerrigan³ 

¹ *Faculty of Health, Education, Medicine and Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge UK*

² *Faculty of Health, Education, Medicine and Social Care; and Centre for Innovation in Higher Education, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge UK*

³ *Director of Learning and Teaching, Plymouth College of Art, Devon UK*

Abstract

This research analyses the reflections of post-graduation Nepalese Business Studies undergraduate and postgraduate graduates from UK universities. It follows their return to Nepal, where the graduates were facing a scarcity of employment opportunities. The primary research was undertaken at a time when UK universities were facing increasing competition to recruit international students and numbers of Nepalese students choosing the UK were decreasing. The mixed methods research was based primarily on semi-structured interviews in Nepal with twenty-three Nepalese graduates, their Nepalese employers and Nepalese education consultancies. Data were analysed using the five systems model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012) Intercultural Awareness Profiling. Although the overall expectations of Nepalese students and employers towards UK higher education remained positive, results indicated a lowering estimation of the quality and reputation of UK universities and increasing Nepalese University and

* Corresponding Author.

gilliamph@aol.com



ISSN: 2091-0118 (Print) / 2091-2560 (Online)

© 2020 The Author(s).

Journal homepages: ¹<http://www.kusoed.edu.np/journal/index.php/je>

²<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/JER/index>



Published by Kathmandu University School of Education, Lalitpur, Nepal.

This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-SA 4.0) license.

regional competition. The outcomes make a further contribution to the knowledge of why Nepalese students choose overseas higher education but why Nepalese employers are struggling to see clear benefits from employing UK educated Nepalese business graduates.

Keywords: *Nepal, educational decision-making, internationalisation, business studies, employment*

Introduction

This study draws upon research (Gilliam, 2017) among Nepalese graduates who had returned home to Nepal after studying business courses in the UK. It considers not only influences on their educational decision-making and expectations for employment, but also their actual experience of finding work, as well as first-hand reports of situations and settings at work. Nepalese students continued to believe, as was the experience of many of their parents, that UK education offered a comprehensive range of courses and gave rise to more employment opportunities and faster career progression. However, Nepalese graduates choosing to return home from their UK Business Studies courses were faced with limited employment opportunities. This applied particularly to the employment prospects of graduates without connections to a family business in Nepal. This shortage of employment arose partially through conflict, including the 10-year civil war (1996-2006) in Nepal, and continuing political instability arising from failures to agree on a new constitution for the country.

The research was carried out at a time when there had been considerable debate about the influence on net migration to the UK in the context of the UK's policy regarding Brexit. Comments from the National Union of Students (NUS, 2016) reflected their concerns at how leaving the EU would affect the appeal of the UK to European Union (EU) and non-EU international students (NUS, 2016), "The appeal of studying in the UK has reduced significantly in the past few years, and this decline looks set to continue alongside the uncertain economic and social landscape that surrounds Brexit" (p. 1).

Background

This research was also undertaken when the recruitment of Nepalese students to UK universities had been decreasing. Using ‘Business’ as the ‘descriptor’ for statistics supplied by The Higher Education Statistic Agency (HESA, 2017), 1,688 Nepalese students came to the UK in 2013/14. Business was the most popular subject choice for 61.3% of those students. The number of Nepalese students studying Business in UK universities decreased from 670 in 2014/15 to 450 in 2015/16 (HESA, HE Student Data Requests, September 2014, 2017). The research preceded the views of the British Council (2018) who later predicted that Nepal would be one of the top ten countries with the most substantial growth rates in outbound mobility over the next decade.

Panday (2012) had described Nepal as a country, “which was not developing at all” and that its failed development was due to, “social and religious rigidities that have maintained traditional power relations and underlying social norms despite the political changes since the 1950s” (p. 81). Whelpton (2005) writing on the history of Nepal noted the continuing struggle between the various castes and religious groups vying for influence, with the highest castes having the most land, capital and political influence.

In one crucial regard, the research presented here gives substance to the claim by Coelen (2015) that the skills, attitudes, and knowledge required to be multi-culturally effective should become more significant in a student’s development than they have been designed to add new knowledge towards curriculum design and development to refine and augment current professional teaching practice in business studies. The research offered important recommendations to Nepalese employers to encourage them to recruit more UK-educated Nepalese Business Studies graduates.

Universities UK (UUK, 2014) had previously confirmed that international students were a valuable source of income to universities and local economies via expenditure on and off-campus contributing more than £7 billion to the UK economy. The financial impact of a decline in UK universities’ reputation among international students led to a decline in the number of international students and the Deloitte Report (2015) to emphasise the need to, “strike a balance between research and learning - with increasing calls to place learning and the student at the forefront of universities’ approaches” (p. 10).

