

**ADJUSTMENT ISSUES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY IN GHANA**

by

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of students traversing the globe in search of higher education has increased over the past decade. They travel from every region of the world to institutions of higher learning - to colleges and universities - that accept them. Altogether, countries in Africa welcome thousands of students into their various colleges and universities. Ghana, where this study is based, boasts of well over 140 state-run and privately - run universities. Over the past two decades, these institutions have experienced significant increases in their admission numbers in their international student population.

Some of the research on the academic experiences of international undergraduate students shows that they do not perform well during their first years on campus and that they experience what is defined as adjustment issues. The thesis research uncovers and examines adjustment issues experienced by international students (between ages 17-29) pursuing undergraduate degrees at a small, co-educational, private university college (XUC) in Ghana. Located within Ghana's capital city, Accra, this four-year college annually admits thirty to forty international students and accommodates nearly three thousand students who are at various stages of their study. During the academic year 2017-2018, the college had enrolled 126 international students.

In this study, the researcher focuses on the effect of adjustment issues on the academic performance of international students. The researcher posits that there is a correlation between adjustment levels and Grade Point Averages (GPAs). Therefore, international students who have high adjustment levels to student life and life at XUC, Ghana experience average to high Grade Point averages. Conversely, international students who experience low adjustment levels to student life and life in XUC, also experience low Grade Point Averages.

KEY TERMS

Academic level

Academic performance

Adjustment

Adjustment level

Anglophone student

Francophone student

Grade Point Average

International student

Selected Private University College

Undergraduate

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DECLARATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACADENV:	Academic Environment
ACADMTVN:	Academic Adjustment with focus on Academic Motivation
AS:	Anglophone Students
ASX:	Anglophone Students Number "X"
ATTACH:	Attachment dimension
AVR:	Average Variance Extracted
CCAS:	Chinese Cultural Adjustment Survey
CS:	Communication Studies
FS:	Francophone Students
FSX:	Francophone Students Number X
ECO:	Economics
GCE:	General Certificate of Education
GCSE:	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GPA:	Grade Point Average
HOD:	Head of Department
HODs:	Heads of Departments
IB:	International Baccalaureate
ICEF:	International Consultants for Education and Fairs
ICT:	Information and Computing Technology
ID:	Identification

IELTS:	International English Language Testing
I-E-O:	Input–Environment-Output
IGCSE:	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IRO:	International Relations Office
ISACQ:	International Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire
KNUST:	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana
LSCM:	Logistics and Supply Chain Management
NAB:	National Accreditation Board
NCTE:	National Council for Tertiary Education
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PERSEMO:	Personal-emotional adjustment
QUAL:	Qualitative
QUAN:	Quantitative
SACQ:	Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire
SOCADJ:	Social Adjustment
SPSS:	Statistical Product for Service Solutions
SRC:	Students’ Representative Council
SSSCE:	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
TESL:	Teaching English as a Second Language
TOEFL:	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UCC:	University of Cape Coast, Ghana
UG:	The University of Ghana

UK:	United Kingdom
UIS:	UNESCO's Institute of Statistics
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA:	University of South Africa
USA:	United States of America
WAEC:	West African Examination Council
WASSCE:	West African Senior School Certificate Examination
WCQ:	Ways of Coping Questionnaire
XUC:	Selected Private University College, Ghana

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation is fast becoming a fundamental feature in higher education. According to the British Council (2012), the rise in the number of students, undertaking higher education outside of their countries is strongly accounted for by the aspiration of national universities to attain global significance. Through their websites, social media outlets and print media they can advertise their programmes to attract students from various parts of the world, aggressively broaden their global reach and increase their revenue generation. In turn, families and potential students can shop for what they can imagine being the best universities across the globe. These prospective students also display willingness to travel long distances to industrialised, as well as, to developing countries, to fulfil their educational dreams. Thus, they leave their countries with the hopes of attaining a higher educational qualification, while also hoping to experience academic, social and personal-emotional harmonisation.

In 2016, the International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF) reported that approximately five million students in higher education were studying abroad, representing an increase of 67 percent since 2005. The ICEF further projected that this number might increase to eight million by 2025. This projected increase has already started, as a report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), shows. The OECD (2017) noted that, globally the number of international students from less industrialised regions of the world, enrolled in higher education institutions, had not only increased between 2005 and 2012 but that by 2017 that there were roughly 1.3 million international students enrolled in higher education programmes in OECD countries. These figures seem to show a clear demand, by young people across the world, for higher education away from home.

Africa is no exception in this global phenomenon. Institutions of higher education in Africa are attracting hundreds of international students annually. A report by ICEF Monitor (2017) indicates

that the numbers of college-aged students who seek admission to universities within their home countries are rapidly shrinking worldwide. However, the numbers of international students admitted annually to universities in Africa are rising and there are expectations that they will continue to climb until 2080 approximately (ICEF Monitor, 2017). For instance, the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2017) reports that in the 2015/2016 academic year, sub-Saharan Africa experienced a 19.6 percent growth in the number of international students coming to the region. Africa is becoming a destination choice for international students.

For many years, students from Africa preferred having their higher education in the USA, UK and other Western countries. However, factors such as cost, distance and increasingly challenging visa-acquisition complexities associated with these traditional destination countries, particularly the USA and the UK (Chow, 2011; Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Meckler & Korn, 2018; Bista, Sharma & Gaulee, 2018; ICEF Monitor, 2019), appear to have compelled prospective students from Africa to seek higher education from outside the traditional destinations (Prazeres & Findlay, 2017; ICEF Monitor, 2018). Many of these potential students now opt for intra-regional universities in Africa (Kritz, 2015).

Across Africa, there has been an upsurge of institutions of higher education (Sehoole & de Wit, 2014) to meet the growing demand. While many African governments have established public institutions to meet the rising demand, massification and overcrowding in these state-run institutions of higher education have resulted in a rapid proliferation of private-owned ones (Mohamedbhai, 2014). It appears that many of these private institutions of higher education are viable options to the public institutions (Bloom, Canning, Chan, & Luca, 2014). Ghana has experienced a similar surge in the demand for higher education with student numbers doubling within the last few years (UIS, 2019).

In a similar trend, to other African nations, this rising demand in Ghana has seen attendant growth in the number of state-run and private-run institutions (Kamran, Liang & Trines, 2019).

The state-run institutions consist of universities with a variety of specialisations, technical universities and professional training institutions (NAB website, 2019). The large state-run universities, established in the late 1940's and 1950's at the end of British colonial rule, account for the bulk of students. The government, via the Ghana Education Trust Fund, foreign donors, and institutionally generated funds (Newman & Duewiejua, 2015) subsidises a portion of the tuition fees for domestic students in the public universities (Ankomah-Asare, Larkai, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2016). These subsidies possibly account for the large student numbers. International students do not enjoy the full benefit of these subsidies, but still do not, pay the full tuition cost of their respective programmes (Newman & Duewiejua, 2015). The private-owned institutions, on the other hand are predominantly university colleges established within the last twenty years by private citizens and religious organisations. They are ineligible for government financial assistance (Newman & Duewiejua, 2015) and get funds primarily through students' fees (Presbyterian University College, Ghana website, 2018; Anon, 2019).

A report by ICEF Monitor (2014) asserts that Ghana boasts of one of the best higher educational standards in West Africa. Entry to these institutions is quite competitive and based on internationally recognised credentials earned at the secondary school level (NAB website, 2019). In terms of global rankings, World University Rankings (2019) indicates Ghana is the only other West African nation apart from Nigeria to have attained a measure of international standards in some of its universities. Furthermore, Ghana's National Accreditation Board (NAB) and National Council on Tertiary Education (NCTE) ensure strict adherence to certain criteria before granting accreditation or permitting the issuance of degrees (NAB website, 2019). To maintain quality standards and to instill public confidence, the NAB regularly publishes the list of accredited and unaccredited institutions on its website.

Moreover, on 19 May 2019, Ghana's parliament approved the Tertiary Education Policy (TEP) (Ghanaweb, 2019). The TEP will ensure that all university lecturers improve their pedagogical skills by undertaking teaching certification courses to enhance their earned PhDs. These higher standards and quality is perhaps what attracts students from the neighbouring African countries and beyond to Ghana.

Ghanaian educational institutions have not been left out of the internationalisation of higher education, as colleges and universities in Ghana have become very attractive to college-aged African youth and their families. For example, after the United Kingdom, Ghana ranks as the second-highest destination choice of Nigerian students. In addition, after Senegal and South Africa, Ghana ranks third as a leading choice for students from other African nations (Schulmann, 2017; Kamran et al., 2019). Furthermore, a World Bank Group report on Ghana indicated that the number of international students enrolled at private universities had grown from 5,300 in 2011 to 10,700 in 2014 (World Bank Group, 2017). These figures show a rapid and significant advancement in the number of international students coming to Ghanaian private universities.

The institution under review is a small, faith-based, private university college situated in a quiet, semi-rural suburb of the country's capital, Accra. There were no international enrolments for the first three years, but after that, there was steady growth, with some fluctuations, over the 14 years of existence. At the time of this research (2017/2018), there were 126 international students enrolled.

Several benefits, such as increased revenue, cultural diversity and international perspectives accrue to institutions that enrol international students. Revenue generated from international students is a major contributor to the funding of the higher education industry globally (Nicolescu & Galalae, 2013; Ortiz, Chang & Fang, 2015; Levent, 2016; Maslen, 2018) and locally (Ankomah – Asare, et al., 2016). In Ghana, for instance, the revenue generated by international students made up 70 percent of the total fees at the universities in 2016 (Ankomah – Asare, et al., 2016). Further, international students enrich the campuses they attend with diversity in foods, language and culture. They also bring intercultural perspectives on current affairs issues. Thus, domestic students and lecturers can gain the ability to operate within a global context and learn how to increase their nation's global competitiveness. Domestic students and lecturers can also acquire the skill to handle emerging global challenges (not excluding financial, environmental and health-related challenges) and gain the ability to understand international collaborators as well as the multi-cultural population in their own nations (Bastien, Seifen-Adkins & Johnson, 2018).

With the influx of international students, however, unanticipated issues arise. Some researchers (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014; Hawkes, 2014; Montgomery, 2017) argue that students and universities alike are often unprepared for the unique situations that challenge international students. Consequently, these students are treated no differently from the rest of the student population. Their concerns seem inadequately addressed, thus leading to frustrations and the realisation that some of their pre-arrival expectations differ from the realities of their experiences (Akwensivie, Ntiamoah & Obro-Adibo, 2013; Malet Glass, Scarboro & Marinoni, 2015; Yao, 2016). Principal among the challenges faced by international students is their adjustment into their new academic environment.

1.1.1 The notion of adjustment

Establishing a universal definition of adjustment within the context of internationalisation for higher education has been difficult due to its multi-dimensional nature (Baker, 2002). As a result, several synonymous terms are used including the terms, integration and adaptation, in various studies that focused on issues of adjustment of international students (Ahmadi, 2016); hence, adjustment to university must be defined holistically. Thus, adjustment is a means rather than an end, and involves the interactions of students with their environment, until harmonisation is achieved between the environment and their needs (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

Contextually, there are three major types of student adjustments in the literature. These are academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustments. Thus, adjustment to university is regarded as a process, which takes place in various areas academically, socially, and personal-emotionally of a student's life. Academic adjustment relates to how well international students meet the educational demands within a foreign university, while social adjustment measures how well they deal with interpersonal experiences. On the other hand, personal-emotional adjustment indicates whether students experience psychological or somatic symptoms of distress (Baker, 2002; Ahmadi, 2016). Due to the multi-dimensional nature of adjustment, students are prone to stress and

inadvertently adopt coping strategies broadly classified as either problem-focused or emotion-focused.

Theoretically, Astin's (1993a) 'Input–Environment-Output' (I-E-O) theory and Tinto's (1993) 'Theory of Student Integration' demonstrate that the ability of a student to adjust to their educational environment ultimately affects their academic outcomes. This researcher thus conceptualised that high-Grade Point Average (GPA) indicates high level of adjustment while low GPA indicates low level of adjustment. In other words, although a number of variables, including completion rates could be used to determine performance, this study uses GPA since a student's inability to complete his/her degree could be accounted for by a number of factors other than the adjustment variables. Besides, Lazarus' and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping is utilised. The researcher designed a conceptual framework to illustrate these concepts.

Young and Schartner (2014) argue that adjustment for international students is not a onetime event, but a process that takes place over a period. Other researchers take a similar stance. For instance, **Páramo**, Vacas and Soledad (2015) agree that the challenges that first-year undergraduate students go through tend to diminish over the years before they obtain their degree. Tinto and Astin both of whom represent some of the most extensively used theorists of university student development, as well as Baker and Siryk (1989), who developed a very widely used measurement for student adjustment, all indicate the importance of the adjustment period when a student starts university, but also the ongoing adjustments needed to finish. Improvement in adjustment levels can be expected for the student as he/she gradually reaches a place of harmonisation or adjustment with the environment. Nevertheless, the available literature is unclear as to the length of time it should take for an international student to adjust sufficiently to a new campus.

Conceptually, defining an international student within the context of higher education seems challenging due to the interchangeable use of the terms, foreign and international students in literature. UNESCO (2015) defines a foreign student as an individual from another nation who is

earning a degree. Such an individual could have a non-resident visa or the status of a permanent resident. Besides, some students, known as credit-mobile or exchange students, are on short-term study programmes, such as Study Abroad programmes, which typically last for the maximum of a year, overseas.

An overview of the websites of three universities in Ghana, namely University of Ghana (UG), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and University of Cape Coast (UCC), appears to indicate no clear cut definition of the term, international student (UG website, 2020; KNUST website, 2020; UCC website, 2020). On the other hand, the distinction between an international student and a Ghanaian student is clearly seen in the admissions and fees requirements. However, the only time the term, foreign student is used is in terms of mode of payment and was noted for the University of Ghana alone where the name on a bank account was University of Ghana Foreign Students' Account. It may thus be surmised that the terms, international student and foreign student may be used interchangeably at the University of Ghana only. However, no other evidence was noted. For the Republic of South Africa, the Home Office website revealed no substantial difference between the terms foreign student and international student, though the former term is used just once. In both instances no clear cut definition is used (Staatskoerant, 2016). Through an overview of the website of three universities in South Africa namely, Stellenbosch University, University of Kwazulu - Natal and UNISA it appears the first two universities use only the term, international students while the last university uses both terms interchangeably. Stellenbosch University, however, also clearly distinguishes between those international students who are non-citizens, permanent residents and naturalised citizens. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to further explore those distinctions.

This study excludes students from any other category described above and uses UNESCO's Institute of Statistics' (UIS, 2015) definition for classification of international students. This definition is in section 1.10.7 of this chapter. Thus, contextually, the international students at the selected university college are students enrolled at the university college who arrived in Ghana for the sole purpose of higher education.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Using a pragmatic philosophical approach for this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, the researcher seeks to explain the following main research question: What are the main adjustment issues facing international undergraduate students at this selected private university and how do these issues affect their academic performance? The researcher selected international students from all four academic levels and relevant faculty and administrative staff through purposeful sampling. The researcher gathered both quantitative and qualitative data from the students through questionnaires and a focus group. The researcher also carried out semi-structured interviews with relevant staff members.

Findings at this research site reveal that many international students are struggling to adjust to the academic environment. However, the research shows that adjustment levels improve with time. Then again, the research findings also reveal that XUC lacks adequate preparation or means to help international students cope with what they discover or are drastically new social and academic conditions in the new society and campus. Thus, the researcher offers recommendations are for improving adjustment and academic outcomes of international students at XUC. The study also provides Intervention strategies.

From the research literature on the topic, it appears that regardless of which countries international students come from, there are similar issues that confront them about adjusting to university life in a foreign country. For instance, they face issues such as new academic and social environment (Unruh, 2014), as well as personal and emotional difficulties like loneliness and homesickness (Andrade, 2006; Bek, 2017; Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2017). Moreover, marital status, age, gender, change in social status, all contribute to a sense of lack of harmonisation in the lives of international students. Language is also one issue in this mix of adjustment difficulties that a significant number of students experience as it is sometimes vastly different (Chen, 1999; Zahi, 2002; Khawaja, Stan & Stein, 2017; Khoshlessan & Das, 2017). International students also sometimes experience

discrimination and stereotyping for the first time (Yoon & Portman, 2004; Lee, 2010; Gautam Lowery, Mays & Durant, 2016).

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

This researcher is a Senior Assistant Registrar in a private university college in Ghana, where she previously held the position of Academic Registrar. She pioneered the creation of the International Relations, Alumni and Mentorship Offices of that university college from 2012 to 2013. During her tenure as the Academic Registrar (2010 to 2012), she observed, that many of the international students appeared to be struggling academically. However, the college had never investigated the cause for these academic struggles to buttress the observations. This stimulated her interest and provided impetus for an empirically based investigation on how to manage this challenge.

Her reassigned duties to the International Relations Office (IRO) in 2012 and later as Senior Assistant Registrar at the office of the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs in 2013 increased her interest in international students and desire to understand their adjustment challenges and apparent difficulty in managing their studies. Furthermore, her Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) considerably exposed her to working with and managing international students and their issues. Likewise, having lived, worked and schooled in the Caribbean, South America, Nigeria, USA and currently working in Ghana, gave her accumulated international experiences and contributed to her empathy and interest in international students.

Specifically, her interest was to understand the adjustment issues faced by international students and determine whether these challenges had any impact on their academic performance. With her background of interacting with international students academically and socially, she also developed concern as to how these students were coping in their new environment. The research is relevant to her management and development of the office of the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs. Thus the motivation to engage in this research is the need to identify the causes for the poor academic

performances of international students and to find a means of better managing the situation. With her background, her experiences as well as the management requirements of a Senior Assistant Registrar, her findings could be relevant in decision-making processes related to the continued future of internationalising the institution. Insights from the study will enable the executive management of the selected private university college in developing appropriate adjustment management and coping strategies to empower international students academically.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The numbers of international students arriving annually to attend Ghanaian universities are increasing (Uzor, 2013). For instance, in a report by World Bank Group on Ghana indicated that the number of international students enrolled at private universities had increased by 102 percent approximately in three years (World Bank Group, 2017). A noteworthy number of these students have problems settling into university life (Akwensivie et al., 2013; Maleté et al., 2015), and this is apparent in their low GPAs and other behaviors. Thus, one would expect that many empirical studies would be conducted on this phenomenon to help find solutions for the adjustment challenges facing international students. However, information on the subject appears to be minimal, resulting in the lack of efficient interventions to address the academic, social and personal-emotional needs of international students.

Through their investigations at three private universities in Ghana, Akwensivie et al., (2013) found that international students were undergoing challenges that were not being addressed. Their investigation was buttressed by the later findings of Maleté et al., (2015) at a major public university where international students felt side-lined at times in lectures because they sometimes could not understand the material. Furthermore, at Faculty Board meetings designated for the approval of grades, at XUC the Faculty commonly observed that many international students appeared to be struggling academically. Available data (XUC, 2013; XUC, 2014; XUC, 2015; XUC, 2016; XUC, 2017) revealed out of a total of 3,102 students that graduated between 2013 and 2017 from XUC, just over one-third of the international students

barely passed, which could be an indication of their struggles. However, it appears that no empirical studies at the research site were carried out to investigate the cause and find solutions to the trend.

As Di Maria (2012) and Young (2014) assert, inadequate discussion about the adjustment challenges faced by international students causes a lack of intentionality in addressing these challenges. This is what appears to have happened at XUC. There is a need to examine the adjustment issues these students encounter in order to address the concerns of faculty. It is based on this situation that the present study is needful. The study identifies some key variables and argues that these variables might be shared among international students who experience challenges adjusting. This study limits its focus to academic, social, personal-emotional adjustment variables that are identified by researchers to affect the adjustment of students who choose to study at foreign universities.

In view of the context of the problem as described above, the main research question being addressed in this study is as follows: **What are the main adjustment issues facing international undergraduate students at this Selected Private University College (XUC) and how do these issues affect their academic performance?**

In line with the main research question stated above, the study will address the following sub-questions:

- What is the influence of key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) on the academic performance of international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC?
- What are the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students at XUC?
- What is the effect of the adjustment issues on the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC?

- What coping strategies do international students employ in adjusting to their adjustment challenges?

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify what adjustment issues international students at XUC encounter and how these issues affect their academic performances. To achieve this aim, the study focuses on the following research sub-aims and objectives:

- To assess what key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) influence the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC.
- To examine the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC.
- To examine how these adjustment issues, affect the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC.
- To explore the coping strategies of students used in addressing the adjustment issues for international undergraduate students at XUC.

The following hypothesis is further set to determine the relationship between students' adjustment levels and their academic performances:

H0. There is no positive correlation between levels of adjustment and academic performance

H1. There is a positive correlation between levels of adjustment and academic performance

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Research paradigm, approach and philosophy

The study investigates the effects that adjustment issues have on the academic performance of international students at a selected private university college in Ghana. A critical examination of the research issues seemed best suited to an integrated approach to operationalise multiple sources of data, thus, allowing for an integrated approach (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2007). In this way, the researcher gained insights, understood relationships between research variables and made deductions.

Every researcher brings a philosophical approach to his/her study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This tendency has a strong bearing on a researcher's choice of design, methods and ultimately the approach taken. This researcher chose a pragmatic research paradigm, a mixed-methods approach and an explanatory sequential design. Based on the pragmatic research philosophy assumed by this researcher adopted, a mixed methods approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Turning now to research approach, Creswell, (2014) defines it as the interplay of the paradigm, the design and the methodology. It involves all aspects of the planning and the procedures required to solve the problem. Thus, it is initially broad and then becomes more specific, concluding with the findings and an interpretative discussion.