The Deloitte Report (2015) also drew attention to a forecast for increasing numbers of international students emphasising the importance of institutions performing well in a global market. It discussed the three key issues facing UK universities offering Business Studies courses to international students as rising student expectations, attracting and recruiting the best (teaching) talent. The importance of recognising and embracing change was evident in comments from the Minister of State for Universities and Science, “We cannot stand still, nor take for granted our universities’ enviable global reputation and position at the top of league tables” (Johnson, 2016, p. 5).

Factors Influencing International Education and Post-Graduation Employment in Nepal

Nepalese students came to the UK because of opportunities for learning and employment (Bhattarai, 2009). Many Nepalese parents relied on students being able to work part-time to pay for their maintenance. Bhattarai added that some students had not been able to find jobs, so used all the money they brought with them; many regretted their decision to come to study in the UK. This research has confirmed that within one of the principal themes impacting on results, cancellation of the two-year post-study work visa was seen by both graduates and employers as a disincentive to study in the UK. It was also established that Nepalese graduates, without the benefit of a family business to return to, needed work experience to apply for jobs in Nepal and this also helped to repay the costs of international fees and maintenance.

Changes to UK visa policies in 2011 were said by The Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) (2016, p.2) to have negatively affected on student recruitment, down from 64,275 in 2011/12 to 60, 90 in 2014/5 and were a contributory factor in the emergence of new providers of HE. ‘Competitors’ included universities and colleges in countries where, for example, post-study work opportunities were available. At the time of this research, the UK Government policy towards post-study work experience differed from Australia and the US who were continuing with post-study schemes.

Appraisal of Literature on Educational Decision Making

Altbach and Knight (2007) describe international education, “as being at a crossroads. Today’s emerging programmes and practices must ensure that international

higher education benefits the public and not simply be a profit centre” (p. 304). De Wit and Hunter (2015) analysed results from ten European and seven countries from the rest of the world, and identified ten key developments in internationalisation including its growing importance, an evident shift from cooperation to (more) competition, emerging regionalisation (particularly outside Europe), and “notable emerging areas of focus, in particular internationalisation of the curriculum, transnational education and digital learning” (p. 2).

Previous studies had shown how parents and young people were discriminating between options in the educational chain from choosing a nursery through to higher education. Hemsley-Brown and Foskett (2001) identified weaknesses in the use of ‘push-pull’ theories used by Mazzarol and Souter (2002) when developing their integrated and coherent overview of choice and decision-making in educational markets. The work of Bodycott (2009) on decisions specifically for studying overseas had refined the work on ‘push-pull’ factors in an examination of what Chinese parents and students rated as most and least important. Importantly their international higher education study concluded there was a requirement for researchers to pay greater attention to cultural values when looking to recruit students. Rounsaville (2011) focused on why students selected particular countries for their higher education by extending the ‘push-pull’ models to using Human, Cultural and Social Capital. This work sought to understand the decision-making of international students using the premise that individuals invest in international education in the hope of achieving some aim or reaping some benefit.

Influenced by Bodycott (2009) and Rounsaville (2011), this research claims that cultural factors added, yet significant unexplored factors in determining how successful returning Nepalese graduates would be in securing employment. The results from Rounsaville (2011) had equally shown that the use of new models in analysing data could give insights into the educational decision making of international students.

As well as considering the influences on the decisions of Nepalese graduates to study in the UK, the present study contended that studying for a Business Studies education in the UK would serve as a basis for employment in Nepal. It considered the specific attributes Nepalese employers looked for in UK-educated Nepalese Business

Studies graduates and whether the current design and delivery of UK Business Studies courses prepared Nepalese business graduates for employment on returning home.

Theoretical Framework

The study applied two previously unused theoretical frameworks for educational decision-making research. The first referenced the ecological model of human development work developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and specifically whether and how ecological and environmental influences have affected the educational decision-making processes of Nepalese graduates. Bronfenbrenner (1979) referred to influences on decision-making as, “a set of nested structures, each inside the next like a set of Russian dolls” (p. 3), interlinking and impacting on an individual’s development which emphasised the importance of understanding the interlinked connections between individuals’ development and surrounding environmental contexts. The second used the cross-cultural awareness model of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) with its implications for International Business Studies and by extrapolation business education.

The overall purpose of using these two models was to show how the interlocking five systems of the Bronfenbrenner model (1979) mesh together within an environment conditioned by the cultural work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012). Using the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) combined with the analysis of the present research was intended to show how patterns of meaning could be generated into themes and associate themes. Furthermore, the value of using both models for analysis came from, “the mutual dependence of the actors since together they constitute a connected system of meanings: a shared definition of a situation by a group. An absolute condition for meaningful interaction in business and management is the existence of mutual expectations” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 27).

Methodology

This research primarily used semi-structured interviews for collecting data. A concern in research using in-depth interviews focuses on insider/outsider issues, particularly the question of bias and validity, insider/outsider bias and validity, Murray and Lawrence, (2000, p. 18). To produce “a faithful account of the phenomenon being studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 584), it was important to undertake all interviews

in Nepal. Whilst “returned home” Nepalese graduates from UK Business Studies courses were the main focus, perspectives from other participant groups, including employers and graduate’s educational consultants, were also included, thereby adding to the view of Wengraf (2012) that, “the more information of different sorts and sources that could be engaged with, the greater are the chances that our eventual understanding will be robust” (p. 104).