There are three main types of approaches namely, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. There are various types of research methods, and designs associated with the three research approaches named earlier. The quantitative approach may use survey or experiment designs while qualitative approach may use focus groups or interviews. On the other hand, mixed-

methods approach uses a combination of designs from both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. A two-phase explanatory sequential design begins with the collection of quantitative data and concludes with the collection of qualitative data collected from focus groups and or semi-structured interviews.

Although in the mixed methods approach, there are various types of designs namely, exploratory sequential, explanatory sequential, transformative sequential, concurrent triangulation, concurrent embedded and concurrent transformative designs, this study adopted the explanatory sequential design. For this study, the mixed methods research was best suited since it built on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data methods of collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014).

1.6.2 Population and sampling

According to Malhotra and Birks (2007) and Murphy (2016), a population is a group of elements that possesses the needed information for inferences. The entire undergraduate population of international students at the research site, the faculty and administrative staff comprise the potential population for this study. The population of international undergraduate students at XUC was 126 at the time of data collection, which was the 2017/2018 academic year. The faculty totalled 58 while the administrative staff totalled 130 during the period.

Sampling is the process through which the researcher makes generalisations to a larger population (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Alvi, 2016). This study's sample for the quantitative phase was 96 out of the 126 international students enrolled at the XUC. In deciding the size of the sample, the researcher determined the desired precision as well as an acceptable confidence level for the estimates (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Thus, this figure was determined using the Slovin Formula developed by Yamane (1967) at a 95 percent confidence level. The researcher stratified the students by their academic levels to ensure representativeness.

For the qualitative sampling, however, the sample size for the face-to-face semi-structured interviews consisted of three administrators and four faculty members. There was one focus group consisting of 10 international students taken from the first and the final years (Levels 100 and 400) respectively, with five students from each level. The students had all taken part in the earlier quantitative phase sampling. They were purposefully sampled by academic levels. The rationale for selecting just these two extreme academic levels was to see if adjustment levels improved with time. The final inferences were triangulated using the outcomes of both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study.

1.6.3 Instrumentation and data collection techniques

The researcher adopted a mixed-methods approach. Three separate sampling methods were used to collect data for this study. For the quantitative aspect, a questionnaire (Appendix H) was utilised. However, for the qualitative aspect the researcher designed a focus group manual (Appendix B) for the students and two separate semi-structured interview schedules for the faculty members (Appendix C1) and administrators (Appendix C2) respectively.

In this study, the researcher was the former International Relations Officer for the university college and a Senior Assistant Registrar. She thus had direct access to the participants and the research site. This situation eased data collection. A study conducted by Wu, Garza and Guzman, (2015) asserts that close relationships with participants could be an asset to such a study as it encourages openness, candidacy and acceptance. To ensure that the researcher's position in the institution did not influence the data collection, in the sense of students feeling compelled or coerced, the students were first briefed on the purpose of the research after which their voluntary participation was sought. A letter of consent, ethically approved by the University of South Africa (UNISA), the institution where the researcher was enrolled, was signed by each participant.

In determining the adjustment levels of the students, the researcher used a modified version of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by Baker and Siryk and administered it to 96 students from all four academic years. This modified version entitled, International Student Adjustment Questionnaire (ISACQ) was developed by Gómez, Urzúa and Glass (2014). The SACQ was not specifically designed for international undergraduate students hence the need for the modification. The original SACQ questionnaire consisted of 67 questions and covered four dimensions deemed to affect undergraduate students who are adjusting to university. These four dimensions are social, academic, personal-emotional adjustment and institutional attachment.

The modified version designed by Gómez et al., (2014) consists of 23 questions and covers five areas. For this study, the researcher in turn further customised the biographical section for Ghana and the specific university college being studied. In addition, based on the pilot test results, a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of at least 0.7 was obtained for each of the dimensions with the exception of the institutional attachment dimension, which is termed, ATTACH. Therefore, the researcher decided to delete the institutional attachment section from the scale. Finally, using the key issues discussed in the literature, including the arguments by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), who propounded the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, the researcher marginally, modified the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985) to measure the coping strategies of the students. This was placed as Section E in the general questionnaire (Appendix H). The full questionnaire was piloted at two similar private universities and was found reliable with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.82.

The researcher collected quantitative data from 82 students who returned the questionnaires. Some of these students were well adjusted and had done well academically. Others, in this quantitative sample, had low GPAs and had adjusted poorly to life in the new environment. The students received the questionnaire at one of their association meetings. The researcher explained the purpose, and the ethical requirements to the participants then gave the

responsibility of distribution and collection to the association's executives. She then left the room to allow for candidacy as they completed the questionnaire.

For the qualitative aspect, the students met with the researcher in a quiet classroom. The researcher explained the purpose of the meeting, read the letter of consent aloud with the students who then agreed to the terms and signed it. A focus group manual developed by the researcher generated discussions for the data collection exercise (Appendix B). The content of the focus group manual was based on the outcome of the ISACQ questionnaire analysis. The manual consisted of questions that asked the students how they were coping with adjustment issues.

The semi-structured interview schedule with selected faculty and administrative staff members specifically focused on general observations of the staff member on international students' academic performances. In the interviews, the researcher explored how they (faculty and administrative staff members) felt the students were coping with adjusting to XUC. The participants received the letter of consent to read and sign before the interview started.

1.6.4 Data analysis and presentation

The data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to Creswell (2014) and Rossman and Rallis (1998), data analysis is a continuous process of data reflection, analytical questions and memo writing as the study unfolds. Due to the explanatory sequential mixed method strategy employed, the researcher presented the data in two phases - first, the quantitative data and then the qualitative data. These two presentations are described in Chapter Four under separate headings, and after that, triangulated.

The quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS) Version 22. Correlational and regression analyses were carried out to examine relationships

between research variables (Hair et al., 2010). For the qualitative data, on the other hand, the researcher conducted a thematic inductive analysis. The results obtained from the quantitative analysis were compared to the qualitative results, triangulated and inferences were made. Further details are provided in Chapter Four.

1.7 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH

1.7.1 Reliability

Neuman (2003, p. 388) states unequivocally that:

Reliability in field research depends on a researcher's insight, awareness, suspicions, and questions. He or she looks at members and events from different angles (legal, economic, political, personal) and mentally asks questions.

In matters of reliability, the researcher employed the reliability procedures suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015) when handling the quantitative data. These procedures involved statistical methods including the Cronbach Alpha to establish reliability.

1.7.2 Validity

Hesse-Biber and Levy (2011) define validity as a continuous practice throughout an entire research process whereby the researcher “earns the confidence of the reader”. Validity is the most important element in instrument development and refers to the degree at which the instrument measures what it claims to measure (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011).

Content validity, according to Connel, Carlton and Brazier (2018), measures the extent to which the set of items on the questionnaire comprehensively covers the different issues the study seeks to measure. Convergent validity is a sub-set of content validity which denotes the extent to which two hypothetically related constructs are actually related. For this study it was assessed by means of the Average Variance Extracted (AVR). An AVR of at least 0.500 was obtained for each of the adjustment dimensions. Face validity, on the other hand, measures whether the items of each component on the questionnaire are appropriate and relevant to the study. The scrutiny of questionnaire by the supervisor for this study and peer reviews helped ensure face validity. Further explanation is provided in Chapter Four.

1.7.3 Trustworthiness

According to Robson (2011), posits that the term trustworthiness describes the ability of the researcher to earn the reader's confidence. According to Robson (2011) the researcher persuade himself/herself and his target group, that the study's findings are reliable and believable. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) further assert that when evaluating the quality of a research, a researcher should reflect on his/her core philosophical assumptions. The quality of both the qualitative and quantitative data in the study was determined by the underlying pragmatic philosophical paradigm adopted by this researcher. Unlike the quantitative component of this study where more statistical methods including the Cronbach Alpha were used to establish reliability and validity, credibility, transferability and confirmability were the common criteria for evaluating the quality of the qualitative research findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

1.7.4 Credibility

According to Bryman and Bell (2015) credibility is the evaluation of the authenticity of the research findings. In order to get credible findings, this researcher made use of triangulation, which, according to Creswell (2014), is the major means of determining data credibility in qualitative

research. Moreover, Maulana and Helms-Lorenz (2016), assert that since there are inherent strengths and weaknesses in observations and interviews, both methods should complement each other to measure quality in research. Thus, this researcher determined credibility of the results of this study by triangulating the findings of the interviews with that of the focus group discussion. The triangulation facilitated the cross-checking of the interviews and focus group data thus preventing any inconsistencies in the data set. Furthermore, the credibility of the findings was also ensured by treating the responses as anonymous and confidential as recommended by Creswell (2014). This gave the participants the opportunity to provide candid answers.

1.7.5 Confirmability

Confirmability focuses on a researchers' bias as it could weaken his/her results (Galdas, 2017). Since research bias is essential in influencing the trustworthiness of qualitative research results, this researcher asked indirect questions to limit bias. She used open-ended questions and maintained neutrality to the answers of the participants. Furthermore, the information collected from the interviews were also reported by the researcher in the same way with no attempts to modify the responses. This researcher saw this as important because verbatim description of participants' opinions is a means of enhancing the transparency of qualitative research findings (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campell & Walter, 2016). In reporting the findings, this researcher quotes some verbal accounts of the participants.

1.7.6 Transferability

Transferability involves evaluating how qualitative research findings may be applicable in other contexts. In this study, the results are only applicable to XUC, Ghana and may not be directly generalised to other private universities. As the data was collected from only a small number of people, the results are orientated to the contextual uniqueness and cannot thus be directly generalised to other universities (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, the findings of the qualitative

research could provide grounds for other researchers to attempt transferring the findings of this study to other private universities.

1.8 ETHICAL ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN THE STUDY

One of the most important aspects of research is to protect participants from harm (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the researcher considered and undertook a variety of ethical and legal issues before commencing the research since it included human subjects and currently enrolled students (Cowley & Hyams - Ssekasi, 2018).

Hesse-Biber and Levy (2011) explain that ethical considerations are extremely important cornerstones of modern-day research. They also stress the importance of informed consent (the right of participants to understand the nature, advantages and disadvantages of a study) as crucial to the moral integrity of the researcher. As an initial step, therefore, the researcher sought ethical clearance was from the Department of Education Management at UNISA, where she was enrolled. The researcher thus completed several detailed questionnaires and provided sample letters of consent for review and approval by the UNISA Ethics Committee. Subsequently, the Committee issued a certificate of ethical clearance to the researcher.

Thereafter, the selected university received written information from her about the nature of the study, the intended use of the data collected and all requisite ethical considerations for the research. After obtaining permission from the Registrar, the data collection started. The participants were pre-informed prior to the distribution of the questionnaires and prior to the start of the interviews to be as candid as possible. Additionally, the participants read and signed informed consent documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and learned that they could withdraw from the study at any time. During the data gathering processes, the researcher observed from the body language of students that they appeared to be genuine in their responses. This made the researcher strongly believe that her position as a university staff did not negatively influence the responses.

In an effort to ensure that participants provided answers devoid of bias and to protect the identity of the university, the researcher utilised the strategy of using anonymity and pseudonyms. Subsequently, the neither the questionnaires nor the voice recordings included the names of the participants. This strategy of anonymity not only reassured the participants of confidentiality, but it also ensured that participants provided candid answers.

Furthermore, the research site remained unidentified as the researcher used pseudonyms. Therefore, Selected Private University College (XUC) is, for example, a pseudonym for the university college. Similarly, the names of the faculties were changed. Furthermore, the participants (students, faculty and administrative staff) received assurance that any information they provided was anonymous, confidential and safe.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Orientation to the study

Chapter one of this thesis is an introduction providing the impetus for the focus of the study. It gives the background, the motivation and objectives of the study, the research questions and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2: The theoretical and conceptual frameworks for the study

Chapter Two discusses the theoretical frameworks underlying adjustment issues faced by university students. Three frameworks and the relevance of their choice for the study is given. Thereafter, the researcher presents a review on relevant conceptual issues and a conceptual

framework by to illustrate her concept of the relationship between adjustment issues and the academic performance of international students.

Chapter 3: Adjustment issues of international students at universities

Chapter Three is a literature review, which addresses the relationship between the various dimensions of adjustment and academic performance of international students at tertiary institutions. It also explores the coping strategies used by international students for handling adjustment issues.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter Four is a discussion on the methodology and research approach used for the study. It provides a detailed description of the mixed-method approach used. Besides, the population and sample size are identified in addition to the data collection techniques employed.

Chapter 5: Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data

As part of the empirical research, Chapter Five covers the analysis and discussion of data from the quantitative and qualitative aspects. It also discusses the research findings and establishes the reliability of the investigations. Finally, the chapter focuses on making comparisons and connections between the findings of the research and the literature review.

Chapter 6: Summary, findings, recommendations and conclusions

Chapter Six contains the summary of main outcomes of the study, conclusions and recommendations of how to implement better management of international students.

1.10 CONTRIBUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

According to Creswell (2014), a study becomes significant if it contributes to scholarly knowledge and literature in the field and if it helps improve practice as well as policies. Though literature is rich with the research of international students' adjustment experiences in the industrialised nations, one cannot say the same for Africa and developing nations such as Ghana. With Google Scholar indicating over 1.3 million finds for adjustment issues of international students in the USA, over 800,000 finds for the UK, 1.3 million for Canada and well over 700,000 for Australia, it is clear that international students are a priority to these nations. The significant number of articles attributed to these industrialised nations could be because they have been major study destinations. Accordingly, issues that arose from the presence of these students, in all probability led to research on the causes, effects and ways of resolution. This research makes important contributions to the study of international student life at XUC. In particular, this study provides an additional resource to the limited number of research resources in Africa that focus on the rapidly increasing presence of international students at African higher education institutions and most especially in Ghana. Research on international undergraduate students in Ghana have looked at general adjustment issues (Akwensivie et al., 2013; Maleté et al., 2015) as well as migration patterns and general adjustment issues (Kwakye, 2016), but none, to the best knowledge of this researcher, have connected these issues to the academic performances of these students.

Contributions of the study are delineated as follows:

1.10.1 The study can add to the knowledge

Since few studies appear to have been undertaken on this subject concerning this particular student population in Africa and at XUC, Ghana, this study adds to knowledge. Information gleaned from it will help international students identify adjustment issues and manage them.

Furthermore, it offers administrators of both XUC and other Ghanaian universities an insight into the adjustment processes of international students on their campuses. Such insight can aid in the restructuring, developing and implementing changes in management of and services provided to such students.

1.10.2 The study can help to improve existing policy

The data generated from this study has the potential to improve existing practices and policies regarding the management of international students on the university campus. Further, administrators, faculty and domestic students may better appreciate the adjustment processes international students in the institution could experience. Ultimately, the study suggests new policies in admissions and academics.

1.10.3 The study can help improve practice

The study can improve practice by assisting in improving admissions and academic practices. With improved knowledge of the needs and requirements of international students once admitted, these students can have special programmes fitted to their needs. This study is significant because the competition for students is very keen considering the vast number of higher education institutions now available in Ghana. Insight from this study, therefore, will be able to enhance the competitiveness of the institution where she works. Therefore, although the study focuses on a selected university college in Ghana and its attractiveness to international students who arrive annually, the exposure that this study makes in showcasing particular issues experienced by such students provides an important resource for administrators, faculty and students. The researcher's analysis includes significant suggestions to address the issues highlighted in the research findings.

1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Van Mil and Henman, (2016) state that the need for defining key concepts in a study is to ensure that there is a common understanding of what is being referred to during the presentation of the findings. The following definitions are key terms from this study:

1.11.1 Academic level

Academic level denotes the year of students' enrolment or total number of credit currently being taken (Brooklyn College website, 2020). First year is denoted as Level 100, the second year as Level 200, the third year as Level 300 and the fourth year as Level 400 in this study.

1.11.2 Academic performance

Academic performance refers to the accomplishment of students within a stated period.

Grade Point Average (GPA) is the standard measurement used (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

1.11.3 Adjustment

Adjustment is a process which takes place in at least three notable dimensions namely, academic, social and personal-emotional leading to the harmonisation between a student and his/her environment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

1.11.4 Anglophone student

An Anglophone student (AS) is an individual enrolled at a college/university who speaks English particularly in a nation that has other language groups (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020)

1.11.5 Francophone student

A Francophone student (FS) is an individual enrolled at a college/university who speaks French as his/her principal language particularly in a nation that has other language groups (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020)

1.11.6 Grade point average

Abbreviated as GPA, Grade Point Average is a measurement of a student's academic success and progression. On a university's grading system, numerical weighted points are allocated to a letter grade in each course within a programme of study. The numerical weighted points indicate the quality of performance. Each course is also assigned a specific number of credit hours. During the programme of study, a student's GPA is calculated by averaging the number of credits hours taken and the numerical weighted points earned (XUC, 2010).

1.11.7 International student

An International Student is a person who has crossed a national or territorial border for educational reasons and is currently registered in an educational institution outside of his/her country of origin (UIS, 2015).

1.11.8 Undergraduate student

An undergraduate student of a university or college is a student who has not received his/her first degree (Noah Webster, 2019).

1.11.9 Selected Private University College (XUC)

Selected Private University College (XUC) is a pseudonym for a private-run, university institution in Ghana.

1.11.10 University college

A university college is defined by Ghana's National Accreditation Board (NAB) as an institution of higher learning that is affiliated to a chartered university, and that offers instructions supervised by the university to which it is affiliated and whose degrees, diplomas, certificates are awarded by the chartered university. For the avoidance of doubt, NAB must certify the chartered university as having the expertise to supervise the programmes of the mentored university college. Any institution wishing to be known and called a 'University College' is expected to have three (3) faculties, each with three departments (NAB website, 2019).

1.12 SUMMARY

International students' numbers at institutions of higher education are rising globally. Africa and Ghana are part of this global trend. Preliminary literature reviews indicate that international students undergo a series of adjustments that affect them in various ways. Due to the dearth of information on this topic in Ghana, but with the concerns of poor academic performance at the study site, there is a need to explore the phenomenon to ensure that international students settle and thrive in their new academic and social environments. This chapter has therefore presented an overview of the research study on adjustment issues and their effects on the

academic performance of international students studying at a selected private university college in Ghana. The next chapter focuses on the theoretical background of the study and offers a conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One provided the background of the research on the adjustment issues facing international students at a selected private university college in Ghana. It touched on the problem statement, aims and objectives, the significance of and motivation for the study. The chapter then highlighted the research methodology implemented. The chapter concluded with an overview of the upcoming five chapters as well as a summary of key terms utilised in the study.

This chapter provides an overview of the definition, limitations and the relevance of two types of frameworks. Leshem (2013) advances that both types of frameworks link theory to practice and essentially formulate the research outcomes. They shape the outcomes by accentuating the conceptual importance of data and their distinct entities (Maxwell, 2012). Imenda (2014) further notes that in a given study, both frameworks reveal the researcher's epistemological paradigm, offer clarity in variables and concepts and afford the researcher a clear methodological approach to the study. Likewise, both frameworks help the audience to appreciate the researcher's purpose, motivation, research design and scholarly preferences. In this study, the researcher relies on both categories of frameworks as guides to investigate adjustment issues faced by international students and the impact they have on the students' academic performance. This is because an overview of their academic performance could reveal the extent to which they are managing these issues and how they cope.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

According to Imenda (2014) as well as Akpabio and Uyannah (2015), all research must be guided by a theoretical and conceptual framework. These researchers agree that frameworks

provide structural guides to the researcher in developing the research questions, in selecting the most appropriate methodology and in aptly interpreting the data collected (Imenda, 2014; Akpabio & Uyannah, 2015; Regoniel, 2015). Imenda (2014) further posits that frameworks also help the research audience to visualise the research process.

Imenda (2014) further defines a theoretical framework as the specific theory or theories selected by a researcher to steer the direction of research. According to Imenda (2014), the concepts taken from the selected theory or theories are then applied in the resolution of the research problem. This definition implies that the selected theories must be relevant to the study and linked to its overall purpose.

This researcher draws heavily from the classic works of Tinto (1993), Astin (1993a) as well as Lazarus and Folkman (1984) for the theoretical framework. Tinto (1993) and Astin (1993a) provide a background to the undergraduate student adjustment phenomenon. Lazarus and Folkman (1984), on the other hand, offers an understanding of how individuals cope when stressed by changes in their lives.

2.2.1 Student adjustment theories

Researchers often use both Astin's (1993a) Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) theory and Tinto's (1993) Student Integration Theory to study university student attrition and retention (Grayson & Grayson, 2003; Melendez, 2006; Swecker, Fiftolt, & Searby, 2013). The theories help educators understand student outcomes in many different forms, such as academic performance, graduation, goal achievements, or satisfaction. Furthermore, other researchers (Espenshade Chung, & Walling, 2004; Dika & D'Amico, 2016; Grier-Reed & Wilson, 2016) used them to study the impact of adjustments by students of diverse ethnicities such as Hispanic, Black, Native American and Asian students studying in the United States. This researcher rationalised that they could serve as a good theoretical basis for this study on adjustment issues

and their effects on African international students at a selected private university college in Ghana.

2.2.1.1 Astin's I-E-O theory

The focus of Astin's I-E-O theory is on how incoming students' background characteristics influence their responses to their academic environment and affects their outputs. The theory is a framework for assessing students' outcomes in higher education (Astin, 1993a). Its proposition is that educational assessments are complete only when the assessment takes cognisance of student inputs (I), the educational environment (E), and student outcomes (O) (Thurmond & Popkess-Vawter, 2003; Nelson, 2015). Thus, this researcher believes that the I-E-O model is a good theoretical framework for assessing adjustment issues faced by international students' and their effects on academic performance. Further, in examining the academic performances (output) of international students, the theory enables a researcher to consider the effect of each student participant's unique background characteristic, such as gender, age, marital status and country of origin as well as the variables of the campus environment such as programme of study and academic level. Figure 2.1 below shows the topology of the framework.