The graduates in the research were all employed or self-employed; therefore the work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) on management was significant given that the research also aimed to identify how to improve the employment prospects of Nepalese graduates who had ‘returned home’. The decision to incorporate Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (2012) Intercultural Awareness Profiling (IAP) questionnaires into the research to understand how cultural norms may have been affecting attitudes and behaviour.

IAP questionnaires, completed by graduates and employers, made available through The Trompenaars Hampden Turner Organisation were designed to increase understanding of cultural paradigms and values, misunderstandings, and individual communication styles. Trompenaars recorded his aim as hoping to make people, “more aware of differences in culture and their fundamental nature through understanding themselves through others” (Lloyd & Trompenaars, 1993, p. 17). The study has shown that it was possible to explore how ecological and environmental influences in the Bronfenbrenner (1979) model and IAP analysis worked together.

The research used multiple data sources to compare and connect perspectives from quantitative surveys, literature, UK educated Nepalese graduates, employers and education consultancies. The study, therefore, contained elements that Morse and Nieuhaus (2009) refer to as a mixed-methods approach in that it included a pilot interview in London, focus groups, moderately structured in-depth interviews in Nepal and the completion of an online questionnaire by Nepalese graduates.

The methods of ensuring the quality of data to meet the research questions included integrating views from multiple stakeholders, examining graduate expectations of employment, contextualising the social-economic, political and environmental and shifting to a nuanced understanding through a mixed-method approach. Priority was given to using primary sources, including citations, for the analysis and discussion and

the results have shown the methods used were, “appropriate to what Gilliam was trying to find out” (Punch, 1998, p. 244). These methods enabled comprehensive evidence to be gathered rather than using either quantitative or qualitative research.

Validity was ensured concerning contextual validity with the inclusion of representatives from several sectors of Nepalese industry including education, manufacturing and service industries and achieved through a mixed-methods approach. Combining methods in social science research has recently gained momentum through a research strand called Mixed Methods Research (MMR) and has been shown by Timans et al. (2019) to offer a framework for combining methods, and has rapidly spread through the social and behavioural sciences.

To ensure that views of graduates from different UK universities were represented. A variety of methods for selecting male and female graduates from undergraduate and postgraduate courses in pre- and post-92 UK universities were used. These included UK university alumni associations, the British Nepalese Alumni Association, Nepalese education consultancies and the British Council in Kathmandu. Employers selected were those of the Nepalese graduates interviewed. Interviews were undertaken with eight female, and 16 male UK educated Nepalese graduates (undergraduate and postgraduate), seven Nepalese employers and four consultants from two different Nepalese education consultancies. To ensure sampling validity, the inclusion criteria for the graduate element of the study comprised male and female graduates who graduated from UK Business Studies courses no later than three years before the interview. Purposive sampling using a purposely designed Facebook page and the goodwill shown by UK university alumni associations and the international offices of UK universities to make contact and arrange interviews with graduates who met the selection criteria. Besides, four of the 23 graduates interviewed were recruited through introductions from graduates who have already agreed to be interviewed, following the principles of snowball sampling discussed by Noy (2008).

The distribution of the sample population is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Details of Universities and Business Studies Graduates Interviewed

12 UK universities were represented by UG and PG graduates interviewed	Male	Male	Female	Female	Total
	UG	PG	UG	PG	
	4	10	3	6	23

Key: UG = Undergraduate | PG = Postgraduate

In addition to interviewing recent graduates, Table 2 gives details of employer/graduate interviews. Seven employers were interviewed, who employed 11 of the 23 graduates interviewed. The seven employers were from the banking, business consultancy, communications, education, manufacturing, retail, and tourism sectors. Additionally, one consultant was interviewed from each of the two education agencies used by the twenty-three Nepalese graduates from five from pre and seven from post-1992 universities. 1992 was the year former UK polytechnics had their status changed to universities.

Table 2

Details of Employer/Graduate Interviews

Graduates interviewed	Employers interviewed	Graduates whose employers were interviewed	Graduates whose employers were not interviewed
23	7	11	12

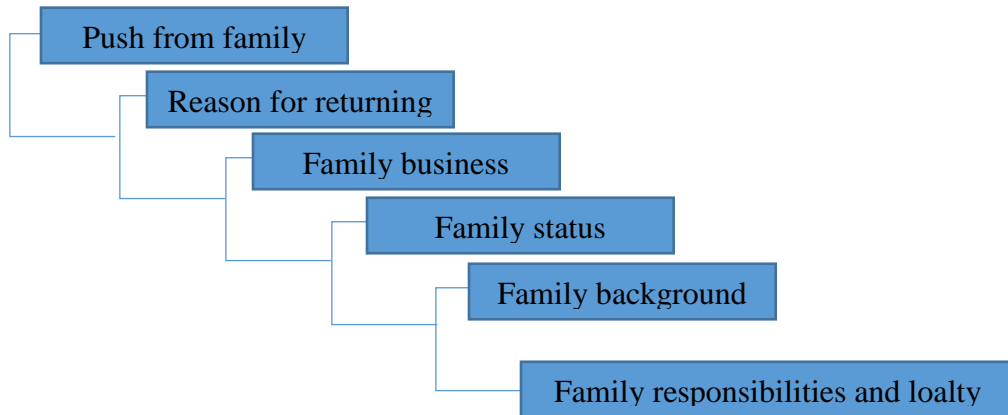
‘Thick description’ (Gertz, 1993, p. 3) was used in analysing the narrative of the reflections to identify themes derived from semi-structured interviews on UK university Business Studies courses of Nepalese graduates. In addition to identifying five major themes and associate themes, the findings extend beyond existing “push-pull” models by identifying how a graduate’s understanding of cultural orientation affected their decision-making. This approach was able to show, “the complexities and contradictions of real life and ...uncovered a particularly rich problematic” Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 311).

Findings

Using NViVo (QSR) in the analysis of transcripts, 583 individual nodes (citations) were identified using word frequency and similarity analysis as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Example of the Use of NViVo Similarity Analysis (Nodes Clustered by Word Similarity)



(Source: Citations From Graduate Interviews)

A final list of themes and associate was developed and checked for appropriateness against data for each participant group. The final list of five main themes (moderated from eight) and their associate themes are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Final and Associate Themes (Bracketed Numbers Refer to the Earlier 8 Themes)

Final and Associate Themes (bracketed numbers refer to the earlier 8 themes)	Final five Themes	Associate Themes
1 Family (1)	Family	Educational decisions Security Connections to the UK Finance Loyalty. influence and independence

2	Curriculum and Employment (2) Private secondary schools in Nepal English language skills State schools in Nepal Perceived poor quality of Nepalese universities Limited course choice (5)	UK and Nepalese Curriculum and Employment	Training and graduate skills Reputation Teaching culture and methods Work experience. Internships and employment skills
3	Expectations (fulfilled and unfulfilled) Unrealised expectations and frustrations Political uncertainty (3)	Expectations	Frustration Political uncertainty New experiences and independence Employment
4	Influence of cultural and caste traditions Ghurkha influences (4)	Intrinsic Influences	Family authority Culture and caste Networking and status
5	UK visa policy Post-study work visa (6) Influence of educational consultancies/agents The British Council (7)	Extrinsic Influences	UK Government policy Advisory services
	Returning home Build/rebuild country (8)	Not included	

(Source: Participant Interview Data)

Evidence from the research in Nepal resonated with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) explanation of his model in terms of Process-Person-Context-Time PPCT. Process refers to the developmental processes that happened through the systematic interactions of the systems in the model; 'Person' indicate the role of the individual and their personal characteristics in social interactions; 'Context' referred to the five systems that serve as the context for an individual's development (the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono- systems) and 'Time' influenced the systemic interactions within an individual's lifespan as well as across generations, such as in the case of family values - a set of morals or beliefs that are passed down between generations and shape development.

In further testing of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, it was shown through the microsystem how the two-way interaction of family or peers was a key influence in career development decisions. Findings showed the significance of the chronosystem, identified by Bronfenbrenner's (1979), as both political uncertainty in Nepal including the aftermath of the 10-year civil war in Nepal (1996-2006) were continuing to affect the development, including educational decision making, of the student, graduates and their families. Using the PPCT model, the identification of political uncertainty in Nepal added to the understanding of both context and time dimensions. The context was additionally seen to relate to cultural and caste factors and geographical boundaries being challenged over time by various political parties in Nepal whilst Time using the PPCT model included the 10-year civil war with, as yet, no final agreement on a constitution for Nepal.

In using Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Intercultural Awareness Profiling (IAP) questionnaires (IAP, 2018), Gilliam (2017) was able to understand further the cultural competence skills of graduates., thereby adding to the work of Albert, (2015, p1) that, "cultural competence is arguably the most important skill for effective work performance in the 21st century" (Alpert, 2015, p. 1). Then study has demonstrated that particularism (on the particularism/ universalism dimension) and communitarianism on the individualism/communitarianism dimension) had been the two most significant dimensions influencing educational and career decision making in Nepal. The Particularism dimension, for example, had shown the emphasis on attachment to one's own interest group and communitarianism, the responsibility to the community and the family.

The value of analysis in using the previously referenced ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) became evident from the linkages found between and within themes. It was seen to support the view of Tudge et al. (2009) that Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development has great potential for providing insights into and understanding of decision-making. Additionally, Intercultural Awareness Profiling (IAP) questionnaires developed from the cultural work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012) were administered to Nepalese employers and graduates giving understanding as to how the working situation and environment were being experienced and for Nepalese graduates the opportunity of receiving individual feedback on a range of dimensions around cultural competences.