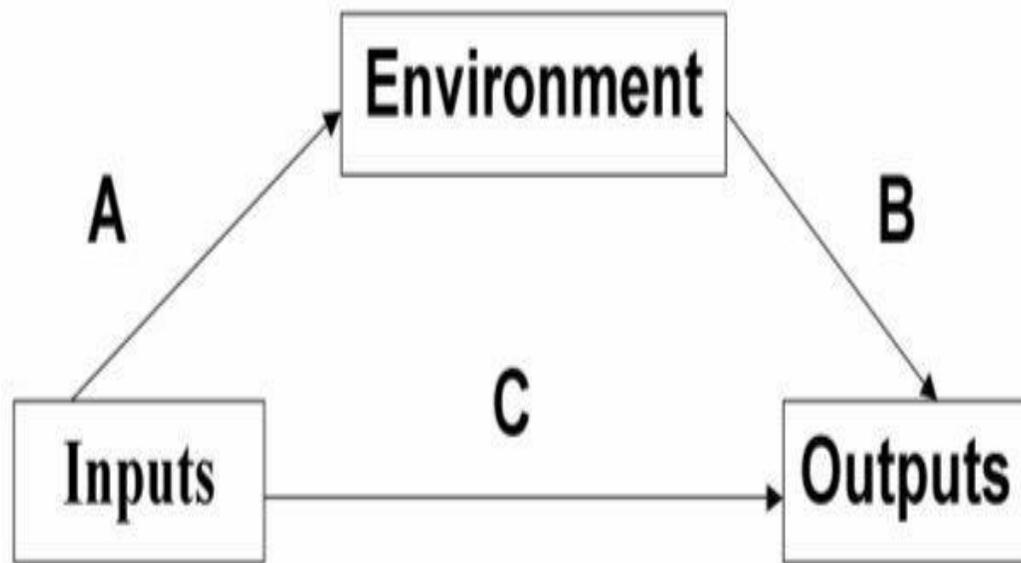


Figure 2. 1: Astin's I-E-O model (Astin, 1993a, p.18)

The model's constructs namely, inputs, environment, and outcomes are described as follows:

According to Astin (1993b), inputs denote a student's individual qualities (background characteristics) that he/she brings at the time of enrolment to the new educational programme. The term may also denote control variables in research such as biographical information (age, gender, educational background, the programme of study). It may also denote an individual's life goals and purpose for college enrolment (Astin, 1993b).

As illustrated by Figure 2.1, the input data has both a direct and indirect influence on the output. It is therefore very significant as it can test the direct effect of the variables on both the environment and the output. It also tests the indirect effect of the output on the input via the environment (Stier, 2014). This diagrammatic relationship between the model's components suggests that there must be some consideration given by faculty and administration regarding international student characteristics prior to their participation in their respective courses

(Thurmond & Popkess-Vawter, 2003). This would be important, as they would have had different educational backgrounds depending on their countries of origin. Furthermore, their linguistic backgrounds may also influence their interpretation and understanding of lectures.

According to Astin (1993b), the 'environment' component of the model constitutes students' experiences throughout their educational programmes. The environment thus has a direct effect on student's outcomes. In the I-E-O model, environmental factors may consist of faculty and staff, fellow students, roommates, curricula, campus climate, teaching style, extramural activities, student clubs and associations (Astin, 1993b). Hence, environment is the component that an institution can readily control. Thus, the university environment is an important factor for the adjustment of university students and their expected academic outcomes (Petersen, Louw & Dumont, 2009).

For the context of this study, the environment component implies that universities have a responsibility to help to ensure that their international students feel welcomed, are well adjusted and can cope with various issues that they consider difficult. Universities should also ensure that these issues do not affect their academic outcomes. However, as Thurmond and Popkess-Vawter (2003) caution, using environmental variables for assessments is very complex. Bearing this in mind, these issues are addressed both quantitatively and qualitatively to find out if they have any bearing on students' academic performance.

Astin (1993b) defines 'outputs' as the skills, knowledge and behaviours that the institution aims at developing in the students. Thus, outputs are the outcome variables and may constitute of post-tests, penalties or end-of-semester results. Consequently, measurement indicators could include general satisfaction with a course, GPA, examination marks, course performance, and degree attainment (Thurmond & Popkess-Vawter, 2003). For this study, the measurement indicator is GPA. This measurement indicator was selected because of concern about the performance of international students at the university college under review in this study. This theory thus addresses the research sub-question one, which states: "What is the influence of

key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) on academic performance of international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC?”

However, the lack of randomisation within the environment, according to Thurmond and Popkess-Vawter (2003) can limit the theory, since students' input variables are not controlled. Nevertheless, the use of multi-variable statistical analysis can control students' input as argued by the theory. In other words, the major purpose of the framework is to control the input differences in international students' biographical characteristics. This, therefore, should provide a more accurate estimate of how environmental variables affect student outcomes.

According to cross-cultural expert, Berry (1984), the degree of adjustment required, depends on the extent of the difference between the students' original environment and the new one. Concerning Astin's I-E-O theory, Berry (1984) postulates that the difference between the input and the output traits of the student equates to the growth or development of the student. This growth or development is by the student's involvement with his/her environment. However, the theory is unclear on the level of involvement required by the student in the new environment in order to promote the development and it is beyond the scope of this study to do so.

The researcher, however, conceptualises that for this study, the international students' abilities to overcome the challenges of their environment, equates to their growth or high adjustment level. The converse of this proposed relationship, therefore, is that international students' inabilities to overcome the inherent challenges of the environment are equal to their low adjustment levels. This argument is also in line with the argument of Ward and Kennedy (1999) who state that an individual who migrates to a new environment may adjust positively or negatively. Similarly, Tinto (1993) argues that a student's general performance and emotional response to the campus experience is influenced by how well academically and socially he/she adjusts to the university experience and fits in.

In summary, the major argument of Astin's theory is that to promote student adjustment, it is essential to understand students' background characteristics upon their entry into university. It is also important to consider the characteristics of the new environment that may promote or inhibit their adjustment and ultimately affect their outcomes. The premise of this theory is that assessing academic performance in higher education institutions cannot be complete unless the evaluation includes information on student inputs (I), the educational environment (E), and student outcomes (O).

2.2.1.2 Tinto's theory of student integration

This theory has synonymous titles, namely Theory of Student Departure, Student Retention, or Student Integration (Rienties, Luchoomun & Tempelaar, 2014; Chrysikos, Ahmed & Ward, 2017). For this study, the title, "Theory of Student Integration" is used. This theory postulates that when students enter university for the first time, they do so with a range of biographical characteristics that influence their abilities to achieve their dreams of obtaining degrees. The students' levels of commitment to graduate from the university, their academic goals, as well as their influencing biographical characteristics all interact with the institutional environment and culminate in either success or failure in achieving their academic goals. Tinto (1975) also posited that the level of academic and social integration of a student into university, and the level of commitment to education and to the university's objectives are proportional to the level of persistence he/she displays to obtain a degree.

Almost two decades after this original theory in 1975, Tinto (1993) modified it by including two components namely, External Commitments and Intentions that mutually affect student integration. In the revised theory and its accompanying model, external commitments refer to the student's commitment to peer groups, family, neighbourhood, and work environments all of which directly affect the student's decision to remain or drop out. Through this model, Tinto (1993) attempted to clarify the effect of internal institutional forces on the student in terms of

student departure based on his earlier model (Schreiber, Luescher-Mamashela and Moja, 2014).

It is apparent that a student's interactions, both formal and informal, influences his/her academic performance and this, in turn, affects integration (adjustment) into the institution and outcomes. For this study, some of the formal influences would include lecture times, participation, completion of assignments and other mandated activities. Informal influences, on the other hand, would include interactions with classmates, the beauty and comfort of the physical environment both in and outdoors as well as accessibility to the campus from the hostels.

However, it seems Tinto failed to clarify to what extent academic integration (adjustment), social integration (adjustment) and the commitment of students affect their academic performance. It appears, however, that positive interactive experiences mean the student will persist to the point of completion. Thus, for international students, this could mean that, despite obstacles (adjustment issues) along the way, they try to surmount them if their interactive experiences are positive, and they are performing well in school. On the other hand, negative interactive experiences, including poor academic performance could mean voluntary or involuntary departure due to the seemingly insurmountable obstacles. However, what is unclear in literature is the point at which departure could take place as far as the experiences of international students in the university environment are concerned. This thesis, however, does not explore persistence or attrition. The main constructs of the theory are shown in Figure 2 .2.

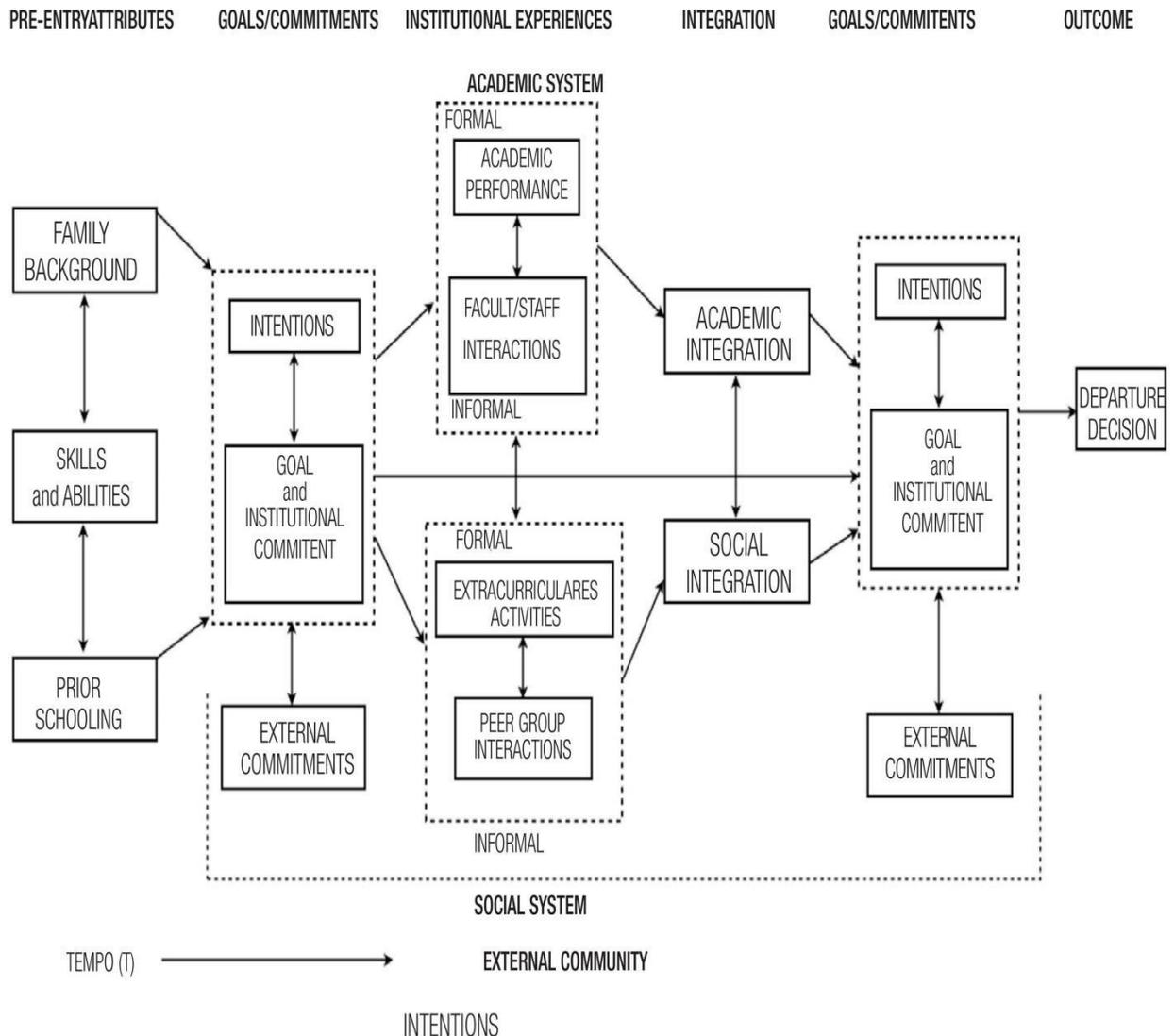


Figure 2. 2: Revised Model of Student Integration (Tinto 1993, p.114)

Tinto’s Theory of Student Integration is not without its critics. Some have claimed that the concepts are nebulous, are subject to various interpretations, and are not testable (Burnsden, Davies, Shevlin & Braken, 2000). Others, like Pascarella and Smart, (1991) have argued that it focuses only on conventional-aged, (18-24 years), and non-minority students in four year residential settings. Tinto (2014) admits that it does not include or acknowledge significant distinctions in the career choices of students from various races. Further, Tinto (2014) posits that it does not regard gender or cultural past. This current study thus addresses the criticism of cultural past since it is exploring the adjustment issues of students from different countries

with different cultural and linguistical backgrounds. In addition, it addresses the issue of racial minority since the international students in the study are racially homogenous. Others, such as Educational Testing Services (2013), while agreeing that this is one of the most prominent theoretical models also see its limitations in both validity and utilisation. Despite these criticisms, Tinto's theory remains esteemed highly by prominent student development researchers (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Schreiber et al., 2014) who regard it as having attained almost paradigmatic status.

A close look at Figure 2.2 illustrates that academic integration indicates whether the student is satisfied with their level of academic performance, personal growth, the relevance of their course to future career goals, and their initial expectations of the course. For social integration (adjustment), the student must attain cordial and reciprocal interpersonal relationships with classmates, faculty and staff. He/she must also have a sense of belonging to the institution, a feeling of ease both in class and out of class and a level of satisfaction with campus activities and events.

Thus, when international students are happy, meaning that they have attained reciprocal interpersonal relationships with classmates, faculty, and others, they will be motivated to continue despite the issues they may encounter while adjusting. Hence, the academic environment must be one where the students feel wanted, welcomed and see that there is an effort to help them fit in and adjust. Tinto's theory implies that when the academic environment of a university is supportive and encouraging, students can overcome difficulties and ultimately adjust to their new environment.

Adjustment to the formal and informal academic systems apparently reflects academic performance and faculty and staff interactions. Similarly, in the formal and informal social systems adjustment to the formal social system happens through extra-curricular activities while adjustment to the informal social system happens through peer group interactions. The

theory seems to suggest that a form of coping strategies must be employed during the academic journey of adjustment.

Conceptualisation of Integration must be understood in the light of Van Gennep's (1960) theory of Rites of Passage from which Tinto (1988) drew some of his ideas. According to Van Gennep (1960), when a person is experiencing change as a result of moving into a new society, he/she inevitably experience three stages namely, separation, transition, and incorporation. These stages are the rites of passage.

The first required rite is for the student to separate him/herself fully and willingly from the former community (family, friends, high school and home) which usually has divergent worldviews and behaviours from the new society (the university campus) into which he/she moves. A complete separation, it appears, could mean a complete denunciation of old norms and values and a full embracing of the new ones ultimately resulting in a transformation of the student and a successful adjustment (Saeed, 2008). The next stage is the transition stage when the individual starts interacting with the members of the new group that he/she is attempting to join (Tinto, 1993). The last stage, incorporation, involves assuming the norms, values and behaviours of the new environment (Tinto, 1993). Thus, for an international student to become fully integrated into/adjusted to a new university campus, he/she conceivably, must be willing to transform and reject previous norms and values (Saeed, 2008). While a willingness to transform is acceptable, it is may not be possible to expect an individual to completely reject the norms and values he/she knows. That action could be tantamount to denying his/her very personhood and possibly create an element of stress that requires management by the individual. This is where Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping comes to bear.

2.2.2 Transactional theory of stress and coping

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, first propounded by Lazarus in 1966 and further developed with Folkman in 1984, assesses how individuals handle major and minor

situations in their lives. Specifically, the theory posits that when confronted with a situation, a transaction (exchange) occurs between an individual and the environment. Subsequently, an emotional effect starts occurring within the individual. Then depending on his/her cognitive appraisal of the event, a process of management or coping may begin. Thus, the theory asserts that there are dual processes - cognitive appraisal and coping, which occur, in a potentially stressful encounter.

According to the theory, a cognitive appraisal is primary and secondary. During the primary appraisal phase, the individual evaluates the significance, the desirability, damage or risk the situation poses for him/her. If the event is insignificant to his/her welfare and poses no damage or risk, it becomes irrelevant. Moreover, if it is a desirable situation that would benefit the individual, it is considered positive. If, however, it has the potential to cause damage or risk it is relevant, and the secondary appraisal commences. During the secondary appraisal phase, on the other hand, he/she assesses the actions to take. This assessment is based on the level of significance (determined during the primary appraisal phase) and whether or not the resources to make this action are available. If the situation is deemed to exceed the resources available, the individual experiences stress and must try to cope (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Thus, stress is the emotional effect on the individual experiencing the situation. It could be triggered internally (based on perception) or externally (based on an environmental stimulus). Conceptually, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress as the consequences of an inability to balance challenges with resources. Stress can result from either major life-changing events or seemingly minor day-to-day aggravating events. Contextually, in the experience of an international student, starting a new university in another country could be categorised as a major event, while the daily aggravation of unclear class assignments, poor language proficiency or a difficult lecturer, could fall into the latter category of a minor aggravation. For a student who has been in the university for a number of years, stress could result from the difficulty of the programme, looming deadlines, concern about career prospects and any of the prior events mentioned.

Turning to the social aspect of student life, socially, the student must make new friends and establish relationships with faculty and staff. This could create some anxieties thus affecting him/her personal-emotionally. Since these relationship-building situations could be regarded as day-to-day situations, they may appear to be uneventful. However, their frequency, intensity and duration could take a toll on the student and lead to psychosomatic illnesses (DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman & Lazarus, 1982). Further, though stress is regarded as a common occurrence for university students, when it is severe and protracted it can seriously affect a student's academic performance, lead to undesirable behaviours and affect adjustment. However, those who are well adjusted are better able to handle the stressors of university life and perform well academically (Binti Hamzah & Marhamah, 2016). One could surmise that these categorisations of stressful events, as major life events or minor daily aggravations, suggest that the appraisal processes play a significant role in stress and coping.

Coping is the association between the individual and the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It is dependent on personal welfare, social performance and physical health, as well as the significance placed on these by the individual. The desired outcome of coping is avoidance or alleviation of the stressor. Coping, therefore, is the process an individual use to manage the environment as well as his/her emotional response. In other words, coping aims at regulating the stressful situation (Glanz, Rimer, & Lewis, 2002) and thus consists of mental and physical attempts to accomplish particular demands (both within and without) that the individual considers as beyond his/her coping abilities (Lazarus, 1991). However, personality type, biographical characteristics and prior experiences determines his/her response to stress and the ability to cope. The theory further expounds on how individuals' strategies to cope with stressful events.

Strategies for coping are essential in the adjustment process of international students who are experiencing stressful situations (Crockett, Iturbide, Stone, McGinley, Raffaelli, & Carlo, 2007; Hirsch, Barlem, Almeida, Tomaschewski - Barlem, Figuera, & Lunardi, 2015). The theory indicates that a variety of coping strategies can be employed under two broad categories

namely, problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping. With a problem-focused approach, the strategy involves active exertion of control over the situation to try to amend it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). This includes confrontational coping. The problem-focused approach may be the most beneficial approach (Holahan & Moos, 1987) for adjustment to a new university environment. Given that confrontational coping is a strategy that involves aggressive efforts to amend the stressful situation some amount of risk-taking is implied (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988). Relaxation strategy, on the other hand, is what the individual does to relax to manage the stress and may include yoga, meditation and reciting a mantra. This construct was used to replace two original constructs namely Positive reappraisal and Planful problem-solving, from the Ways of Coping scale.

Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, involves the individual exerting control over him/herself to change the way he/she relates to the situation and its potential to create stress (Ebata & Moos, 1994). Examples of the latter type of coping include distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility and escape-avoidance. The distancing strategy is when the individual detaches cognitively to minimise the significance of the stressful event, while escape-avoidance happens when the individual handles the stressful situation by using wishful thinking or by making behavioural attempts to escape or avoid it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988). Self-controlling, on the other hand, is the strategy where the individual tries regulating feelings and actions towards the stressful situation. However, accepting responsibility is a strategy when the individual acknowledges a role in a stressful situation and tries to put things right (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988). Emotion-focused coping appears to be largely dependent on biographical characteristics. Overall, coping strategies are conscious behaviours for handling the daily problems of life. In Chapter Three further discussion is held about the coping strategies employed by international students.

Contextually, using this theory can provide a useful framework in evaluating the coping processes of international students within the context of their adjustment in the university environment (Hunter & Boyle, 2004). This is explained by the fact that the theory appears to identify the reason why some international students could cope more effectively with academic, social and emotional stress than others who suffer from negative outcomes such as an inability

to cope with the academic environment and poor academic performances. For instance, students who choose to use the problem focused coping strategy in social adjustment issues may actively seek to participate in campus life by attending events as well as joining associations and clubs (Stoklosa, 2015). Similarly, students may in the case of academic issues, decide to seek out help from lecturers and fellow students including those who have completed the course. Lastly, when dealing with personal-emotional issues, they could decide to seek the help of counsellors, chaplains, lecturers or even other students. Here, we see the relevance of Tinto's theory and how it enables higher adjustment levels.

2.3 SYNTHESIS OF THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

According to Creswell (2014), theories are the lenses through which a research study is visualised. The overarching theory is Astin's I-E-O Theory, while the supporting theories are Tinto's Student Integration Theory as well as Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping. Together these three theories help to explain the multidimensional phenomenon of international student adjustment and its effects. The principal effect looked at in this study is academic performance. Astin's as well as Lazarus and Folkman's theories address research sub-questions two and three.

Notable parallels exist between Tinto's and Astin's theories that make them work well together for this study. For instance, both theoretical perspectives regard entry traits as having a significant impact on the students' determination to complete their degree (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005 cited in Reisinger, 2016, p.9). However, while Astin refers to these traits as inputs, Tinto refers to them as student characteristics. This study refers to inputs as background characteristics and examines them accordingly.