Findings from this research also showed that any concerns over the quality of UK education were not seen by employers to be affecting higher-ranked UK universities, or those with reputations based on subject or research excellence. Significantly, for UK universities, although improvements to Nepalese education were recognised by all participants, the influences on graduates, the expectations they held for UK education, and how this would affect their future careers, were contributing factors to why the graduates interviewed had chosen to participate in UK tertiary education over Nepalese universities.

The conceptual framework emphasised the importance of understanding the interlinked connections between individuals' development and surrounding environmental contexts. Using the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) had enabled "the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas enabling the findings from the research to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). These enabled patterns of meaning to be generated as seen in the themes and associate themes.

The findings in Theme 5 (extrinsic influences) demonstrate their importance, particularly for postgraduate students, of UK Government policies. Interviews also showed that employers were losing some of their confidence in UK education, especially changes to the UK's post-study work visa policy, seen by graduates, employers and education agencies as removing a quintessential advantage of UK education.

It was also shown that graduates, on their return to Nepal, expressed their frustration when they failed to successfully introduce new ideas that had been generated from their studies in the UK and observing or experiencing UK working practices to their employers. Employers judged the returning graduates' timescale for implementing changes and expecting career progression as too ambitious. Employers claimed this desire for early promotion was not their experience of home graduates who were able to assimilate more quickly into their organisations. One employer commented that he was aware of people who come up with, "very good ideas, very sharp" but when it comes to debates and arguments, "they put themselves in the back because the problem is communication. If you allow them to speak in Nepali, there's no problem". These

findings led to an analysis between employers and Nepalese graduates concerning the implications for the design and delivery of Business Studies courses to meet the expectation of Nepalese graduates.

Silverman (2010) introduced the issue of how to confirm whether studies say, “anything interesting about the phenomenon” when discussing issues of validity as, “another word for truth” (p. 275). Although it had not been possible for Gilliam to return to Nepal to check for, “respondent validity” (Silverman, 2010, p. 278), the opportunity was taken at the end of each interview to clarify understanding of any points or words used that might give cause for misinterpretation, as in the example below:

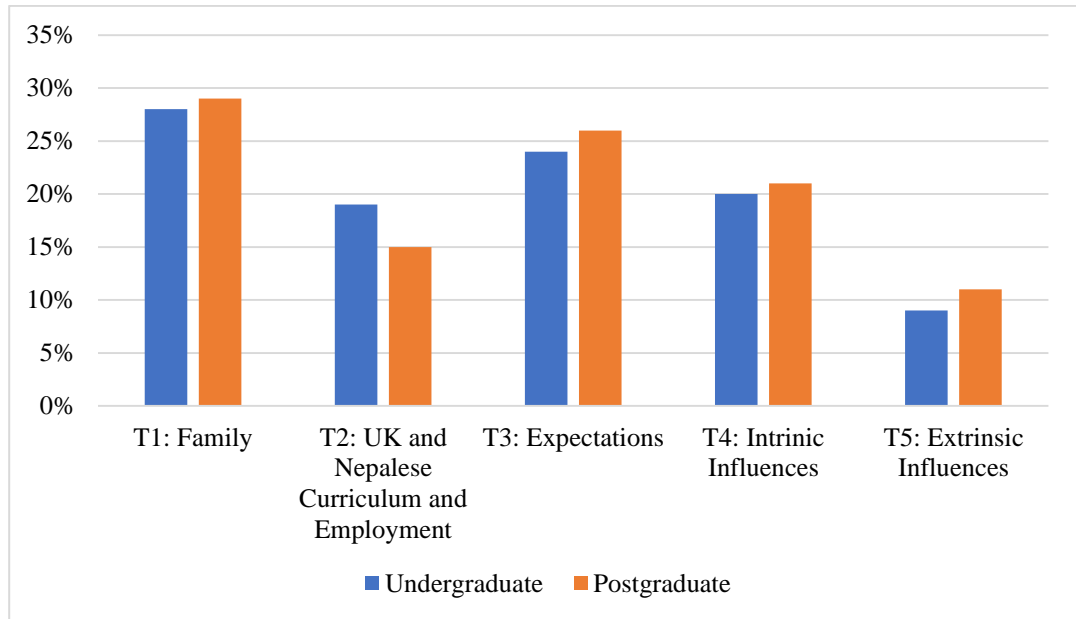
Researcher	Respondent Masters Graduate (07)
Can you tell me about foreign investment?	Absolutely, we already have partnerships with many foreign companies.
I was trying to ask about Development money.	Absolutely. The war did send the country back 50 or 60 years. On top of that the lack of a real governing body has hampered us. All political parties think they have very little time when they are in power and they must get as much for their people as possible and the country’s development takes a back seat. That’s one of the things I see that’s happening and I am sure others would confirm that. So, the business community are risk takers. When we open our shutters every day in Nepal you are risking everything anyway!
My notes.	<i>Misunderstanding of investment. Ask again if this occurs. Note introduction of political factors and self-reliance</i>