Also, whereas Astin regards the environment and its impact on university students' experience as significant, Tinto sees social integration as such (Reisinger, 2016). In this study, it is referred

to as academic environment and is a component of academic adjustment. Lastly, in Tinto's theory, a student's decision to leave a university by dropping out, transferring or ultimately graduating, correlates to Astin's output component of the I-E-O model (Rany, 2016). The decision by a student to take any one of these actions is important for this study as their academic performance can lead to any one of these outcomes. Thus, the researcher regards both theories as relevant.

Although neither theory specifically focuses on international students' adjustment, they both provide an adequate theoretical basis for students' adjustment in general. Moreover, they both measure students' educational outcomes. Astin's I-E-O theory serves as a possible useful evaluation tool alongside Tinto's Student Integration theory for the researcher to conduct quantitative analysis. Thus, this researcher believes the I-E-O model is a good theoretical model for assessing international students and their adjustment challenges since adjustment takes place within a specific educational environment.

Tinto (1993) argued that the foundation of successful academic performance in universities rests on successful social and academic integration. Poorly integrated students may perform poorly in their studies if they have not interacted sufficiently with their lecturers and classmates. Inadequate interaction is a situation which literature shows is common between domestic and international students (Yefanova, Baird, & Montgomery, 2015; Huizinga, 2016; Marangell, Arkoudis, & Baik, 2018). This researcher has found this to be true in her personal experiences as an international student. Similar behaviours appears to exist between domestic and international students on the campus where the study was conducted whereby international students often befriend their co-nationals or other international students. Thus, the basic principles from Tinto's (1993) theory of student integration are also applicable to this study and can extend to include international students at XUC.

Finally, turning to the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, despite its specific psychological emphasis, the theory lends support to Astin's and Tinto's theories. From the

theory, it seems that while attempting to conform to the environment, the student also changes the environment to meet his/her needs. Possibly, this means that there is both a process and an achievement occurring, which in the context of this study, is adjusting (process) and attaining an appreciable level of adjustment.

This combination of theories further provides support for the conceptual premise that as adjustment levels improve so also do students' academic performances. Moreover, Lazarus and Folkman's theory helps this researcher to determine how international students appraise and cope with stressful situations and eventually overcome them. All three theories attempt to show how an individual can handle challenges of his/her environment for a successful outcome. To cope successfully, the student must adjust and strategise within the context of an academic environment. Additionally, how he/she appraises various educational situations, may determine his/her academic success or failure. Though it is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning that some landmark empirical studies (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989; Carver & Scheier, 1994) identified that coping is not merely situational, but is also dispositional, meaning that an individual's personality influences the coping strategies. Within the scope of this study however, the researcher explores background characteristics to ascertain if they have any bearing on the adjustment process and attainment.

In summary, the adjustment becomes an issue when an international student is unable to cope with the challenges of the university environment. Since education is the primary goal of a student's time overseas (Dunn, 2006), it is essential that international student adjustment is sufficiently measured to determine how it affects academic performance. The next section introduces the conceptual framework of the research.

2.4 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Miles and Huberman (1984) and Breman (2013), a conceptual framework is the existing map of an unexplored research area and is subject to change as the research terrain changes. It is thus an evolutionary structure indicating the progress of the research. Furthermore, it is an important graphical representation of empirical data (Leshem, 2013). Though describing it as a synthesis of the reviewed literature, Regioniel (2015) uses the map-charting metaphor and explains that a conceptual framework serves not only as a means of plotting a route to a destination, but is a diagram displaying the connective relationship between specific variables.

The theoretical frameworks assisted in developing a conceptual framework for this study in assessing the adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students and the effects of these issues on them, with emphasis on academic performance. It was developed using the research sub-questions. It helps clarify the reviewed literature in Chapter Three. Furthermore, it contextualises the educational setting of the study as suggested by Berman (2013).

According to Tinto (1975), students' grades are an indication of their academic aptitude as well as the approach that a university has towards a specific academic performance. Moreover, GPA is regarded as the main measurement of academic performance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Cambridge University Reporter, 2003; van Rooij, Jansen & van de Grift, 2018). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) further posited that high GPAs were an indication of a student's high level of adjustment to the institutional environment. Kirkpatrick (2001) who discovered that higher GPAs indicated a high level of adjustment experiences, whereas low GPAs indicated low levels of adjustment experiences, confirmed this finding. In this study also, the researcher conceptualises positive and negative adjustments as high and low adjustment levels respectively. The researcher also surmises that similar to the earlier studies of

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) and Kirkpatrick (2001) which were both conducted on domestic students in the USA, international students at XUC, Ghana would display similar outcomes.

The conceptual framework below (Figure 2.3) shows the relationship between independent variables, intervening variables and dependent variables. The independent variables (adjustment) are predicted to help explain the dependent variables (adjustment levels). The intervening variables are the background characteristics and experiences of international students that also influence their outcomes or academic performances. The independent variables consist of the dimensions of adjustment namely, academic, social and personal-emotional adjustments. The adjustment levels may be high or low.

As asserted by Coles and Swami (2012), successful adjustment is dependent on many variables with academic performance as one of them. As already stated, in this study, academic performance is a two-fold component, namely, high GPAs and low GPAs, which are indicative of high or low adjustment level of international undergraduate students. On a 4.00 scale, high GPA falls within the range of 3.25 - 4.00 while low GPA falls within the range of 0.00 – 2.49. This researcher surmised that low or very low academic performance, which is a GPA of 2.00-2.49 or 0.00-1.50 respectively, might be an outcome of major adjustment issues an international student is experiencing. On the other hand, the researcher posits that international students with average to high adjustment levels are more likely to have average or high academic performance that is a GPA 2.50 - 3.24 and 3.25 - 4.00 respectively.

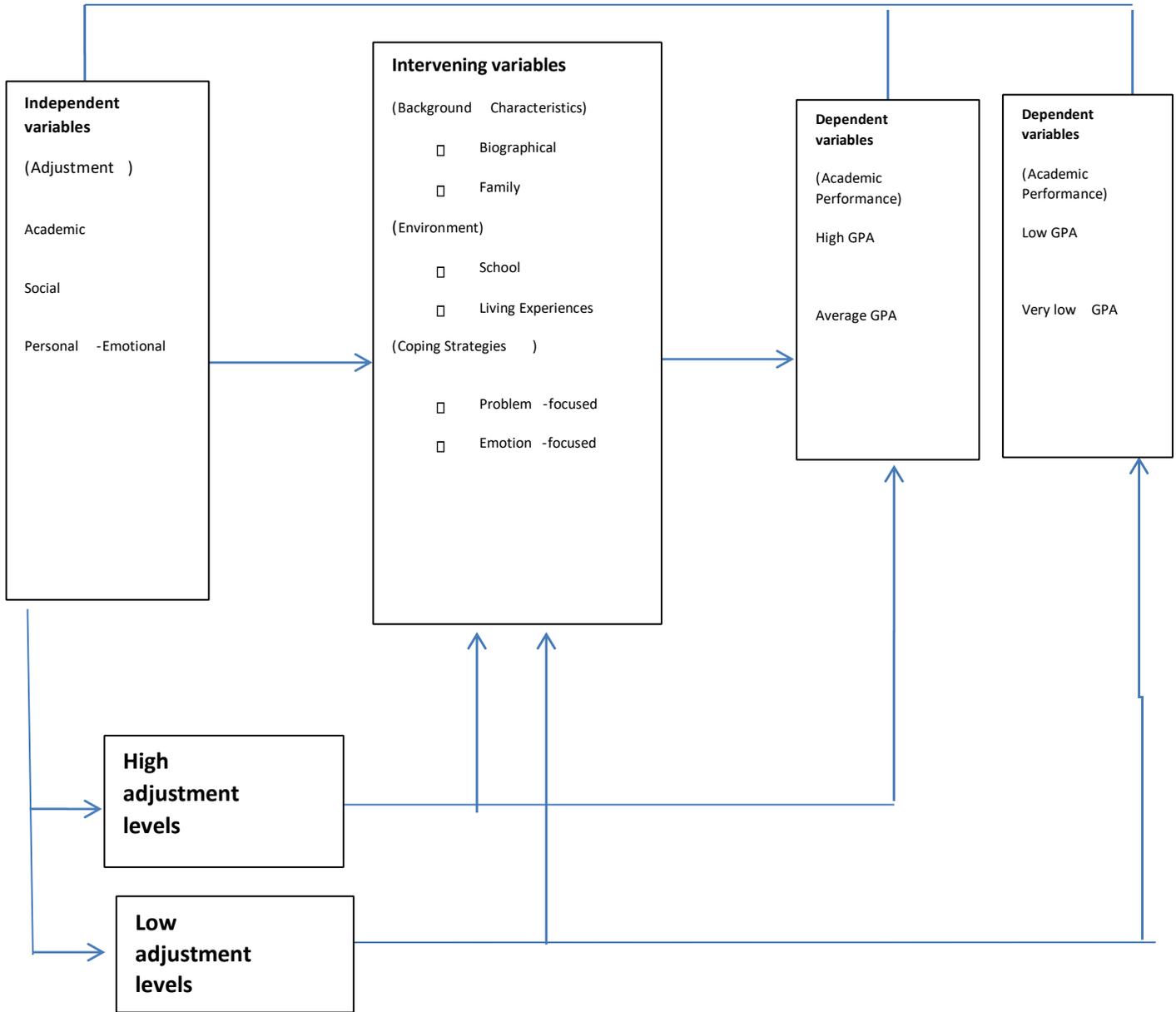


Figure 2. 3: Conceptual framework illustrating the researcher’s concept of the connection between adjustment and academic performance

2. 5 SUMMARY

International students encounter difficulties in adjusting to university life in a new country. Thus, this chapter discussed the theories of student adjustment and related them to international students. Also explored was a theory on stress and coping as a way of relating it to management and care for the students. The chapter demonstrated the complexity of student adjustment phenomenon and the lack of a comprehensive theory to address this situation within the specific context of the study. The factors that could impinge on the successful adjustment of international students were conceptualised by the researcher. Consequently, a conceptual framework was developed illustrating the variables and their interrelationships. Chapter 3 will discuss each of these components as they relate to adjustment and its effect on academic performance.

CHAPTER 3

ADJUSTMENT ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study. This chapter, on the other hand, opens with a presentation of the educational context of the study and relevant educational policies of the university college. Then using empirical literature and guided by the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the chapter explores the relationship between international students' adjustment issues, their background characteristics, campus environment and academic performance. Finally, the chapter closes with a review of how adjustment issues may create stress. It then highlights some coping strategies that students have been seen to deploy.

3.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

3.2.1 Overview of undergraduates students' mobility in Africa

The proliferation of universities across the African continent within the last 20 years illustrates a growing continental trend prompted by the awareness that higher education plays a massive role in development (Sehoole & de Wit, 2014). Subsequently, during this period, several African governments prioritised higher education within their national budgets and established many state-run (public) universities (Darvas, Gao, Shen & Bawnay, 2017). However, overcrowding at the public universities and their inability (due to inadequate facilities and human resources) to meet the rising demand for knowledge resulted in the parallel rise of private universities

across Africa (Mohamedbhai, 2014). Growing from a mere 24 in number to over 400 in less than two decades (Darvas et al., 2017; Bloom, et al., 2014), private universities have provided viable options to the public institutions (Bloom, et al., 2014) for potential students and their families. For instance, findings by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) indicate a strong impetus for African middle-class families to send their university-aged children abroad to industrialised nations (Kritz, 2015). However, rising costs and increasingly stringent immigration requirements for several industrialised nations, in particular, the USA, which was traditionally the greatest destination for international students, until recently, have caused these potential students and their families to look elsewhere (Okahana & Zhou, 2019), including intra-continently, to obtain higher education. The major study destinations in Africa, according to ICEF Monitor (2013), have been Morocco and Tunisia (from the northern African nations), South Africa and Angola (for southern African nations), Uganda and Kenya (from the eastern African nations) and Senegal and Ghana (for the western and central African nations).

3.2.2 Overview of higher education in Ghana

Following continental trends, Ghana's Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) have increased from a mere three public universities in 1990 (Kamran et al., 2019) to a variety of public and private HEIs (totalling over 170) in 2019. These institutions include technical universities, college of education, and vocational training centres (NAB website, 2019). Due to this explosive growth in the HEI sector, Ghana's Ministry of Education has worked hard to develop and ensure quality standards at the universities by establishing a National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). Consequently, all universities must adhere to rigorous standards before being accredited or renewing their accreditations.

As mandated by NAB, the 81 degree - offering, private HEIs are university colleges affiliated to one or more public universities for mentorship lasting a minimum of ten years at the end of which time they could apply for a presidential charter. During the mentorship period, inspections of assessments and instructional material are part of annual performance reviews with the

mentors. In addition, mentor institutions confer degrees on graduates of these private HEIs (NAB website, 2019). These rigid requirements have apparently earned Ghanaian certificates international credibility and recognition (Kamran et al., 2019). Moreover, the presence of foreign universities totalling five in number (NAB website, 2019) and establishment of centres of excellence in research have not only enriched the educational landscape, but have earned the country status as a key provider of quality education in West Africa (Ankomah-Asare et al., 2016). Beyond quality, other reasons that attract students include a perception of Ghana as a safe country (much-cherished quality in a region rife with strife), shared historical /political ties and geographic proximity for African students (Kwakye, 2016). The top sending African nations are Nigeria (an Anglophone nation) and Gabon (a Francophone nation) while the USA is the top sending non-African nation.

Data available from the UIS website indicated that enrolments (of both domestic and international students) in all Ghanaian universities stood at 300,000 for 2018/2019. International enrolments swelled from 1,899 to 17,821 between 2007 and 2015, then dipped to 12,988 in 2017. Despite the drop, Ghana still has a relatively sizable international student population and twenty-six percent of these enrolments are in the private university colleges (US Embassy, 2019).

3.2.3 Overview of the research site

XUC, the private university college under review, is affiliated in part to the University of Ghana (UG) which is the best public university in the country as noted by World University Rankings (2019). Other affiliations include Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and University of Cape Coast (UCC). Affiliation affords XUC the opportunity to “ride on the wings” of the affiliates who monitor and mentor the quality of its teaching and learning, infrastructure, employees’ skills and qualifications.

First established in 2003/2004 academic year as a Bible College, XUC received accreditation in 2005 to run degree programmes. XUC has grown steadily over the past 14 years to include four faculties namely, Faculty of Business (FOB), Faculty of Theology (FOT), Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS) and Faculty of Computing and Science (FOCS). During the time of this research, enrolment of international students was in FOB and FOCS. These two faculties are affiliates to UG and thus further references to academic procedures and expectations would be in line with UG's mandates. The undergraduate programmes run for a four-year duration and each academic year is referred to as a level. The numbering for levels starts at 100 in first year and ends at 400 in the fourth and final year. For the FOB and FOCS programmes, successful students at the completion of their programmes earn Bachelor of Science degrees in their areas of specialisation.

Although it opened its doors for active enrolments in 2005/2006 academic year, the first intake of international students at the university college was in 2008/2009 with a total enrolment of three students within an overall population of 254 students. Enrolment figures steadily climbed yearly and for 2015/2016 academic year, it stood at 350 within an overall student population of 3,200. However, due to economic recessions faced by Nigerian students, who are the largest sub-section of the international student population at XUC, international enrolments dipped in 2016/2017 academic year. HEIs all over the country experienced this downward trend in that period (Kamran et al., 2019). Subsequently, the university student's population in the 2017/2018 academic year (the time of the study) stood at 2,800 with 126 international students.

The international students at XUC come from two broad language groups namely, the Anglophone and the Francophone groups. The AS's are from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia and The Gambia respectively while the FS's hail from Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Togo and Mali. These countries are all located in West and Central Africa. Their programmes of study are BSc. Communication Studies, BSc. Logistics and Supply Chain Management, BSc. Accounting and BSc. Human Resource Management for those enrolled in the FOB. For those enrolled in the FOCS the main programme of study with the highest international enrolment is Information Technology.

To better manage and care for the international student population, the university college Management established the IRO in 2012/2013. The researcher and a student intern staffed the office for that academic year. Although subsequent officers have managed the office after the researcher's transfer to another office, the staff numbers remain unchanged. With the establishment of the IRO, attention to this cross-section of the student population increased. The generic Orientation Week that had existed from the inception of the university college amended to include a few hours specially dedicated to addressing the Orientation needs of fresh international students. Besides, there was inauguration of the International Students' Association (ISA), selection of patrons, development of a Constitution and student elections. Two other associations namely, the Nigerian Students' Association and the Francophone students' Association also came under the parent association at that time.

Despite these progressive actions, the university college, however, has no special educational policies to assist its international students academically. For instance, there is no language centre for the FS's to improve their English skills nor is there a tutorial support centre to assist with academic challenges, which appear to be significant. Moreover, at the instance of the International Relations Officer, a special day was set aside each semester to recognise the diverse student population. Due to its popularity, Diversity Day expanded to a week-long celebration, dubbed the International Students' Week. However, by 2017/2018 this event became a half-day programme subsumed into the overall SRC week celebrations. Attention on the international students declined which was a situation that could cause some demotivation and dissatisfaction with the environment.

3.2.4 Overview of educational policies at the research site

Andrade (2017) posits that if the overall enrolment percentages of international students are low in an institution, the implications are that the needs of these students would be addressed inadequately in centralised national or institutional policies. On this basis, this section will

highlight relevant policies at XUC with the intent of exploring how they could affect the academic performances of international students who grapple with adjustment issues. The researcher therefore states existing admission, academic and welfare policies from the students' handbook of the university college under study. The admission policies show the criteria for entry into the university. The academic policies, on the other hand, state how students are assessed and how they progress. Lastly, the welfare policy indicates the institutional structures available for assisting students in adjusting to life on campus.

3.2.4.1 Admission policy

In Ghana, as in many other African countries, admission to university is based on the performance at the examinations given at completion of secondary school. Universities accept applicants with strong academic skills (Darvas, Ballal, & Fedaa, 2014). High scores in the areas of numeracy, literacy and communications (Darvas et al., 2014) demonstrate these skills. Regardless of nationality, universities in Ghana admit undergraduate students based on the academic criteria stipulated by the National Accreditation Board (NAB). These criteria are as follows:

3.2.4.1.1 West African examinations

For admission into the first and second years of the university college, applicants should have obtained six passes in the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Mandatory courses include English, Mathematics and either Integrated Science or Social Studies. In addition to the mandatory subjects, there are three others referred to as the elective subjects. Lastly, applicants should have an aggregate score of 6 - 24 in their final examinations (NAB website, 2019). As the name WAEC implies, all applicants from the West African subregion are eligible to apply to a Ghanaian university using these qualifications.

3.2.4.1.2 Other qualifications

Applicants with other qualifications are admitted into the first and second years at the university college based on equivalencies to the WAEC examination in the International Baccalaureate (IB), the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the International GCSE (IGCSE), and American Grades 12 and 13 examinations. Those who took the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level examination should have obtained credit passes in five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics. At the GCE Advanced, students must have three passes in relevant subjects. A pass in the General paper is also essential (NAB website, 2019).

3.2.4.1.3 Additional admission policy

At the university college under consideration, international students must meet the above national academic criteria as well as fulfil the following additional criteria:

- (a) pass an interview and an English test (for non-English speakers)
- (b) submit a financial statement indicating the ability to meet all expenditures
- (c) pay all fees in advance before registration
- (d) present passports and other immigration documents
- (e) present a police clearance from the country of origin
- (f) register with the Ghana Police Service
- (g) obtain mandatory student immigration documents (XUC, 2010).

These additional admission requirements could all present added challenges for incoming international students. An external agency conducts the English test and issues the certificate, which is presented as evidence of English proficiency for admission.

3.2.4.2 Academic policies

As per the student handbook of the university college under review, the academic policies are categorised as class attendance and participation, continuous assessment, end-of-semester examinations and student progression.

3.2.4.2.1 Class attendance and participation

Class attendance and participation are mandatory requirements leading to 10 percent of the overall grade. A three-week continuous unexcused absence will lead to the deference of the programme (XUC, 2010). Though the policy is entitled class attendance and participation, there is no penalty for non-participation. Thus, international students could essentially attend class but not participate.

3.2.4.2.2 Continuous assessment

Students are assessed continuously. Thirty percent of the continuous assessment constitutes part of the overall grades. The continuous assessment consists of the attendance and participation, quizzes and mid-semester exams (XUC, 2010).

3.2.4.2.3 End-of-semester examinations

The main examinations occur during the last two weeks of the sixteen-week semester. These end-of-semester examinations are mandatory and are worth 70 per- cent of the overall marks (XUC, 2010).

3.2.4.2.4 Student progression policy

The student progression policy stipulates that a student is in good standing if he/she obtains a GPA of 1.50 and passes the requisite number of credits required for the completion of that academic year (XUC, 2010). A residential student who does not meet the minimal GPA goes on academic probation and must move out of the hall of residence (XUC, 2010). This latter measure of non-residential status, due to poor academic performance, could represent an additional challenge for international students who choose to live on campus.

3.2.4.3 Welfare policy

Students can seek guidance and counselling help from the university counsellor or chaplain for spiritual, emotional and social issues. Other faculty members are also available for non-professional counselling assistance (XUC, 2010).

3.3 CONCEPT OF ADJUSTMENT

3.3.1 Definitions of adjustment

By utilising Astin's I-E-O Theory, Tinto's Student Integration Theory and Lazarus' Transactional Stress and Coping Theory, this researcher has conceptualised the adjustment processes and achievement of international students (see Figure 2.3). However, conceptually, establishing a universal definition for adjustment within the context of internationalisation for higher education has been difficult due to its multidimensional nature (Baker, 2002). This researcher observed that the terms "adjustment", "integration" and "adaptation" are used synonymously in various studies focused on issues of adjustment of undergraduate international students. This synonymy of terms was noted in studies conducted by Ahmadi (2016), Rienties et al., (2014), Gómez et al., (2014) as well as Jean (2010).