(Source: Gilliam, 2017, Interview)

A summary of the differences within the five principal themes between respondents (graduates/postgraduates) is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Percentage of Graduate Citations by Theme



(Note: No. of Graduates interviewed = 23)

Figure 2 shows how the impact of Themes inclusive of Associate Themes differed between graduates and postgraduates. Only the curriculum itself ranked higher for undergraduates. Expectations, intrinsic influences, especially of networking, family authority and culture, and extrinsic influences of UK Government policy and advisory services were established as more significant to postgraduates.

The findings have shown how the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1989) and the work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) create greater understanding of the influences on a graduate’s educational decision-making processes. Finding have also led to more explicit knowledge of factors that influence, not only the initial decision-making process of graduates, but also the attitudes and post-study reflections of Nepalese graduates against their expectations of UK education.

Discussion

Meaningful communication, which links to the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979), “presupposes common ways of processing information among the people interacting” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 27). In the research undertaken by Gilliam (2017), the value of using both models for the analysis comes from Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012). The scholars maintained that:

...the mutual dependence of the actors due to the fact that together they constitute a connected system of meanings: a shared definition of a situation by a group. An absolute condition for meaningful interaction in business and management is the existence of mutual expectations. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 27)

Analysis of the IAP questionnaires enabled the identification of cultural differences (universalism versus particularism, and individualism versus communitarianism) that contributed to the frustration experienced by graduates and their employers but also gave positive recommendations on how a graduate might effect attitude change of an employer.

Analysis of IAP questionnaires presented in the methodology, indicated graduates experienced the behavioural response of Communitarianism (the responsibility of the individual to the community) from their employers, implying the focus was on responsibility to the employing organisation and not their individual agenda. A Communitarian orientation was precisely the same as one of the dominant cultural orientations of the graduates themselves, that suggested individual initiatives, as opposed to group consensus, were unlikely to be accepted without considerable discussion and agreement by the employing business. Analysis of IAP questionnaires also found that graduates tended to see themselves as people who take shared responsibility, are committed to common goals and objectives, and are loyal to the group they belong to. The groups to which they belong in Nepal includes the immediate and extended family, and the family business, within which there is a degree of certainty when decisions are taken.

Graduates were positive in their endorsement of UK education for improving self-confidence and considered this to be one of the most important attributes they had developed. However, after joining a business in Nepal, they realised that they were

failing to demonstrate and successfully implement new skills. They were then critical of their employers' responsiveness to their ideas".

Analysis of the IAP questionnaires revealed how Particularism and Communitarianism were evident in the graduates' dominant cultural orientation. Similarly, results from the Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) database of Nepalese employers show that Particularism and Communitarianism are also the two most noticeable cultural orientations and are therefore the same as those analysed for the graduates. These factors were seen from Theme 4 in the findings to have been significant to both undergraduates and postgraduates but more important to postgraduates in their educational decision making.

The recommendation from the feedback given to graduates by The Trompenaars Organisation showed that those graduates with particularism as their dominant orientation should, "give people autonomy to make their own decisions". The fact that they had not been treated in this way led to their frustration. With respect to Communitarianism, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) have argued that members of a predominantly communitarian society are firmly integrated into groups which provide help and protection in exchange for a strong sense of loyalty. The group comes before the individual, and people are mainly oriented towards common goals and objectives. An important caveat for communitarianism noted by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) was that it might lead to a lack of personal initiative, ambition, and personal responsibility.

There was considerable evidence cited in interviews towards reliance on the family business for employment. For those without such security, adopting a more entrepreneurial approach, including starting their own business, could be an alternative career pathway. Aside from particularism and communitarianism, analysis of the IAP questionnaires indicated that the cultural dimension of achievement was associated with more graduates (i.e. 15 out of the 23) than any of the six other dimensions. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) have argued that achievement means that people believe that you are what you do, and they base their worth accordingly, and these cultures value performance, no matter who you are.

The actual experience of employers towards graduates was more inclined towards the opposing orientation of 'Ascription' (social status based on birth), in that decisions

requiring change were assigned to groups for a collective decision to be made in the circumstances regarding power, title, and position. This limited their opportunities to influence decision-making.

Securing any employment was the top priority for Nepalese UK educated graduates who return home, as they are faced with increasing competition. One employer explained, “we get 100 applicants and at least 25% highly qualified from overseas universities and two to three from top selective US (Ivy League) universities”. The highly competitive nature of the jobs market in Nepal supports views from employers in this study that UK universities should ensure that employers and education consultancies are fully aware of the graduate attributes that are developed in modules and courses. Frawley and Harvey (2015) in a survey for the Higher Education Authority referred to the potential of longitudinal graduate surveys in providing evidence about the extent to which graduates were using the knowledge and skills acquired in their course and how employers require and utilise the increasingly highly-qualified pool of graduates available to them.

Baruch and Bozionelos (2011) explained how employers in Nepal justified their decisions regarding their continuing trust and loyalty to family. One exception was seen in the recruitment of technical or professionally qualified staff into the family or non-family businesses. One Employer explained further from his experience of working in the private sector in Nepal that, “There are very few businesses who would entertain graduates based on the merits of their academic background.” They would base their judgement on the applicant’s CV which includes their academic background and the interview, commenting, “It is easy to see [know] about them whilst we are talking to them.”

From their experience of both UK education and employment in Nepal, the Business Studies graduates interviewed in this study have identified weaknesses in the design and delivery of the Business Studies courses they graduated from. One weakness raised was that UK teaching materials, including case studies and management models, did not give adequate attention to the context and specific needs of Nepalese business, thereby neglecting the variety of business organisations and business opportunities in Nepal. The research recommends a balance between studying regional issues and the needs of local and small family businesses and larger organisations.

Employers highlighted areas where there were vacancies, especially in accountancy, in Nepal for qualified UK-educated Nepalese graduates. With this knowledge, UK universities could offer and promote more suitable pathways, including accountancy and computing, to students on Business Studies courses or in the information they offer potential students to schools, educational media, the British Council, and education agencies.

Both graduates and employers cited the need for students to gain experience in studying and interacting with students from other countries. Students stated that a diverse mix of students in classes was highly valued. The discussion around the analysis of IAP questionnaires also highlighted the benefit of studying with students from several countries. This showed that a graduate's own ability to work and communicate effectively with their employer might have been influenced by the cultural experience of living and studying in the UK.

The research found that different perspectives were arising from Nepalese graduates interviewed towards teaching methods in the UK and Nepal, and postgraduates were more likely than undergraduates to be comfortable with UK teaching methods. Changes were proposed in the research to UK universities offering UK Business Studies courses, concerning the selection of teaching materials, enhancing opportunities for student interaction in classes and the development of entrepreneurship skills. The research further recommended ways lecturers teaching business studies could gain more international experience, including working more closely with, and through, Nepalese universities and employers on internship opportunities in Nepal.

Graduates and employers need to know how their own behaviour may need to be modified to ensure their ideas are considered instead of immediately being rejected. There was evidence from interviews with Nepalese employers that they would welcome reciprocal arrangements whereby UK graduates and postgraduates could include building in a period of time working within the others country to become more acquainted with the challenges of cultural diversities in employment.

Conclusion

The research has contributed to understanding how and why Nepalese students and potentially other international students choose UK HE. Employers, education agencies,

graduates and parents reported that changes had damaged the UK's reputation. A major reservation reported by Nepalese graduates regarding their UK education was their inability to fully comprehend how to react to the needs of businesses in Nepal, and how to implement the implied changes to UK university Business Studies Courses. Employers and graduates were of the view that UK Business Studies courses, especially course materials, had too little international content. Employers were concerned that the learning outcomes for courses should be more explicit as to how a broader, internationally focused curriculum would add value to Nepalese businesses. There is a need to include more evidence that graduates understood the different social and political orientations of non-Nepalese companies they were likely to deal with, and particularly how these different positionings might impact on businesses developing international activities.

The research recommends that UK universities make changes to Business Studies curricula to better meet the needs and expectations of future Nepalese students, graduates, and employers. These recommendations reflected a deeper understanding of educational decision-making of international students. Successful changes to Business Studies courses should lead to the creation of more employment opportunities in Nepal for UK-educated Nepalese graduates.

It was also found that working with employers in Nepal, in the design and delivery of Business Studies courses, can enhance graduate employability and encourage admissions to UK universities from Nepalese students. Graduates, employers and education agencies advised that, if changes were made to Business Studies courses, they should include more explicit information on how the chosen course enhances employability in their home country. Findings indicate that a successful working relationship between UK universities and Nepalese education agencies offered the greatest prospect of increasing applications from Nepal.

The research undertaken by Gilliam (2017) proposed that further research should be undertaken. The methodology and analysis using the same conceptual frameworks are sufficiently robust to warrant undertaking comparative studies in other countries. These could introduce a sampling frame that includes both UK and international graduates educated in UK universities and their respective employers. Graduates from several

disciplines, including business, could be included and results compared with those from this Nepalese research.

Longitudinal quantitative surveys amongst UK and international graduates could be developed to assess the impact on employment prospects of implementing changes to UK Business Studies courses. A longitudinal study may also add to the knowledge of the impact on admissions to UK universities arising from changes to the UK's two-year post-study work visa. A longitudinal study using as many graduates and employers interviewed in Nepal may also indicate any changes in their views and afford the opportunity of updating information on employers' needs.