Ahmadi (2016) in the study of the relationship between adjustment, background characteristics and success of international students in the USA, used the terms “adjustment”, “adaptation” and “integration” interchangeably. Rienties et al., (2014) in their comparative cross-institutional study of the academic and social integration between Dutch and international students used the terms, “adjustment” and “adaptation”. Similarly, Gómez et al., (2014) in their study of international students utilised the terms, “adjustment” and “adaptation” interchangeably. In addition, Jean (2010) in studying the academic and social adjustment of first-generation college students used the terms, “adjustment”, “adaptation” and “integration” synonymously. For this study, the term “adjustment” is used except where omitting the terms, “integration” or “adaptation” would change the original title or intent of the theory.

The term, adjustment is defined in various ways. Sufian, (2004) as cited in Al-khatib, Awamleh and Samawi, (2012, p.8), regards adjustment as the ability of a person to realise emotional desires while fulfilling self-acceptance and enjoying life without conflict. Sufian’s definition is consistent with the theoretical argument of Astin (1993a) that adjustment involves accepting and participating in social activities in the university. Al-Ananni, (2005) cited in Akpunne, Akinniyi and Lawrence (2018, p.1613) on the other hand, defines adjustment as the conduct aimed at surmounting obstacles or the techniques used by people to meet their needs, satisfy their motives and reduce pressure as they try to achieve balance and satisfaction in life. This definition from Al-Ananni (2005) appears to capture what Tinto (1993) illustrates. In Tinto’s illustration, a student’s institutional experiences may become obstacles in achieving his/her educational goals. Such a student has to make a commitment to the institution in order to meet the need of acquiring a degree.

Yet another definition of the concept is specified by Al-Azza (2004) cited in Al-khatib et al. (2012, p.8), which regards adjustment as the behavioral process whereby individuals essentially retain a balance between their needs and the challenges of their environments. Ramsay, Hooker, Campbell and Cao, (2007) cited in David and Nită (2014, p.140), further support Al-Azza’s concept which views adjustment as a multifarious, on-going process

eventually resulting in an individual attaining a harmonious state with his/her environment. Later research by De Araujo (2011) also supports this view of adjustment being an ongoing process. It is a process which Wang-Yue (2016) calls successful adaptation to a new environment. Finally, Encyclopedia Britannica (2017) defines adjustment as a progressive course of action taken by people to retain a balance between what they require and whatever hindrances they encounter in the acquisition of their requirements. Thus, adjustment starts with an unfulfilled need and ends when obstacles are overcome, and fulfilment of the need is met.

In summary, it is apparent from the definitions above that adjustment is a complex concept to define without a definite and clear context. Despite the various definitions, one can surmise that adjustment takes place within a particular setting or a definite environment. For international students, this environment is their new country and university campus. However, some researchers (Ramsay et al., 2007 cited in David & Nită, 2014, p. 140; De Araujo, 2011) regard it as a continuous process. On the other hand there are some like Sufian (2004) cited in cited in Al-khatib et al. (2012, p.8) as well as Al-Ananni, (2005) cited in Akpunne et al. (2018, p.1613), who regard adjustment to be a place of achievement. In all instances, there is an obstacle to surmount, which for international students, is their new environment and its attendant issues. Therefore, the adjustment process can be said to be complete when the goal of academic achievement (obtaining a degree) is attained. Thus, it appears that this goal is partly achieved when they earn the required GPA to make academic progress yearly.

3.3.2 Definitions of university student adjustment

Studies on university student adjustment started in the 1940s while more specific studies on international student adjustment at universities began in the 1950s (Volet & Jones, 2012). Research on university student adjustment evolved over the past six decades from focusing on adjustment being just a predictor variable to it being an appropriate, achievable measurement of student harmonisation with the campus environment. This evolution of the

phenomenon is in relation to attrition, retention, academic, social and mental well – being of university students in general (O’Donnell, Shirley, Park, Nolen, Gibbons & Park, 2018). Specific focus on international student adjustment, on the other hand, emerged in the 1950s and initially focused on themes such as language, racial discrimination, health, finances and homesickness (Moony & Gordon, 1950 cited in Alavi & Mansor, 2011, p. 1582; Volet & Jones, 2012). In recent times, however, the focus has broadened to include reasons for studying abroad, social and multi-cultural difficulties, academic and language difficulties (Yusliza & Chelliah, 2010).

Though in contemporary research new categories and terminologies are in use, the issues appear to be the same. Thus, a clear understanding of the phenomenon and its attendant issues is important. This subsection introduces the concept of student adjustment within university settings. Here the researcher discusses three dimensions of university adjustment, their indicators and accompanying issues experienced by university students, as noted from globally conducted, empirical research.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher attempts to create a working definition for each type of adjustment by using a synthesised summary of the behavioural correlations identified by Baker and Siryk (1989) in their questionnaire. This is because the scales of measurements for this study are from a modified version of the SACQ called the International Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (ISACQ) developed by Gómez et al., (2014). The ISACQ uses these synthesised definitions as seen in the following sections:

3.3.2.1 Academic adjustment and its indicators

Academic adjustment for a university student can be defined as fitting into the academic environment of the university. This type of adjustment is assessed by academic motivation (seriousness of academic purpose), satisfaction with the chosen programme of study and environment and achievement of good academic performance (strong GPA), (Baker, 2002; van

Rooij et al., 2018). In other words, a student with high adjustment levels is motivated to attend classes because in addition to understanding and enjoying what is taught, he/she interacts well with fellow students and faculty and performs well academically.

3.3.2.1.1 Academic motivation

Academic motivation is a student's desire and determination to achieve academic goals despite obstacles. It consists of the student's belief that he/she can successfully accomplish the task. This is attributed to behaviours that cause academic success within an academic environment (Amraj, Motlagh, Zalani, & Parhon, 2011; Usher & Morris, 2012). These definitions imply that motivation can be lost if the individual is unable to surmount the obstacles successfully.

3.3.2.1.2 Academic environment

This term refers to the physical, social and psychological environment of the institution. It includes a sense of welcoming/unwelcoming as perceived by the student, as reflected in the policies, and even includes the aesthetic beauty of the institution (Ozerem and Akkoyunlu, 2015). Ideally, the academic environment should be a place that fosters active, collaborative learning, critical thinking, development and dissemination of knowledge (Warger and Dobbin, 2009). It, therefore, has some bearing on the academic performance and motivation of students (O'Malley & Hanson 2012; Adil & Marhamah, 2014).

3.3.2.1.3. Academic performance

Academic performance is defined as how students perform in their examinations at the completion of a specified educational period. Their GPA (Cambridge University Reporter, 2003; van Rooij et al., 2018) generally measures it.

3.3.2.2 Social adjustment and its indicators

Social adjustment is defined as fitting into the social environment of the university (Tinto, 1987) as indicated by involvement with social activities on campus, having relationships (platonic, romantic or both) with others and gaining a sense of belonging (Astin 1999; Baker, 2002; Baker & Siryk, 1989; Tinto, 2014). It is an indication of the student's ability to succeed (Astin, 1993b). Thus, a socially well-adjusted student successfully handles the social aspects of university that consists of involvement, interpersonal relationships and perceived fit. Hence, a student is considered to be having an issue with social adjustment when these criteria are unmet. Such a student would be said to have a low social adjustment level.

3.3.2.2.1 Involvement

Involvement is the amount of physical and mental energy a student dedicates to the overall educational experience. It extends beyond academic pursuits to participation in sports, associations and other social events (Astin, 1999).

3.3.2.2.2 Interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships are the interactions the student has with faculty, staff and colleagues (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

3.3.2.2.3 Perceived fit

Perceived fit is the sense of belonging that the student feels at the institution (Tinto, 1987).

3.3.2.3 Personal - emotional adjustment and its indicators

Personal-emotional adjustment can be defined as holistic satisfaction with the environment indicated by psychological and physiological healthiness (Baker & Siykr, 1999; Baker, 2002). Personal-emotional adjustment is, therefore, the extent to which a student can handle psychological distress and physical ailments. Consequently, when a student is challenged in these areas adjustment levels are lowered.

3.3.2.3.1 Psychological health

Psychological health is the mental well-being of an individual as deduced from the previous descriptions.

3.3.2.3.2 Physiological health

Physiological health is the physical well-being of an individual as deduced from the previous descriptions.

Taken together, successful university adjustment is a student's capability in handling academic demands, in interacting socially with fellow students, faculty and staff, all the while participating in campus events and retaining sound psychological and physiological health. These definitions indicate that overall university adjustment constitutes academic, social and personal-emotional dimensions.

3.4 EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITIES OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

A survey carried out by World Education Services (WES) of close to 5000 current and former international students in the USA, UK, Canada, Germany and Australia yielded similar feedback

on their pre-departure expectations. The survey revealed that individuals who travel abroad for education primarily expect that higher education overseas would be better than that of their nations and could, therefore, advance their job prospects. Other expectations include a wish to learn or develop foreign language skills, particularly English. Lastly, there is an expectation that the desire to live in another nation (either permanently or for a time) after degree completion would be possible (Roy, Lu, & Loo, 2016).

Interestingly, similar findings were noted in Ghana of international students enrolled at a public (Frempong, 2015) and private university (Kwakye, 2016) respectively. Collectively, these findings seem to indicate that pre-arrival expectations of international students are global. However, as the reviewed literature on university adjustment demonstrates, there is a difference between the expectations and the realities of students. This difference is what appears to create issues for students. The next section, therefore, moves on to discuss overall university adjustment issues.

3.5 OVERALL UNIVERSITY ADJUSTMENT ISSUES

Tinto (1997) theorised that the experiences students have during their time at the institution are important factors that motivate them to achieve their educational goals. This section reviews common adjustment issues noted by researchers to influence the academic performance of international undergraduate students. Academic and non - academic (social and personal-emotional) adjustments issues are identified. The review is arranged in the order of the research sub-questions. In line with this, the influences of biographic characteristics on academic performances of international students are reviewed first. Next, commonly noted adjustment challenges are explored. Lastly, literature on coping strategies is examined.

3.5.1 University adjustment issues and biographic characteristics

Tinto (1987) theorised that biographical characteristics directly influence academic performance as academic motivations vary from person-to-person. The theoretical models of

Tinto (1993) and Astin (1993), previously discussed in Chapter Two, indicate that individual characteristics play a role in the outcome of a student's life as he/she interacts with the new environment. Hawkes (2014) posits that the academic performances and outcomes of international students strongly depend on their cultural background, their experiences at the institution and their attitudes towards the language of the host country. Hawkes (2014) further, argues that when taking into account the academic performance of an international student, the individual's characteristics cannot be ignored as these characteristics have an unseen influence on that person's approach to values and norms of his academic environment. An implication of this is the possibility that attention to individual differences may help decision-makers avoid a one size-fits-all approach in their institutions of higher education. This section that immediately follows, reviews empirical studies carried out on how different biographical characteristics influence students' responses to overall university adjustment.

3.5.1.1 Gender

While some studies have established a disparity in the adjustment levels of male versus female international students, others have found there to be no difference. Lee, Park and Kim (2009), in their study of international students in the USA, discovered that male international students displayed lower levels of psychological adjustment than did the female students in their sample. A later study by Razek and Coyner (2013) for comparing the adjustment levels of male versus female Saudi students revealed that female students exhibited lower adjustment levels than male students during their initial years in the USA. However, in a study conducted in Malaysia, Mustaffa and Ilias (2013), found no significant differences between the genders in adjusting nor was there an effect on academic performances.

In yet another study in the USA, Mesidor and Sly (2016) in their investigation on factors contributing to the adjustment of international students found gender disparity to be a predictor of personal – emotional adjustment. This assertion by Mesidor and Sly (2016) that gender disparity affects adjustment corroborated the earlier findings of Lee et al. (2009) as well as Razek and Coyner (2013). They, however, contrasted with that of Mustaffa and Ilias (2013). Nevertheless, the findings

of Mustaffa and Ilias (2013) confirmed what Baker and Siryk (1989) had earlier established, that, there was no gender disparity in overall adjustment to university life and academic performance. There is no clear-cut established finding. This study will attempt to establish this for international students at XUC.

3.5.1.2 Age

In a study conducted by Ebenuwa-Okon, (2010) to investigate the influence of age, financial status and gender, the investigator found that age had no significant bearing on the adjustment or the academic performances of university students. However, Risquez, Moore and Morley (2007) in their study of academically disadvantaged students in South Africa, appeared to have converse findings. Risquez et al., (2007) found that though the mature students (26 years and older) were initially slow in adjusting, they later outstripped their conventionally aged colleagues (17-25 years) in this regard. Similarly, Wilson (2011) in a study on socio-cultural adaptations of international students found that mature students (were more challenged than conventionally aged students in adjusting to university life. They have negatively affected academically as they tried to adjust. More recently, however, Ugwu and Adamuti-Trache's (2017) study on the postgraduate plans of doctoral students demonstrated that older students can adjust significantly faster and better than their younger counterparts. Conversely, another recent study by Alshafi and Shin, (2017) indicated that age and other biographical factors tested (gender, academic level and length of stay) had no significant bearing on adjustment levels of the international students in their sample.

While there is no clear consensus on the matter, apparently, this researcher surmises that because conventionally aged students are perhaps more socially active than their older colleagues, this may account for them underperforming academically during the adjustment period. Again, this researcher surmises that the differences in these findings could be that mature student may have left behind a spouse and/children or even a lucrative job to pursue their education abroad in an uncertain new environment. Thus, they may be more determined to succeed and return home to explore new career opportunities. Conversely, the adjustment levels of younger students may be lower because they are free of the parental restrictions and may take newfound freedom to an

extreme and not focus on their studies. In addition, they may not have developed sufficient study skills to meet new academic demands. Although there appear to be no unified findings regarding adjustment issues and age, this current research will explore only the conventionally aged international students.

3.5.1.3 Marital status

There is some evidence to suggest that marital status plays a role in the academic performances of international students. Lasode and Awotedu (2014) in a study conducted on the adjustment issues of married undergraduate women found that they had greater difficulties adjusting to the rigours of university life. This was due to the demands of juggling their personal lives and studies. The researchers thus concluded that these conflicting demands caused great stress and affected their academic performances. Similarly, Ahmadi (2016) found that unmarried international students were better adjusted in personal–emotional aspects than married international students were. A probable explanation is that this occurred due to the greater financial and emotional responsibilities that married international students carried as compared to unmarried international students.

3.5.1.4 Country of origin

Country of origin appears to have a strong bearing on the ability of the international students to adjust. Many scholars hold the view that the greater the similarity in culture, the easier it is for adjustment to take place. For instance, research by Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet and Kommers, (2012) on international students in the Netherlands, found that dissimilarity in culture due to countries of origin resulted in lower levels of adjustment as compared to the higher level of adjustment noted in international students whose countries were more similar in culture to the Dutch.

Other researchers confirmed this country of origin concept. They discovered that students from collectivist cultures such as is prevalent in the countries of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, where group thinking is the norm, experience greater difficulty in adjusting to western universities where people are more individualistic. For instance, Asian international students exhibited higher levels of stress than European international students did when studying in a western nation (Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Meryl & Lu., 2011; Bodycott, Mak, & Ramburuth ., 2014; Wu et al., 2015.) Razeq and Coyner (2013) in their study of Saudi international students also recognised this difference in the adjustment abilities of some of their participants from collectivist cultures when compared to those from more individualistic cultures. It could be deduced that such students were unable to express their individual views confidently or comment on the materials they were learning if it appeared to be different from the established norm. These findings supported the earlier views of Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) who recognised that the greater the cultural difference is, the harder it is for a migrant to adjust to a new environment.

In contrast, another study illustrated that even when there are cultural similarities, as in the case of Chinese students studying in Japan, there were still challenges. Although the social skills of both countries bore strong similarities, Chinese students had a hard time relating to Japanese lecturers and peers (Zhang, 2009). The similarity in cultural and social skills, like deference and politeness towards people in authority such as lecturers, caused reluctance amongst Chinese students to share their concerns with their Japanese lecturers. They thus prolonged easily resolvable issues ultimately affecting their adjustment and academic performance (Zhang, 2009). Since the international students in this current research are from neighbouring African countries, with similar cultural backgrounds, the researcher will seek to discover if country of origin had an effect on their academic performance at XUC.

3.5.1.5 Language proficiency

Learning in a second language is an added challenge for many international students (Wu et al., 2015; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). It seems that language constitutes a major source of stability

or instability for international students. This is the situation faced by many students from Africa and the developing nations studying in foreign countries. As Wilson (2011) asserts, increased skill in the instructional language is a crucial factor in the adjustment of international students and causes improved academic performance. Other studies ascertained the link between academic performance and language fluency of international students. Young, Sercombe, Sachdev, Naeb and Schartner, (2013) for example, corroborate that aptitude in the language of instruction has a strong correlation to academic performance. Abdullah, Kongand Talib (2014) also agree that learning in a non-native tongue is a major issue for international students.

Further, Wu et al. (2015) discovered that even when international students are admitted to universities with a strong English proficiency, as indicated in their entrance examination results, they still face challenges with the actual use of the language in daily affairs and in the classroom. Findings by Montgomery (2017) supported this discovery by Wu et al. (2015). Evidently, limited language ability affects the way a student could effectively communicate in assignments, examinations and classroom activities. Since Ghana's official language is English, FS's may suffer academically due to their inability to participate in class actively. This study will seek also to determine this.

3.5.2 University adjustment issues and various variables

Turning now to the commonly noted adjustment issues, the study focuses on the individual dimensions of adjustment and various variables. A review of academic adjustment issues is first.

3.5.2.1 Academic adjustment issues

3.5.2.1.1 Intellectual demands

Eze and Inegbedion (2015) in their investigative study on factors influencing academic performance of international students' in UK universities, asserted that adjustment issues negatively affected the academic performance of most of their international student participants in their study. In that study, for instance, their participants had many concerns about teaching methods, previous educational training, ability to meet the demands of course work and the aptitude to pass. Increased intellectual demands of the university are a challenge for an incoming student. This is because, at the university level, students are expected to learn and comprehend more abstract terms and deal with a heavier workload than they did in secondary school. In addition, international students may need to work harder to meet the required academic demands, which may not only differ from what they are familiar with but may also be in another language.

3.5.2.1.2 Teaching styles

Lin and Scherz (2014) illustrate the issue of how different teaching styles affect international students. Their study was on the need for pedagogical considerations for Asian international students. According to the researchers, participants in their study complained of the use of only local examples when lecturers illustrated their points. They also felt that lecturers spoke too quickly and used unknown colloquialisms. In these instances, they felt their presence, as international students was disregarded. A possible explanation for this finding is that lecturers were not intentional to involve their audiences, as their examples were not meaningful to international students. Moreover, their pace of speech could be due to poor time management on the part of the lecturers that in turn caused them to rush through the material to cover the syllabus or their own familiarity with the material and genuine lack of sensitivity to the presence of non-native speakers.

3.5.2.1.3 Course requirements

Yet another academic adjustment issue is that of certain course requirements such as group work, active classroom participation and intellectual discourse. In their study of academic and socio-cultural challenges faced by international students enrolled in American universities, researchers (Irungu, 2013; Wu et al., 2015) discovered that students had difficulties in communicating with lecturers, staff and domestic students. For this reason, they were not able to adequately participate in group work. However, group work and active classroom participation, are sometimes major academic adjustments that international students needed to make quickly to avoid penalisations and ultimate poor academic performance. Apparently, group work was not always easy for some international students because their host colleagues due to their accents and pronunciations (Hyams-Ssekasi, Mushibwe, & Caldwell, 2014; Vyas & Yu, 2018) sometimes shunned them. These findings corroborated that of an earlier researcher, Terui (2012) who observed in an ethnographic study the difficulties international student participants faced in their attempt to interact with native English speakers. According to Terui (2012), the international students had to act as if they fully comprehended what the native speakers said to them when they often did not.

Also noted as an academic adjustment issue, was the expectation of active intellectual discourse. In many non-Western cultures, lecturers or the textbook authors are unquestionable authority figures thus the expectation that a student should paraphrase or critique their ideas is considered almost impossible and even disrespectful (Vyas & Yu, 2018). This was the experience of Chinese students from Mainland China while studying in Hong Kong in the investigative study carried out by Vyas and Yu (2018). When faced with these issues, of their inability to interact successfully within the academic environment, the academic motivation of affected students could plummet resulting in loss of academic points.

3.5.2.1.4 Programme of study

Lastly, in this category of adjustment issues is the correlation of academic motivation of students and satisfaction with their programmes of study. Literature indicated a considerably positive

relationship between programme of study and the adjustment of international students to university. One major challenge is the acquisition of discipline-related terminologies in the host language (Lin & Scherz, 2014.) This skill is crucial for the professional development of international students both during and after completion of their programmes of study (Andrade, 2017). Another issue is the choice of programme and adjustment levels. Ahmadi (2016), for example, discovered that international students enrolled in business programmes had higher adjustment levels than those enrolled in the sciences, engineering, health and human services. That study confirmed earlier research of Yan and Berliner (2011) as well as Rienties et al. (2012). They found that international students studying social science programmes experienced better adjustment levels than students enrolled in the natural sciences.

Furthermore, research that is more recent asserted that students enrolled in the sciences had described their programmes of study as boring, difficult and dull (Jaspersohn, 2017). These findings appear to be consistent with the findings of Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) who had noted that students studying social sciences or humanities perform better academically. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) had concluded that this was due to more regular faculty-student interactions by social science students. The matter of interactions will be explored further under the social adjustment section.