ORCID

Paul H. Gilliam  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5649-5001>

Simon Pratt-Adams  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7227-7848>

Mark J. P. Kerrigan  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2598-4881>

References

- Alpert, R.T. (2015). *Cultural diversity in the workplace*.
<http://www.diversityresources.com/cultural-diversity-workplace/>
- Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalisation of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3/4), 290-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542>
- Baruch, Y., & Bozionelos, N. (2011). Career issues. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organisational psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 67-113). American Psychological Association.
- Bhattarai, K. (2009). *Problems and prospects of Nepalese students in the UK: Brain drain, immigration or global network?* Business School, University of Hull.
- Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese students regard as important. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(3), 349-373. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240909345818>
- British Council. (2018). *International student mobility to 2027: Local investment, global outcomes*. <https://library.education.govt.nz/blogs/international-student-mobility-2027-local-investment-global-outcomes>

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology – Vol. 4: Theories of development* (pp. 999–1058). Wiley.
- Chartered Association of Business Schools. (2016). *UK business schools and international student recruitment: Trends, challenges and the case for change*. <https://charteredabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Chartered-ABS-International-Student-Recruitment-2016.pdf>
- Coelen, R. (2015). Why internationalise education? *International Higher Education*, 83, 4-5. https://www.academia.edu/19369692/Why_Internationalise_Education
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Deloitte. (2015). *Making the grade 2015: The key issues facing the UK higher education sector*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/public-sector/deloitte-uk-making-the-grade-2015.pdf>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage.
- De Wit, H., & Hunter, F. (2015). The future of internationalisation of higher education in Europe. *International Higher Education*, 83, 2-3.
- Frawley, D., & Harvey, V. (2015). *Graduate surveys: Review of international practice*. Higher Education Authority, Ireland. <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/Graduate-Surveys-Review-of-International-Practice.pdf>
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.
- Gilliam, P. (2017). *Nepalese students' reflections on UK university education* [Doctoral thesis, Anglia Ruskin University]. <http://arro.anglia.ac.uk/703002/>
- Hemsley-Brown, J., & Foskett, N. (2001). Model consumers? A model of choice and decision-making in educational markets. http://www.leeds.ac.uk/bei/Education-line/browse/all_items/121411.html
- Higher Education Statistics Agency. (2014). HE student data requests on Nepalese enrolments to UK universities. www.hesa.ac.uk

- Higher Education Statistics Agency. (2017). HE student data statistics on student recruitment. www.hesa.ac.uk
- Johnson, J. (2016, May). Foreword from the Minister of State for Universities and Science. In *Success as a knowledge economy: Teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice* (pp. 5-6). Department for Business Information and Skills. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523546/bis-16-265-success-as-a-knowledge-economy-web.pdf
- Lloyd, B., & Trompenaars, F. (1993). Culture and change: Conflict or consensus? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 14(6), 17-23. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437739310047074>
- Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. (2002). Push-pull factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(2), 82-90. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540210418403>
- Morse, J. M., & Niehaus, L. (2009). *Mixed methods design: Principles and procedure*. Left Coast Press.
- Murray, L., & Lawrence, B. (2000). *Practitioner-based enquiry: Principles for postgraduate research*. Falmer Press.
- National Union of Students. (2016). *The importance of international students*. <https://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/the-importance-of-international-students/>
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 27-344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401305>
- NViVo QSR International. (2018). *NVIVO qualitative data analysis software*. www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products
- Panday, D. R. (2012). The legacy of Nepal's failed development. In S. Von Einsiedel, D. M. Malone, & S. Pradhan (Eds.), *Nepal in transition: From people's war to fragile peace* (pp. 81-99). Cambridge University Press.
- Punch, K. F. (1998). *Introduction to research methods in education*. Sage.
- Rounsaville, C. A. (2011). *Where should I study? International students' perceptions of higher education in the UK, Ireland, and the U.S.* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. The University of Nottingham.
- Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data*. Sage.

- Timans, R., Wouters, P., & Heilbron, J. (2019). Mixed methods research: What it is and what it could be. *Theory and Society*, 48, 193–216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-019-09345-5>
- Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (2012). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding cultural diversity in business* (3rd ed.). NB Books.
- Tudge, J. R. H., Mokrova, I., Hatfield, B. E., & Karnik, R. B. (2009). Uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. *Journal of Family Theory and Review* 1(4), 198–210. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-2589.2009.00026.x>
- Universities UK. (2014). *International students in higher education: The UK and its competition*. <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2014/international-students-in-higher-education.pdf>
- Wengraf, T. (2012). *Qualitative research interviewing – Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Sage.
- Whelpton, J. (2005). *A history of Nepal*. Cambridge University Press.

To cite this article:

Gilliam, P. H., Pratt-Adams, S., & Kerrigan, M. J. P. (2020). Re-examining the value of UK university business studies courses for post-graduation Nepalese graduates. *Journal of Education and Research*, 10(2), 52-75. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jer.v10i2.32719>