In summary, academic adjustment characterises how students participate in academic activities required to meet academic standards. It is apparent that academic adjustment seems to be individualised. Moreover, it relates specifically to each student's adjustment abilities to cope in any university environment. This sub-section has highlighted just how academic adjustment issues affects academic performances of international students. Evidently, adjusting to a new school environment is a challenge for many international students as is further discussed in the following section of social adjustment issues.

3.5.2.2 Social adjustment issues

Relationships within the campus are an important facet in academic performance. The quality of interaction a student has with faculty and fellow students and involvement in social activities give him/her a sense of belongingness. As Astin, (1993c) asserts the campus environment (whether welcoming, cold or indifferent) affects minority students. Though beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that some international students may have stronger cultural connections (tribally/ through language) which makes them more readily accepted/ adjusted compared to other local/ indigenous students from minority tribes. However, within the context of this study the term, “minority students” would refer to international students based on their population size rather than race. The students become reserved in their social and academic interactions if there is strong cultural homogeneousness of the general composition of the campus population that differs from theirs. Their reserved attitudes and reluctance to interact could affect their academic performances. Astin (1993c) thus posited that socialisation with fellow students of different ethnicities could enhance academic progress, particularly in their programme areas. Tinto (1993) asserted a similar view by positing that when students bridge a cultural gap, through group membership where values and beliefs akin to their cultural origin are held, they derive a sense of belonging and ultimately perform better academically. There is a positive correlation between the social adjustments of international students, friendships with domestic students, faculty and academic performance since many international students appear to experience low social adjustment levels in their time overseas. Lack of involvement in university social activities, weak interactions with domestic students and faculty, xenophobia and perceived discrimination are common social adjustment issues such as is described in this section.

3.5.2.2.1 Extra - curricular activities

An important area of social adjustment issues is involvement in university social activities. Studies have shown that beyond the classroom, interaction with fellow students through leisure, extra-curricular activities and socialisation through clubs and associations apparently has a positive effect on the academic performance of students. For instance, Mayo Donnelly and Schwartz

(1995) cited in Jean (2010, p. 21) established that successful social adjustment ultimately influences the ability of students to earn higher grade point averages. Similarly, Gómez et al. (2014) in their study showed that social networks, developed through sports and leisure, had positive correlation to the adjustment levels of international students.

3.5.2.2.2 *Student - student interactions*

Astin (1993b) stresses the strong effect of student-student interactions on almost every aspect of the lives of undergraduate students. Correctly, Astin (1993b) notes that the quantity of time spent interacting with fellow students has profound influence on almost every area of their academic lives. In addition to improved cognitive development, students also become more culturally aware and socially diverse. Irungu (2013) agrees with this view and argues that the ability to integrate with host students was crucial for several aspects of learning and carrying out assignments. Irungu (2013) further argues that strained or non-existent relationships with domestic students were in part responsible for poor performance. Though in some instances, international students in an attempt to preserve their cultural identities would not mix with host students (Lee & Opio, 2011), in more commonly reported instances where they wanted to, the lack of reciprocity from domestic students left them feeling unwanted, abandoned and lonely (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Lee & Opio, 2011; Irungu, 2013; Bofo-Arthur, 2014).

Later findings by Hsu and Huang (2017) support this idea that when international students have good interaction with host students, their willingness to participate verbally in class improves, even at the risk of correction openly by the lecturer; the overall outcome is better academic performance. However, neither Irungu (2013) nor Hsu and Huang (2017) could indicate the amount of interaction relevant to influence the academic lives of the student. Astin (1993c) on the other hand, noted that excessive interaction, in the form of volunteering in clubs and partying, could spell doom academically. This seems to suggest that the quality of the interactions amongst students is more important than quantity. These studies described above appear to corroborate Tinto's (1993) theory where he postulated that social adjustment, or the lack of it, could affect how students performed. Tinto (1993) had stated that the inability of a student to fit into the informal environment of the

institution could lead to withdrawal. One could deduce that, if international students are regarded as unwelcome guests, that host students grudgingly interact with, this perception could have considerable impact on the sense of belonging for international students. Ultimately, their social adjustment levels could be low.

3.5.2.2.3 Student-faculty interactions

Experiences with faculty also have some bearing on the perceived sense of belonging at the institution (Kinzie & Kuh, 2016) and the outcome of students' performances. This, therefore, is another issue of social adjustment where issues arise. Prominent student development theorists, Astin (1993b) and Tinto (1997), concur on the importance of good relations between students and faculty. Astin (1993b) asserts that interaction between students and faculty has a strong positive relationship to all aspects of student outcomes and particularly for academic performance. Astin's findings indicate that beyond attaining strong GPAs, good student-faculty interactions lead to degree completion, graduation with high honours and continuation to post-graduate studies. Similarly, Tinto (1997) stresses those deliberate efforts universities must make to ensure that academic and social problems are minimised for students through purposeful extracurricular activities and faculty-student interactions. The theories of these researchers are therefore relevant for assessing the effect of these interactive relationships on students' adjustment and performances.

In a study conducted by Glass, Kociolek, Wongtriratand Lynch (2015) on the impact of student-faculty interactions on international students' sense of belonging, they discovered that students responded positively or negatively to their academic environment when they sensed either positive or negative social and emotional signals emitting from faculty. These non-verbal cues transmitted a sense of belonging to the institution. These responses were particularly significant for international students during periods of transitions or difficulty. When faculty members expressed concern and interest in students' struggles, there was a remarkable positive effect on their academics (Glass et al., 2015). Even beyond the classroom, other forms of interaction with faculty face-to-face (Montgomery, 2017) or by email also had positive effects on the academic

performance of international students and their ability to overcome other challenges of attending university (Kim, Collins, Rennick & Edens, 2017). Thus, for the international student, classroom interactions extend beyond a learning event but provide social interaction with faculty that later plays out in their academic performance. Faculty-student interactions are apparently invaluable in the overall wellbeing of international students and apparently play an important role in their academic and social lives.

3.5.2.2.4 Xenophobic experiences

Xenophobia, the use of vernacular and discrimination appeared to be rampant and a major challenge for international students in some countries. According to a study conducted in an African university by Maundeni, Malinga, Kgwatalala and Kasule (2010), on the cultural adjustments of international students, the investigators found that a substantial number of international students complained of open xenophobic reactions by host nationals and frequent use of vernacular. Five years later Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) conducted a study on the challenges faced by international students in the higher education system of the nation of South Africa. Though they focused on how the economic and socio-political climate of the country affected these students, their study confirmed that discrimination was a predominant issue for African international students. This social issue affected their ability to adjust both to their campus and to society. In a similar vein, Gyasi-Gyamerah (2017) found that international students in Ghana reported strong feelings of discrimination from Ghanaian nationals both on and off-campus. Conversely, however, some students reported preferential treatment by faculty. Together, these studies highlight some social adjustment issues of xenophobia in African universities.

Yet another issue of social adjustment was the use of vernacular on campus. Three different studies conducted in Ghana, two at a public university and another at some private universities, indicated that though English was the main language of instruction, domestic students and faculty alike, often use vernacular languages in class, thus causing international students to miss vital

pieces of information (Akwensivie et al., 2013; Malete et al., 2015; Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2017). This reported use of vernacular in lectures and study sessions in some Ghanaian universities is consistent with the findings of Maundeni et al. (2010) in their study of international students' adjustments at another African university. These reports bear similarity to the reports of the earlier study by Lin and Schrez (2014) conducted in the USA that, lecturers were apparently sometimes insensitive to the presence of international students in their classrooms.

Racial/national stereotyping and perceived discrimination are further social adjustment issues some international students experience (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Gyasi- Gyamerah, 2017; Vyas & Yu, 2018). For instance, the physical resemblances to domestic students of the same race/nationality place some international students in unfamiliar contexts. They are incorrectly branded, in such instances, and expected to behave as domestic students of the same race/nationality (Lee, 2015; Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2017). In other words, they are stereotyped. When stereotyped in this manner, international students often felt compelled to live up to the expectations (Lee, 2015) or compelled to disprove the myths (Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2017). Consequently, such students may not become fully involved in campus activities to experience high levels of social adjustment. Moreover, the pressure of these experiences has converse emotional effects on some international students (Quaye, Griffin & Museus, 2015). These personal – emotional issues are discussed in section 3.5.2.3.

3.5.2.2.5 Length of stay in the host country

Renowned cross-cultural experts like Adler (1975), Ward, Okura, Kennedy and Kojima (1998) as well as Ward and Rana-Dueba (1999) hold congruent views that the length of stay in the host country is a determinant factor in the successful adjustment of sojourners, a term used to describe short-term residents, and an apt description of international students. This factor means that the longer they stay in and embrace their new cultural and educational environment, the better for the international students. Xueqin and Newton (2011) posits that if however, they fail to embrace the new culture, international students will remain unchanged despite the length of time spent in the

host country - a finding corroborated by Hurny (2014). Thus, when international students and host students are provided with many common experiences together, at the end of their time in university a high adjustment level (of the international students) should be more evident. The literature available, however failed to indicate how the length of stay in a host country was beneficial to academic performance of international students. This study investigates that issue.

3.5.2.3 Personal - emotional adjustment issues

Other than social and academic adjustment issues, researchers (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2011; Harvey, Robinson, & Welch, 2017) found that students were greatly challenged personally and emotionally due to cultural changes, prolonged absences from friends, family and familiar surroundings. Psychologically, personal-emotional adjustment manifests in feelings of loneliness, homesickness, and depression (Andrade, 2006; Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2017; Bek, 2017). Psychosomatically, health issues have also been seen to develop in some international students because of various personal – emotional adjustment difficulties (Akinola, 2014). Since these feelings may eventually affect their ability to concentrate on their schoolwork, it is important to highlight a few of them such as loneliness, homesickness, depression and illnesses.

3.5.2.3.1 Loneliness

Bek, (2017) in a study of international students in Turkey, emphasised the need for students to recognise the feelings of loneliness and depression that may haunt them and affect their ability to cope with academic issues in their new environment. Bek (2017) found that class participation and regular attendance were valuable resources for international students in coping with these emotions. This finding reiterates what Astin (1993b) and Tinto (1997) had asserted about the importance of positive interaction with faculty and fellow students. Overall, there appears to be evidence that this type of interaction aids in the adjustment process. In another study, Harvey et al. (2017) conducted a study on the experiences of nursing students who leave their families behind for several years as they embark on studies overseas. They found that because these

students experienced great distress, homesickness and loneliness it affected their ability to perform well in their studies. These findings were also congruent with the findings of Andrade (2006) and Gyasi-Gyamrah (2017).

3.5.2.3.2 Depression

In another analysis of psychological issues affecting international students, Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer, (2011) identified depression as a personal-emotional issue that can have severe consequences with extreme cases leading to suicide ideation. Though also caused by other factors, Rosenthal, Russell and Thomas (2008) noted that international students often develop high scores for depression particularly when their academic performances are low.

3.5.2.3.3 Illnesses

Lastly, in terms of personal-emotional issues, some students experience increased stress levels, which may lead to high blood pressure and other illnesses. They also face exposure to public health diseases such as Yellow fever, Malaria, Dengue fever (Akinola, 2014) and intermittent outbreaks of Ebola in certain parts of Africa (ICEF, 2014). Thus, one can deduce that though some illnesses may be psychosomatic, others are not but their prevalence in the region where the students are studying could be stressful.

In summary, ability or inability to adjust academically, socially, personal-emotionally has an impact on international students' main objective - degree attainment - for enrolling in a university overseas. A highly adjusted undergraduate international student is one who earns good grades and passes all courses. Such a student usually fits into the campus environment and has little or no psychosomatic symptoms. He/she ultimately graduates from the institution. However, unresolved adjustment issues may cause students to withdraw voluntarily (Tinto, 1993; Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010) or else be withdrawn involuntarily from university due to unsatisfactory academic performance, as is the policy of the university college under review (XUC, 2010). While students

with low levels of adjustment may also graduate, they may do so with poor grades and a low GPA. These studies have provided important insights into the issues that confront international students as they navigate their academic lives and thus raises the question of how they cope. Despite these commonly reported adjustment issues, it appears that the longer an international student remains at a particular university and progresses through the academic levels the lesser discomfort he/she feels with the environment. With time, the student gains greater confidence and the report of student life experiences tend to improve (Sanbert, 2014). This is possible because they develop strategies to cope. The next section of this chapter provides important insights into the coping strategies of international students.

3.6 COPING STRATEGIES

Cognitively embracing new experiences is an important aspect of coping (Pennebaker, Colder & Sharp, 1990). However, unmet expectations, perceived threats and challenges, could produce considerable amounts of stress in their student experience and affect their academic lives (Yao, 2016). Stress does not stop after the early years of university but continues and may increase as difficulty in subject matter increases, relationships change, and other experiences occur (Monteiro, Balogun, Oratile, 2014). Many students, nonetheless, can overcome these challenges and complete their education (Gebhard, 2012). This section explores what coping strategies have been effective for international students. It looks at first coping strategies for overall university adjustment and then in terms of biographical characteristics. Research on the coping strategies of international university students in relations to adjustment and academic performance in Ghana was minimal hence the following references were mainly from other nations.

3.6.1 Coping strategies in overall university adjustment issues

In an investigation conducted at a Malaysian public university, the researchers (Abdullah, Elias, Uli, & Mahyuddin, 2010) discovered that there was a significant, positive relationship between

all dimensions of university adjustment and coping strategies of first-year students. This relationship was, related in turn, to their academic achievements. Though that study did not concentrate specifically on international students, emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies appeared to be beneficial for the participants.

Though in many instances (as in the study just mentioned) both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping appeared to be utilised, there were times that one was preferred to the other. For example, a study of 400 students (international and domestic) in five different academic levels, at University of Education, Winneba, (a public university in Ghana) it was found that many students used the problem-solving strategy of accepting responsibility. In other words, they identified the stressor and tried to find ways to resolve it. However, they used more of the emotion-focused strategies such as mental disengagement, acceptance, denial and lastly, social support. These coping strategies suggest that students tried to see the good in their stressful situations (Esia - Donkoh, Yelkperi & Esia - Donkoh, 2011). This appears to support the idea that when individuals appraise situations as unchangeable, more emotion-focused coping strategies are engaged (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985). Another study conducted in Hong Kong by Lo (2017) on international first-year students found the preferred strategic choice by all students was positive (problem-focused) coping. This suggests that they encountered adjustment situations that they appraised as changeable and worked on amending them.

3.6.2 Coping strategies and biographical characteristics

Many researchers (Tamres, Janicki, & Hellgeson, 2002; Al-Sowygh, 2013; Sapranaviciutė, Perminas, & Kavaliauskaite, 2013) found that the type of coping strategy employed by students differed depending on background characteristics such as gender, age, country of origin, marital status and language. Their findings further support Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) extensively established findings that coping is affected by individual appraisals of an event and availability of resources to handle it. For that reason, perhaps an individual's physiological

makeup and other personal characteristics would influence the coping process. The following studies hone in on these specific background characteristics:

3.6.2.1 Gender

Some studies on coping strategies found that gender played a role in the management of stress and coping. For instance, Sapranaviciutie et al. (2013) saw there was a clear difference in how male versus female students coped. The females used emotion-focused strategies (like venting) more than the males. The female students also comparatively sought out social support more than their male colleagues did. Perhaps this strategy could be attributed to the tendency for women to be more emotional and verbally expressive. This finding, however, varied from that of Al-Sowygh (2013) in a study of international students of dentistry where the main coping strategies were problem-focused coping, planning, religion and acceptance. In that study venting and denial were some of the least used strategy.

However, Al-Sowygh (2013) also discovered that there were significant disparities between the genders. Females were more active in seeking out emotional support than males. Again, the psychological makeup of women may be partly responsible for this gender disparity in coping as may have been the case with findings from Sapranaviciuite et al., (2013). These findings were partly congruent with previous studies of Tamres et al., (2002) that found that although the disparities were small, men used more avoidant coping behaviours in certain stressful situations (relationships in particular) than women.

Some researchers (Gustems-Carnicer & Calderon, 2013) have noted the avoidant coping strategy to be a predictor of more psychological distress. They also found, women were more verbally expressive than men were and sought out more social - support. Perhaps, this explains why other researchers like Mesidor and Sly, (2016) also Razek and Coyner, (2013) found differences in gender to be a predictor of personal – emotional adjustment (cf. par.

3.5.1.1). These findings appear to suggest, also, that due to their coping strategies, women have better social adjustment levels than men, as was earlier noted in the study by Lo (2017).

3.6.2.2 Age

Age appears also to influence how students cope in university. A study conducted by Cabras and Mondas, (2018) to investigate the influence of gender and age on university adjustment indicated that mature students were better at managing their stress level than younger students. The study revealed that older students used more problem-focused coping strategies than their younger counterparts who used more avoidance and distraction strategies to cope. This may explain why Ugwu and Adamuti (2017) and Risquez et al. (2007) found mature students able to have better adjustment levels than the conventionally aged students (cf. par. 3.5.1.2).

3.6.2.3 Country of origin

According to Razek and Coyner (2013), differences in values and belief systems based on a student's country of origin was another source of stress. They opined that many non-Western countries were collectivists and thus international students, when confronted with the need to be more individualistic, feel stressed. Some investigations, therefore, explored the role that country of origin played in the coping strategy international students utilised.

A seminal study undertaken by Chataway and Berry (1989), found that students from very dissimilar cultures to the host culture used less problem-focused coping strategies than those from countries with greater similarity. While the former group engaged in thinking that is more negative, the latter engaged in thinking that is more positive as well as active information-seeking to cope.

Other studies have shown the difference in coping style displayed by specific countries. In Ghana, for instance, (Adom, Essel & Chukwuere., 2019) indicated that in addition to planning and time management, students used prayer and spiritual exercises as a means of coping. This discovery is similar to what other researchers found in their study of students from Asian and Middle-Eastern countries as was noted in Al-Sowygh's (2013) findings as well as findings by Razek and Coyner, (2013) where students used prayer and religious activities to cope.

3.6.2.4 Marital status

According to Wa-Mbaleka, Pena de Vargas, Varani Lisal, Paul and Lipen (2015), the marital status of international students affects their coping abilities. Apparently, married students studying abroad without their families as well as those with their families, experience similar stressful situations as their unmarried peers. However, those with their families' present can rely on their spouses for emotional and social support, but also have the added issues of helping their families to adjust and cope. These findings appear to support Ahmadi's (2016) assertion that single students exhibited higher levels of personal-emotional adjustment. These findings therefore imply that unmarried international students use better coping strategies than unmarried students do.

3.6.2.5 Language proficiency

Language is such an important aspect of daily life that it is very likely to be a potential stressor. Thus, students' inability or reluctance to participate in a class or group work (cf. par. 3.5.2.1.3) could raise the anxiety levels of international students. For instance, Gyasi-Gyamerah, (2017) found that FS's enrolled in a public university in Ghana had a harder time than AS's as they struggled with both poor English proficiency and vernacular language. They reportedly coped by isolating themselves and spending more time with co-nationals. This appears to be a very common coping strategy with international students dealing with the anxiety of language proficiency skills (Yao, 2016).

These findings from the various empirical studies seem to suggest that coping strategies are somewhat individualised as posited by Lazarus and Folkman, (1984). It further implies that for coping to be effective, a combination of strategies may be appropriate under different circumstances. For instance, an international student experiencing homesickness or loneliness may use both problem-focused strategies (like seeking out fellow nationals or calling home), and emotion-focused strategies (like venting). In general, therefore, it seems that what Lazarus (1993) asserted, that coping is multifaceted and individuals employ most of the strategies for a wide range of stressful situations, is supported by these various studies on coping strategies. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of one strategy over another is maybe debatable since the long-term result may be the best determiner. Thus Newness' (2011) advancement that several coping strategies should be considered by stress managers to guarantee that an individual can effectively handle stressful academic events may be buttressed.

In summary, it can be concluded that the transition into a university overseas comes with many challenges which various studies have shown ultimately can affect the academic performance of the student as well as he/her personal-emotional well-being. With the change in academic, social and personal-emotional matters, the student may experience feelings of inadequacy and experience stress levels which, if poorly coped with, could manifest as negative psychological and physiological outcomes and lead to poor academic performances. Biographical characteristics influence how individuals handle various situations, but it is important that all university students utilise effective coping strategies to minimise the negative effects of stress as the reviewed studies have shown.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the context of international undergraduate students in Ghana. It has also explored the concept and dimensions of university adjustment, each with its attendant indicators and issues. By the different empirical studies highlighted, the researcher established that

international students face numerous issues as they try to adjust to university life in another country. The evidence of these difficulties may play out in their final academic performances. Nevertheless, many international students surmount them by applying various coping strategies. The next chapter will look at the methodology used for conducting the study. It provides an overview of research methods and the rationale for using them for this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the contextual and conceptual background of the study through discussion of several empirical studies on adjustment and coping strategies of international undergraduate students. This chapter, on the other hand, provides a detailed description of the research methodology used for the study. This research study is predominantly quantitative, with a minor qualitative component. It uses the explanatory sequential design of the mixed methods approach. The chapter opens with a brief rationale for the empirical research then proceeds to establish the significance of the study. It continues with a detailed description of the research design, research methodology, discusses the population and sampling and concludes with description of the data collection instruments. Validity, reliability, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this study are also discussed. As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the researcher incorporates diagrams to assist the reader in following the steps.

4.2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Empirical research is research involving observable and measurable phenomenon (Pennsylvania State University Library, 2017). The researcher collects and interprets systematically with a clear purpose of obtaining answers to questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The ultimate goal of empirical research is that the study should influence policy and practice. This empirical study is significant to the selected private university college under

review since its findings may influence policies and practices surrounding the care and management of international undergraduate students.

Consequently, the researcher is investigating what adjustment issues may account for the poor academic performances of international students. Currently, there is seemingly, no empirical research to explain the academic performances of international students enrolled at XUC. Knowledge of the relationship between adjustment and academic performance of international undergraduate students will help XUC management to formulate strategies to assist them. The study sampling is, however, limited to enrolled students of the 2017/2018 academic year.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE STUDY

Creswell and Creswell, (2018) define research design as the type of investigation carried out through a specific research approach (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods) to present clear direction for the research procedures in a particular study. For this study, the survey design was used for the quantitative aspect of the explanatory sequential design of a mixed-methods approach. Then for the qualitative aspect, the researcher used focus group discussions with students and semi-structured interviews with staff.

Survey design, according to Joy (2014), is concerned with the conditions or relationships that exist including the description, recording, analysis, and interpretation of the present nature, composition or processes of phenomena. The design largely focuses on the prevailing conditions. In this case, the researcher was interested in finding out how the international students were faring at XUC. The main advantages of survey design are its ability to accommodate large sample sizes, generalisability of results, ease of administering and recording questions and answers, increased capabilities of using advanced statistical analysis and abilities to tap into latent factors and relationship (Tannor, 2014; Nunoo, 2015).

Surveys designs are not free from shortcomings. As pointed out by Seifert and Hoffnung (2000), it is sometimes difficult to ensure the clarity of the questions to be answered, unless the questions are clearly worded. This shortcoming was addressed using the results of the piloting of the survey instruments. Another shortcoming pointed out by Seifert and Hoffnung (2000), and Moy and Murphy (2016) is that, unless the participants are people who can articulate their thoughts well and sometimes even put such thoughts in writing, researchers cannot rely on it. The use of questionnaires to collect quantitative data exclusively from international students who could read and write in English helped in addressing this shortcoming.

In spite of the few problems inherent in the use of the survey design, it was the most appropriate choice for this study since the objective of the study is to collect original data to describe a population too large for direct observation. Another reason was its potential to provide a lot of information from a sample of individuals within a short period (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although the researcher collected the information within two weeks, most of the collection took place during a one-time session.

4.3.1 Research paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that the most important foundation of research is the researcher's paradigm. They define the research paradigm as the fundamental principle or worldview for conducting a research study methodologically, ontologically and epistemologically. Though the term, "worldview" is used by some of the principal voices in the field, such as Creswell and Plano Clarke (2007), as well as Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), the preferred term for this study will be "paradigm". Despite the different terminology used (worldview or paradigm), all researchers agree that a researcher must identify his /her epistemological position. In other words, a researcher must commit to "ontological and epistemological positions" Scotland (2012). After reviewing the various paradigms, this

researcher agrees that the selection of a paradigm is indeed a crucial stance one must understand and adopt at the onset of a research project.

In research, the fundamental philosophical assumptions are ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology (Neuman, 2003; Saunders et al., 2009). Ontology is the researcher's perspective on the nature of reality or being (Saunders et al., 2009). Epistemology, on the other hand, is the view held by the researcher on what kinds of knowledge are acceptable. Then, axiology involves the researcher's idea of the role that values play in research (Saunders et al., 2009). Finally, the methodology involves the techniques used by the researcher to acquire knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 2000).

The paradigmatic position of a researcher impacts his/her approach, strategy and methods even though they remain concealed within the study (Saunders et al., 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Revealing these positions, however, will give the readers an insight into the rationale for the researcher's methodological approach. This researcher thus provides an overview of the main paradigmatic positions then provides a systematic revelation of this researcher's position. The main paradigmatic stances are Positivism, Post-positivism, Constructivism Advocacy/Participatory and Pragmatism. Table 4.1 below highlights these stances and a brief discussion takes place after that:

Table 4. 1: Characteristics of paradigms (Creswell, 2014, p. 9)

Paradigm	Characteristics
Positivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Predictive <input type="checkbox"/> Deductive <input type="checkbox"/> Highly structured
Post-positivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Determinism <input type="checkbox"/> Reductionism <input type="checkbox"/> Empirical observation and measurement <input type="checkbox"/> Theory verification
Constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple participant meanings <input type="checkbox"/> Social and historical construction <input type="checkbox"/> Theory generation
Advocacy/Participatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Political <input type="checkbox"/> Empowerment issue-oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative <input type="checkbox"/> Change-oriented
Pragmatism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consequence of action <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Pluralistic <input type="checkbox"/> Real-world practice-oriented

Positivists aim at predicting outcomes. They are deductive and are highly structured. Creswell (2014) asserts that Post-positivists see causes as the determinants of outcomes. Thus, the problems considered by Post-positivists are issues, which have to discover and measure cause and effects. Hence, they usually ascribe to experiments.

Post-positivists, as Creswell further notes, are reductionists. This means that they reduce information into minute, distinctive, testable ideas such as the variables that make up research questions and hypotheses. The resultant knowledge is, therefore founded on careful observations and measurements. It is typically used in quantitative studies. However, since the context of this current study goes beyond mere objective questions and extends to the complexities of real life, this paradigm was inadequate alone to resolve the situation.

On the other hand, Constructivists assume that people are looking for ways to make sense of their world. As such, people create the meanings of their experiences, which focus on particular objects or things (Creswell, 2014). As Guba and Lincoln (2000) posit, the constructivist researchers construct outcomes through their interaction with their study participants. Unsurprisingly, therefore, qualitative researchers ascribe to constructivism. They inductively and holistically construct social and historical meanings from multiple participants in natural settings. As with the paradigm before, this particular paradigm is inadequate to address this study because there are some variables that must be measured objectively.

Advocates are researchers who ascribe to the advocacy and participatory paradigm. Research from this paradigmatic stance focuses on solving problems that affect marginalised peoples. Unsurprisingly, it often has a political and action-based agenda and addresses issues of oppression and suppression. Consequently, there is a strong collaboration with the participants to liberate them and offer an improved lifestyle for them (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011).

Finally, there is the Pragmatic paradigm. The Pragmatic researcher is not restricted to a particular philosophical system or reality but can adopt both quantitative and qualitative assumptions in his/her research study. Freedom of choice thus plays a big role in this paradigm. In pragmatism, the world is not an absolute unit (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders, 2009). Thus, data collection and analysis may occur both qualitatively and quantitatively. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), the focus is on solving the research problem and not just the approach or the underlying philosophical assumptions of a particular methodology. All available approaches are used to obtain the answer to the problem, thus making pragmatism a pluralistic paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Not all researchers agree that pragmatism is the best philosophical footing for mixed methods research. Even some of the more conservative researchers like Biesta (2010) concedes that pragmatism enables mixed methods researchers to clarify the inferences and justifications of the mixed methods approach, and ultimately, the explanatory-sequential design which is the choice for this study.

This research is thus, in line with one of the stated characteristics of pragmatism, which is a consequence of action taken. Furthermore, this researcher's personal experiences, as mentioned in the motivation section of Chapter One, exposed her to the adjustment challenges international students face. This exposure, in turn, helped to shape her paradigmatic stance. Thus, both single and multiple realities are reflected in this research since the knowledge base of the researcher and the participants are honed.

The pragmatic stance allowed this researcher to alternate between induction and deduction at various times. Deductively, this researcher used questionnaires in obtaining quantitative data to determine the effect of the adjustment on the academic performance of international students in XUC. Inductively, this researcher used qualitative strategy of conducting focus groups and semi-structured interviews to understand further the adjustment strategies of international students in the university. Thus, through the quantitative phase, objective measurements were obtained from the questionnaires while during the qualitative phase measurements that are more subjective were obtained from the interviews and focus group

discussions. The mixed-methods approach has both quantitative and qualitative philosophical assumptions. Having already defined each of these terms, the underlying philosophical assumptions for each phase are now explained separately since they are inevitably reflected in the overarching pragmatic philosophical stance. Consequently, these researchers' pragmatic stance become clearer.

An ontology consists of both objective (objectivism) and subjective (subjectivism) aspects. Objectivism is the belief that social entities and social actors exist independently of each other. Subjectivism, on the other hand, is the belief that it is the perceptions and outcomes of those perceptions that create a particular social phenomenon (Saunders, 2009). Quantitative studies are ontologically objective while qualitative studies are ontologically subjective.

In this mixed-methods study, ontological objectivism was displayed in the quantitative phase. This researcher was external to the research problem as she used questionnaires to measure objectively the social entity of international student adjustment phenomenon and its effect on their academic performance. The university college in this study, like all educational institutions has its policies and procedures that all students must adhere to succeed academically. Thus, the researcher assumed that the standardised questionnaire accurately measured the adjustment phenomenon. Using the questionnaire helped to negate potential biases and created some detachment between her and the participants as suggested by Saunders et al., (2012).

The second phase of the research displayed Interpretivism. The participants had various views about the adjustment phenomenon. Thus this researcher used the qualitative methods by conducting focus groups with some of the international students as well as semi-structured interviews with some administrators and some faculty members who have regular contact with international students in the university. In that phase, it was important for this researcher to have a rapport with the participants. As a staff member, there was already an established relationship with some of the students. Thus, this researcher was able to obtain subjective

inputs to support the objectively analysed results from the first phase. As aptly surmised by Crotty (1998), social interaction with a human community generates the data gathered on the field. The researcher thematically sorted, categorised and compared the data based on the reviewed literature. Thus, as a pragmatic, this researcher was external to the phenomenon and elicited multiple views ontologically. The focus was on getting the research question answered, and so the use of the different epistemological positions was employed when needed.

The epistemological position of the researcher revealed what she considered as acceptable knowledge in this field. For the quantitative phase, this researcher took the positivist philosophy while for the qualitative phase she took the interpretivism philosophy. Since the emphasis was more on the quantitative phase of the study, the epistemological emphasis strongly reflected positivism. The knowledge was thus revealed objectively since (as stated earlier) the positivist epistemological researcher is ontologically objective. Hence, the overarching pragmatic position that pulls from the required philosophies needed to solve the research problem was very important in this regard.

Axiologically, it was important for this researcher to try to be as objective as possible since her own international experiences and her administrative position could sway her opinions. However, the voices of the participants needed to be heard as well; hence, she relied on the questionnaires for this objectivity. Consequently, the pragmatic stance remained intact, since the pragmatic researcher adopts both objective and subjective positions.

4.3.1.1 Research approach, design and method

Briefly put the paradigm, the design, and the method all play a role in the research approach, which could be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed. These major research terms used in the methodology chapter range from the general (i.e. the research problem) to the specific details of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research approach is the overall plan for, the actions taken, in the study. It consists of a series of

decisions taken by the researcher. It involves the paradigms, the research design and the research methods. On the other hand, Creswell (2014) defines a research design as the procedures of inquiry within a specific approach. Lastly, research methods entail the type of data collection, analysis and interpretation that researchers put forward for their projects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Figure 4.1 illustrates the interaction of these paradigms, designs and methods.

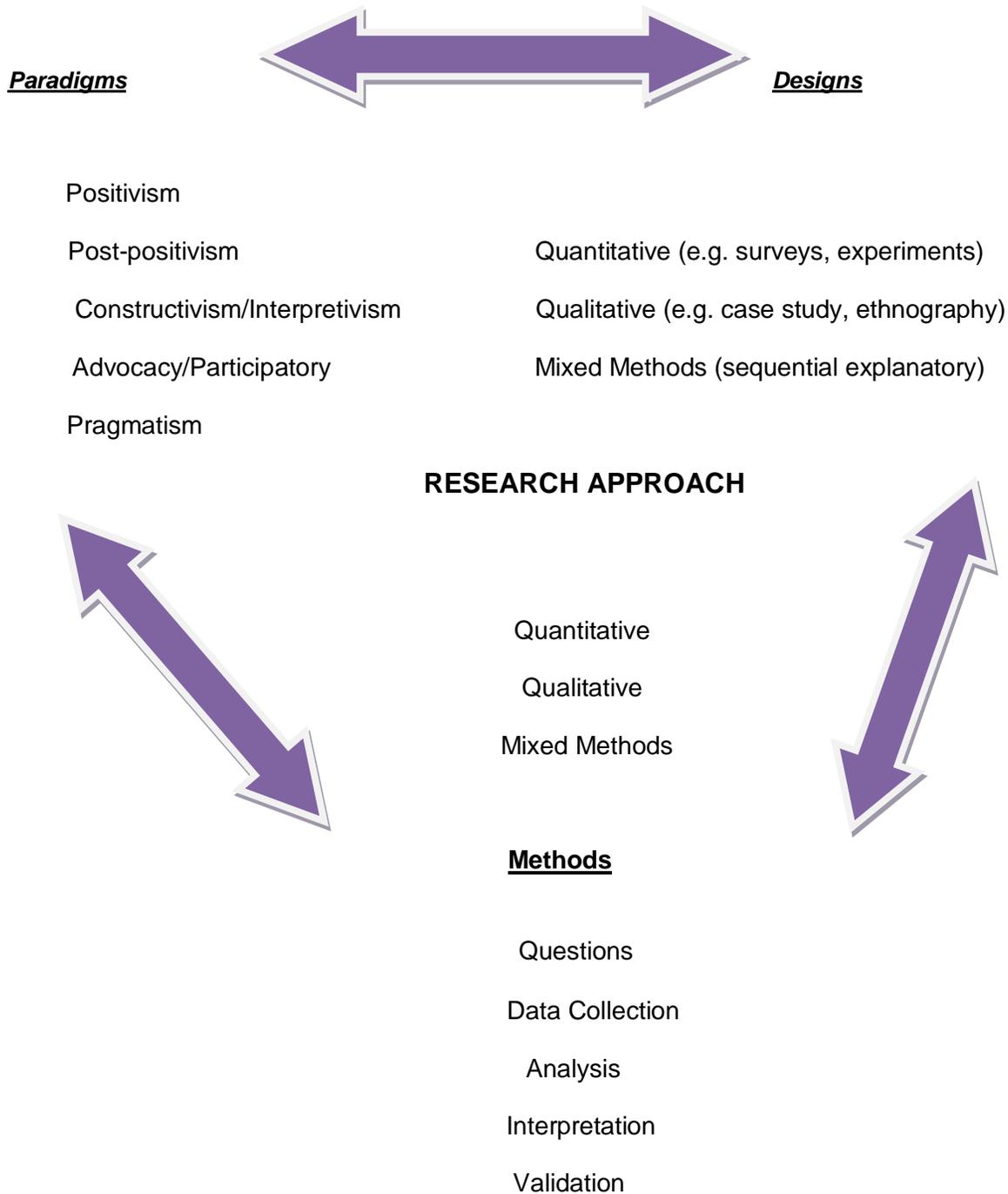


Figure 4. 1: Interplay of Paradigms, designs and methods (Adapted from Creswell, 2014, p. 35)

In applying Figure 4.1, as indicated above, the pragmatic paradigm was adopted for the study, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey design used was the

adoption of quantitative approach using questionnaires. The qualitative approach was used through the focus group with Levels 100 (first year) and 400 (final year) international students and semi-structured interviews with staff. The outcome of the questionnaire analysis was validated using that of the focus group and interview responses, with the principle of the explanatory sequential design of the mixed-method approach.

4.3.1.2 Definition of mixed methods approach

Creswell (2014) defines mixed methods as a research approach requiring the collection and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach uses separate designs that may incorporate philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The overarching assumption here for this research is that by mixing the two approaches, a mixed-methods enquiry yields more comprehensive findings of a research problem than a single approach could.

4.3.1.3 Components of mixed methods approach

Major components of the mixed methods approach and their application to this study are as follows:

- Data collection was in quantitative and qualitative formats; hence, it is both open and close-ended data. For this study, the close-ended data was gathered using a questionnaire, while open-ended data was gathered using a focus group and interviews.
- Both the qualitative and quantitative data were analysed separately in the study in two distinct phases. In both quantitative and qualitative phases, the collection and analysis

procedures were rigorously conducted. During data analysis, the data from both the qualitative and quantitative aspects were mixed by embedding, merging or connecting the data.

- Depending on the mixed methods design used, the timing for the collection of data and the emphasis on each set of data determines how the mixing happens. Due to the design utilised for this study, the quantitative data collection took place first and was the primary phase as there was more emphasis placed on it than the secondary qualitative data.

The philosophical stance of the researcher also informed the procedures of data collection and analysis. For this study, this researcher took the pragmatic stance and collected and analysed the data accordingly (Creswell, 2014)

4.3.1.4 Rationale for mixed methods approach

The mixed-method approach was used for this study since it simultaneously maximised the strength of the qualitative and quantitative approaches while minimising their weaknesses (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2007). Additionally, it offered a valuable strategy for the researcher to gain better and more comprehensive appreciation of the research problem. This appreciation of the research problem happened when the data was compared and different perspectives were seen. Furthermore, the qualitative results offered explanation to the quantitative results when the voices of the participants were heard (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the theories described in Chapter Two provide strong support for the quantitative aspect of this mixed methods research.

The qualitative research aspect of this study (Creswell, 2014) catered for some disadvantages associated with quantitative approaches like insensitivity to emotions, feelings, insights, motives, intents, views and opinions of the subjects studied. With the qualitative approach, participants had the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than coercion to choose from fixed

responses as the quantitative method demanded. In addition, with a quantitative approach, researcher bias and a limitation of the qualitative approach were eliminated. Ultimately, a mixed-methods approach offers decision-makers an empirical basis for establishing or modifying existing policies as the need for interventions become evident. This is so because the generalisability of the study increases by mixed methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Through this research, there are suggestions for amending existing educational policies at XUC.

4.3.1.5 Types of mixed methods designs

According to Creswell and Plano Clarke (2018), various industries have their own terminologies for mixed methods designs many of which overlap. Some of the different terms used for this approach include the following: integrating, synthesis, quantitative and qualitative methods, multi-method, and mixed methodology. This study, however, used the more contemporary and common terminology, mixed methods.

Different designs associated with the use of the mixed-method research approach include the following:

- The convergent parallel design
- The explanatory sequential design
- The exploratory sequential design
- The embedded design
- The transformative design
- Multiple designs

The first three designs are the basic designs of mixed methods while the last three are considered as more advanced. After considering all the design options available this researcher selected the explanatory sequential mixed methods. Therefore, no further discussion occurs for the other designs. The following section provides further details on the selected design:

Explanatory sequential design

This two-phased approach to mixed methods is designed for projects where the qualitative approach is not as strong as the quantitative. This approach was adopted for this study because it appears, from the literature, that most studies using the SACQ, even as modified versions, were purely quantitative studies. For example, Kaljahi (2016) carried out a quantitative study on the effects of academic adjustment, social adjustment and personal-emotional adjustment of students on their academic performance in universities of Northern Cyprus. Also, Rienties and Tempelaar (2013) explored the role of cultural dimensions of international and Dutch students on academic and social integration and academic performance in the Netherlands.

A few examples of modified versions of the SACQ include the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) for use with Spanish students; the Chinese Cultural Adjustment Survey (CCAS) and the International SACQ (ISACQ) instrument which this study utilised. The SACQ for use with Spanish students was developed by Soledad, Vacas, Counago and Fernandez, (2012). They investigated whether the modified instrument would yield the same psychometric results on 300 first-year Spanish students. Also, Hurny (2014) modified the SACQ by combining sections of it with selected sections of three other assessment tools to develop the CCAS. The CCAS was used for measuring the cultural adjustment of international students from China. Lastly, Gómez et al., (2014) investigated the correlation between leisure activities and international student adjustment. They developed the ISACQ instrument, which this study utilised. This researcher has further modified the ISACQ by including a biographical section to suit the context of this research in Ghana. The explanation is found in the upcoming section (See Appendix H).

This researcher wanted to hear a few of the voices of the participants and thus incorporated a minor qualitative section into the research, as was done by Morse (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Moreover, there have been recommendations to potential researchers that, speaking to the participants to get their interpretation of the questions could prove useful

and overcome the limitation of the SACQ which is a self-report instrument (Carter, Locks, Winkle-Wagner, 2014), and in this instance, the modified version, the ISACQ. The explanatory sequential design option of the mixed methods approach allows for this type of research even though the quantitative portion is of greater weight than the qualitative portion in this design (Creswell, 2014).

The questionnaire also contained a section for measuring coping strategies. It was an adaptation of the WCQ developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1985). The researcher modified it for measuring the coping strategies of the students' adjustment challenges. The original WCQ contained eight coping factors. However, relating the items to the transactional stress and coping theory, six items out of the eight were relevant for this study while an additional item (Relaxation) was introduced considering constructs of the theory.

The main aim of this design (explanatory sequential) is to discover causes, factors or correlations and, consequently, engender useful and influential knowledge to change the course of events (Biesta, 2010). The researcher wanted to discover the cause of the poor examination results of the international students and propose policies and strategies to the university management to help rectify the situation.

Finally, Creswell (2014) describes the explanatory sequential design as a major design, within the mixed methods approach, used for educational research. This makes it very appropriate for this study. The quantitative data collected from the international students is substantiated by the qualitative data collected from a few students within the sample and a few staff members of the university college. The figure below illustrates the design used in the study.

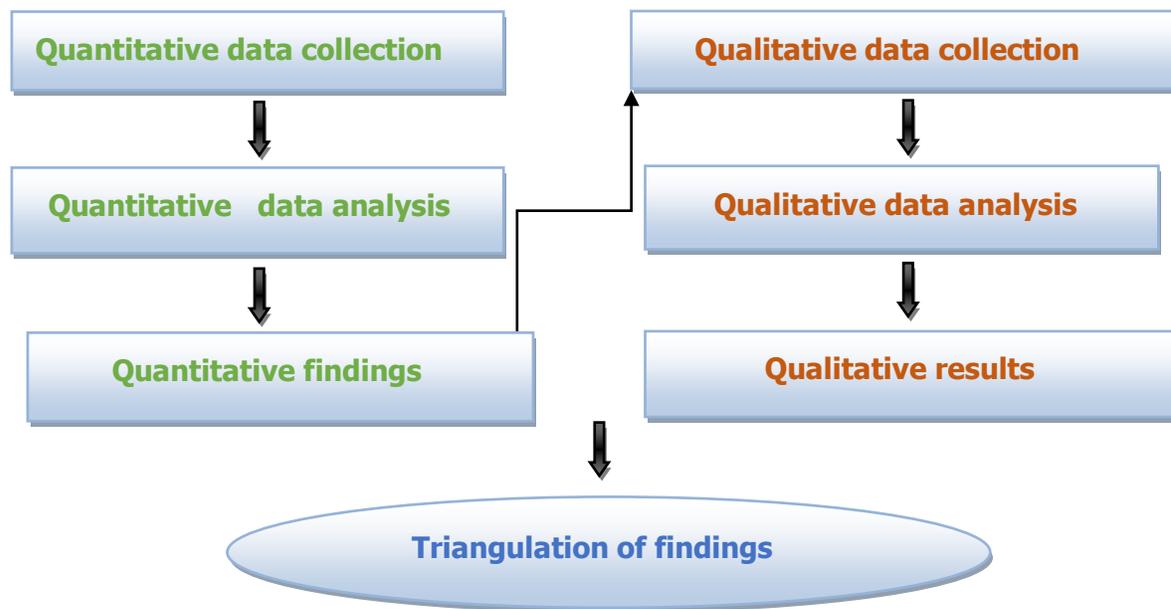


Figure 4. 2: The Explanatory Sequential Design (adapted from Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006, pp. 12-28)

Creswell (2014) states that after the collection and analyses of the quantitative data, the results are used to explore the subject qualitatively. For this study, the quantitative results aided in the selection of the qualitative sample and guided in the selection of the questions for the qualitative phase. The researcher first conducted a survey with the international students and then followed up by focus group discussions with some of the same participants. Also, semi-structured interviews were held with some administrators (University Counsellor and Chaplain and one of the IRO staff) and faculty (those with the most international students in their classes), to explore the outlier cases. The ensuing discussion, following the general presentation of the results, sought to specify how the qualitative further expands on the quantitative. This further explanation is regarded as the main strength of this design.

The weakness of this approach, Creswell (2014) admits, could sometimes be in establishing strong validity. If the researcher overlooks some options for following up in the qualitative phase,

then compromised, validity occurs. Additionally, if a different sample is used in the second phase, the results become invalid. For this study the same sample was used thus the validity was not compromised. The last challenge of establishing validity is the sample size. If it is inadequate in either phase there may be a problem with validity. For this study the sample size was considered adequate. Despite this inherent weakness of validity, the explanatory sequential mixed methods design is good for explaining relationships and/or unanticipated results. Further details on how it was incorporated in the study are given later in this chapter and the following chapter.

4.3.2 Research strategy

The research strategy adopted for this study is based on a single selected private university college in Ghana. The design (explanatory sequential) focuses on undergraduate international students enrolled in two faculties only. The interaction of the variables is the major attribute of the explanatory sequential design.

4.4 RESEARCH METHOD

The method for undertaking empirical research is vital to the study. The following section presents the methodology that the researcher engaged in for this research. It provides details of the population and sampling, instrumentation and data collection techniques, data analysis and presentation as carried out utilising the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Each subsection is described first quantitatively and then qualitatively.

4.4.1 Population and sampling

4.4.1.1 Population

In any research study, it is essential to have an accurate description of the population of elements (persons, organisations, objects, etc.) which form the focus of the study. Important inferences are drawn from them after the study (Weathington, Cunningham, & Pittenger, 2012). According to Robson (2011), population is the group of elements that possess the information sought and about which inferences are made. They usually bear similar characteristics. The population for this study consisted of 126 international students, 50 administrators and 135 faculty members.

4.4.1.2 Samples and sampling methods

A sample is the representative elements of a population scientifically chosen to participate in a research study (Alvi, 2016). The sample may be humans or objects and are called participants or informants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, the samples are termed as the participants.

Sampling, on the other hand, is the selection process through which generalisations are made about a larger population that is to be studied (Alvi, 2016). Sampling occurs as a guarantee that the sample is an impartial representation of the population (Weathington et al., 2012). There are two main types of sampling namely, probability and non-probability sampling (Merriam, 1998). Probability sampling also called random sampling is said to have been used when every person in the population has an equal chance of being chosen for the study. The benefits of probability sampling are that it increases the chances of the sample being truly representative of the population. In addition, sampling bias and error are minimised due to its objectivity as well as its systematic characteristics. Moreover, the selection is by strict protocol (Weathington et al., 2012).

The types of probability sampling include the following:

- Simple random sampling - equal opportunity for selection is available
- Systematic sampling - sample population are selected at particular intervals
- Stratified sampling - sampling various smaller groups in the population for comparisons
- Cluster sampling - sampling used for intact groups

Conversely, non-probability sampling is said to have been used when the elements of a population have not been given an equal chance of being selected. It occurs when the researcher is unable to obtain a random or stratified sample. It is also used for small samples within a limited geographic area (Battaglia, Link, Frankel, Osborn, & Mokdad, 2008; Weathington et al., 2012). The sample was small and the geographical area was limited to the campus of XUC.

Types of non-probability sampling include the following:

- Convenience sampling – the researcher depends on the availability of the participants.
- Snowball sampling – the researcher starts with just one or two participants and then uses them to locate others within their group.

The international students selected for sampling met the following criteria:

- They were active members of the International Students' Association (ISA) at the university, as suggested by Campbell, (2002). An active student is one who participates in events and attends the ISA meetings regularly.

- They were stationed in Ghana for a minimum of three months and enrolled at the university for one full semester.
- For gender equality, male and female students were selected (Campbell, 2002)
- Both AS's and FS's were included to get different perspectives.
- They were drawn from two of the three faculties that exist at the university – namely, FOB and FOS. The third faculty, FOT, did not have any international students.
- They were from all four academic levels of the university, namely, Levels 100 to 400.

4.4.1.2.1 Sample selected for the quantitative phase

For the quantitative phase of the study probability sampling and in particular stratified sampling was used. This choice was made because there was a need to make comparisons of various variables as per the researcher's conceptual model. The study employed the stratified sampling method in the sampling of the students. Stratification is a sampling process that ensures that certain characteristics such as gender, age, country of origin and so forth are represented within the sample and are reflected in the population (Creswell, 2014). The method, according to Tannor (2014), permits researchers to identify sub-groups within a population and create a sample, which mirrors these sub-groups by randomly choosing subjects from each stratum.

According to **Páramo**, Vacas and Soledad (2015), the challenges that first-year undergraduate students go through tend to diminish over the years that they are obtaining their degree. The different academic levels of the students made the study population vary in terms of their ability to adjust to the environment. Therefore, the study divided the student population into four homogenous sub-groups using the academic level as the basis before sampling, where every student was assigned to only one stratum. Such sampling is more

representative of the population across these sub-groups than a simple random sample (Tannor, 2014). For sampling, the researcher stratified students into four cohorts (Levels 100, 200, 300 and 400) where Level 100 is the entry-level and 400 being the final year. While for the qualitative phase, purposeful sampling was used. Within each of these strata, the researcher ensured that the characteristic was equivalent to what it was in the population.

The sample size for the study is determined using the Slovin Formula (Umar, 2000):

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \dots\dots\dots 1$$

Therefore, inserting the 126 international students into equation 1, gives:

$$n = \frac{126}{1+126(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 96$$

The sample size is further distributed proportionally across the four academic levels using a stratified proportional allocation formula by Neuman (1964) stated below:

$$nh = \left(\frac{Nh}{N}\right) n$$

Where

nh =stratum sample size for a particular academic level

Nh = population size for a particular academic level

N = Total population size of international students

n = total sample size for the study

The calculation for the 50 students in level 400 is shown below:

$$nh = \left(\frac{50}{126}\right) 96$$

$$nh = 38$$

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of the sample size across the academic levels:

Table 4. 2: Distribution of sample size across academic levels

Academic Level	Population	Sample size
100	40	31
200	19	14
300	17	13
400	50	38
TOTALS	126	96

4.4.1.2.2 Sample selected for the qualitative phase

The qualitative phase, on the other hand, involved purposeful sampling. Thus, some of the same students were used in the second phase as recommended by Creswell (2014) in order to buttress the points made. By so doing, the researcher was able to delve a little deeper into the phenomenon. Although the questionnaires were distributed to students in all four academic levels, only Levels 100 and 400 students were selected for the focus group discussions. The researcher wanted to get the contrast in opinions between the first and final year students to see if adjustment had improved with time as indicated by the analysis. In addition, in explanatory sequential mixed methods, the qualitative aspects lend support to the quantitative with emphasis on the outliers (Creswell, 2014). Consequently, these 10 focus group members were selected from the 82 student participants who returned their questionnaires. Their selections were based on comments made in the commentary section of the questionnaire.

The participants had been asked to leave their phone numbers on the back of the questionnaire for this purpose. The questionnaires had been given coded serial numbers for identification; this was useful in the open-ended sections of the questionnaires. The serial numbers allowed the researcher to select specific students for the focus group discussion. The numbering was coded as ASX-100 or FSX-100 for Level 100 students and ASX-400 or FSX-400 for Level 400 students. The first letter indicated the broad language group (whether Anglophone or Francophone). The figures, “100” or “400” indicated the academic level, while the letter “X” indicated the two digit serial number on the questionnaire. During the focus group session, an additional identification number “Y” was issued where “Y” represented the three-digit focus group number. Thus, the final codes for the qualitative scripts were ASX-100-001 or FSX-400-001.

Therefore, ASX-100-001 represented an Anglophone student number, X in academic level 100 and the first of the level 100 students in the focus group. Similarly, FSX-400-001 represented a Francophone student number, X in academic level 400 and the first of the level 400 students in the focus group. Thus the 5 level 100 students were listed as AS15 - 100-001, FS16-100-002, FS20-100-003, FS45-100-004, FS26-100-005. For the Level 400 students the coding was as follows: FS59-400-001, AS77-400-002, AS78-400-003, FS79-400-004, AS 81-400-005. The illustration is given in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 below.

Table 4. 3: Description of coding for student participants in Level 100

Student Participant Coding	Gender	Programme	Country of Origin
LEVEL 100			
AS15-100-001	Female	Communications Studies	Anglophone
FS16-100-002	Male	Logistics and Supply Chain Management	Francophone
FS20-100-003	Male	Logistics and Supply Chain Management	Francophone
FS45-100-004	Male	Logistics and Supply Chain Management	Francophone
FS26-100-005	Female	Human Resource Management	Francophone

Table 4. 4: Description coding for student participants in Level 400

Student Participant Coding	Gender	Programme	Country of Origin
LEVEL 400			
FS59-400-001	Female	Logistics and Supply Chain Management	Francophone
AS77-400-002	Female	Communication Studies	Anglophone
AS78-400-003	Male	Logistics and Supply Chain Management	Anglophone
FS79-400-004	Male	Information Technology	Francophone
AS 81-400-005	Male	Communication Studies	Anglophone

Again, for the qualitative aspect, the researcher also purposefully selected three administrators and four faculty members for her sample size. They were the University Counsellor, the Chaplain and the Assistant Registrar in the IRO. These administrators were selected since they deal with students on more personal and emotional issues thus fulfilling the aspect of the study on how the international students cope with adjustment. In addition, they directly handled the international students daily.

The faculty members were those who were Heads of Departments (HODs) of programmes that had the largest numbers of international students enrolled. These HODs also taught courses in those programmes. These programmes were, namely, Communication Studies (CS), Logistics and Supply Chain Management (LSCM), Economics (ECO) and Information and Computing Technology (ICT). The first two programmes are under the Faculty of Business while the latter is under the Faculty of Science. The staff sample is below:

Table 4. 5: Staff sample

Participant No	Gender	Staff position	Level of Education
1	Male	Lecturer and HOD of CS	PhD
2	Male	Lecturer and HOD of ICT	PhD
3	Male	Lecturer and HOD of LSCM	PhD
4	Female	Lecturer and HOD of ECO	PhD
5	Female	College Counselor	MA
6	Male	Chaplain	MA
7	Male	Assistant Registrar for International Relations Office	MA

The research site was the campus of the university. The university is a small, private institution, which evolved from a Bible School to a fully accredited university college with three faculties. It is situated in a semi-rural part of the capital city, Accra, on a serene and secluded campus.

4.4.2 Instrumentation and data collection techniques

4.4.2.1 Questionnaire (Quantitative)

According to Creswell (2014), the explanatory sequential design makes use of questionnaires, often surveys, in the quantitative portion. The first phase of this study thus started with a survey to generalise the results to a larger population of international undergraduate students. Surveys offer quantitative or numeric trends, mindsets, or views of a population by studying a sample of that population. The researcher could after that generalise the results of the sample for that population (Creswell, 2014).

The survey was adopted for the quantitative aspect of the research because it was economical, and the feedback was almost immediate (Creswell, 2014). This was particularly true in this instance when the students were requested to do it during one of their International Student Association meeting times. After explaining the purpose of the research, most of the international students were delighted that the university was willing to pay attention to their concerns. They were also pleased that the university college was trying to answer their needs. Unsurprisingly, they were thus very eager to participate in the research.

Surveys utilise standardised questionnaires. Hence, questionnaires are widely employed in the collection of opinions of people about themselves or a social structure (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005). Questionnaires are also used to collect information about the behaviours of people (Williams, 2003). More importantly, they are commonly used in educational settings

to collect vital information for planning and development of educational systems (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005) thus making the use of them very appropriate for this setting.

Kothari (2004) states that a questionnaire is a data collection instrument consisting of several questions printed on a form in a specific format. Furthermore, MacLean (2006) notes that these questions are carefully designed around a theme that the researcher wants to investigate. The theme of this research study was the adjustment issues faced by international students and the effects thereof. Thus, the ISACQ and the WCQ were appropriate for the study. The questionnaires were then administered to a particular set of participants (undergraduate international students) whom the researcher believed held the sought-after information (MacLean, 2006).

Each survey participant was administered the same questions. Thus, the questionnaire was standardised (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005). Standardisation was important to ensure that the variation in responses by the participants was truly due to everyone's differences rather than the procedures employed in the administration of the questionnaire. Due to the standardised manner by which the questionnaires were administered, the quantitative data was collected with the internal consistency and coherency required for quantitative data analysis (Grover & Virens, 2006). Since the function of the questionnaire was to measure variables, the variables were clear and easy to understand without the need for further explanation by this researcher. Therefore, there was certainty about the research questions (Bird, 2009). In addition, the questionnaire was designed in a manner that guaranteed that every question was answered, and that data coding and analysis was unhindered (Harris, Brown & Hong, 2010).

A brief description of the original (SACQ) and modified (ISACQ) survey instruments follows. The SACQ, (Baker & Siryk, 1980, 1984, 1989 and 1999), from where the ISACQ was developed, is a well-known instrument (Salami, 2011; Páramo, Martínez, Tinajero, & Rodríguez, 2014; Fernández, Araújo, Vacas, Almeida & González, 2017) used mainly to

measure the process of adjustment to university of domestic students. The original 67-item self-report instrument uses a Likert scale to quantify how easy or difficult it is for students to adjust in the areas of academics, social life, personal-emotionally and institutionally to a university. To measure academic adjustment, the 24-item subscale investigates how successful students are meeting the many academic demands of university. The social adjustment scale consisting of 20 items measures social life. This scale focuses on how successful students are dealing with the social demands of university life. The students' psychological state is measured using the personal-emotional adjustment subscale made up of 15 items. It checks on whether there is psychological distress amongst the students. The final sub-scale which consists of 15 items, is the institutional attachment subscale. It is designed to measure the student's commitment to attaining a degree at a university. It also measures their general feelings about the university (Baker & Syrik, 1989).

The SACQ scale is rated on a 9-point scale where 1 = applies very closely to me and 9 = does not apply to me at all (Baker & Siryk, 1999). It identifies potentially academically endangered students, to measure the campus climate towards diversity and to discover the factors that affect student attrition, persistence and retention. This instrument has proved its reliability for over three decades in traditional, racially homogeneous universities in the United States (Carter et al., 2014). However, there appear to be limited studies on other populations such as African-American, Hispanic and other racial groups within the United States. Nevertheless, some researchers (Rienties et al., 2012; Gómez et al., 2014) appear to be filling that gap by customising it for international students who are at various levels of their university education as is the case of the participants in this current study.

The ISACQ, on the other hand, is a quantitative instrument developed by Gómez et al. (2014). It is a modified version of the original SACQ used to measure international student adjustment to life at university. In their modified instrument, Gómez et al., (2014), reduced the 67 questions from the SACQ to 23 items in five subscales. These sub-scales were made up of Personal-Emotional Adjustment (Cronbach's alpha = .86), Social Adjustment

(Cronbach's alpha = .77), Academic Motivation (Cronbach's alpha = .82), Academic Environment (Cronbach's alpha = .72), and Institutional Attachment (Cronbach's alpha = .75). The following SACQ questions were used 31, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 52, 64, 3, 5, 19, 23, 36, 43, 54, 62, 8, 18, 46, 65, 16, 34, 59. According to Gómez et al. (2014), space limitations were the rationale for not exploring all the subscales and dimensions of the original SACQ. For their study, Gómez et al. (2014) also used other scales to serve their purpose. This researcher contacted the designers of the ISACQ and gained permission for the use of the questionnaire (See Appendix A).

The original WCQ comprised of 68 items in yes/no format. To improve clarity, it was revised to a 66-item questionnaire (Van Liew, Santoro, Edwards, Kang, & Cronan, 2016) and the yes/no format replaced with a 4-point Likert scale. The revised version had eight sub-scales for coping. For approximately 30 years the WCQ has been used in measuring coping a wide variety of stressful situations – clinical (Van Liew et al., 2016) and non-clinical, such as educational (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985) situations. This is so since its purpose was to ascertain the cognitive and behavioural patterns of individuals in various stressful situations. It has also been used to examine coping in different cultural situations (Senol - Durak, Durak, & Elagoz, 2011; Van Liew et al., 2016).

For this study further modification and customisation took place by changing the biographic section to reflect the existing international student population at the university college. The questionnaire consisted of an introduction section and four other sections. The introductory section was a preamble stating the purpose of the study and informing participants that it was for solely academic purposes. They were reassured of confidentiality and thanked in advance for their time. The main sections consisted of five parts denoted as Sections A to E and a comments section. Within the main sections, participants were requested to tick the most appropriate answers to the questions asked. The final section was entitled Comments. It was an open-ended question which allowed the participants to provide feedback in own words. Thus, both closed-ended and open-ended questions were used. The close-ended questions required the participants to select from a variety of stated

answers, while the open-ended questions allowed for freedom of expression (David & Sutton, 2004).

Harris, Brown and Hong (2010) describe the Likert-scale as a well-situated scale for collecting data on a construct from a variety of approaches. They are considered an excellent way of gathering attitudes and opinions towards an object or situation in a survey. Likert-scales ask participants to respond to the degree to which they either agree or disagree with a statement within a series of statements on a questionnaire form. The scales usually range from one to five, where one is the lowest and five is the highest. Thus, they are categorised as, Strongly Approve, Approve, Undecided, Disapprove and Strongly Disapprove. Consequently, Strongly Approve corresponds to five while Strongly Disapprove corresponds to one on the Likert-scale.

In this study, the Likert-scale was placed on the ranges used within the ISACQ which ranged from one to nine where one represents, “Applies very closely to me”, and nine represents, “Does not apply to me at all”. While the Likert-scale on the modified WCQ for this study ranging from one to seven were One (1) = Least Important Coping Strategy and Seven (7) = Most Important Coping Strategy.

The description of the sectional portion of the questionnaire is as follows:

- **Section A - Biographics.** This section required that participants supply their age range, gender, marital status, country of origin, length of stay in Ghana and prior travel to Ghana. It consisted of six questions.
- **Section B - Family Characteristics.** This section made inquiries about whether the participant had relatives within the country and the sources of financial support. It consisted of four questions.

- **Section C - School Characteristics.** This section inquired about the academic level, programme of study, current GPA, and post-graduate plans. It consisted of four questions.
- **Section D - Adjustment Issues.** This section consisted of a series of 23 Likert-like questions under the sections entitled, personal-emotional adjustment, social adjustment, academic adjustment (consisting of academic motivation and academic environment). For this section, the participants were required to carefully read each statement, under each sub-section and decide on how each statement best described them. Each of these sub-sections had boxes that the participant was required to tick. The boxes were placed on a scale of one to nine where one was, “Applies very closely to me” and nine was, “Does not apply to me at all”. The questionnaire ended with a request for a short description of their university experiences with an emphasis on the positive and negative experiences.
- **Section E - Coping Strategies for Adjustment.** This section was made up of 7 Likert-like questions. There were boxes required for the participant to tick. These boxes were placed on a scale ranging from one to seven where one meant, least important coping strategy and seven meant, Most important coping strategy. The participants were asked to rank the most important coping strategy they usually used in responding to stressful situations in the university environment.

The final section of the questionnaire was a comments section. It was not given a numerical value. Here the participant was asked to comment on the positive and negative aspects of his/her experience at the university college. Participants were not expected to give more than a paragraph of commentary.

4.4.2.2 Focus group manual (Qualitative)

The Focus group manual for the students consisted of six sections (See Appendix B). The description is as follows:

- **Section A - Background information.** This section was numbered one to seven. It required the focus group moderator to fill in a dotted line that supplied information for each of the following items: group type, group composition, group size, start of discussion, end of discussion, name of moderator and date of discussion.
- **Section B - Performance.** This section was made of three questions numbered eight to 10. Participants had to describe their perceptions of the performance of the international students in the university; the factors that could pertain to performance levels and what interventions could be relevant.
- **Section C - Adjustment of International Students.** This section consisted of four questions numbered 11 to 14. The participants were asked about the positive and negative aspects of their experiences at the university as well as their description of the general level of adjustment of their international colleagues to the university. It also sought to find out what areas of adjustment, at the university, international students felt most challenged. Finally, the last question in this section was on how they would relate the adjustment of international students to all the three dimensions of student adjustment.
- **Section D - Coping Strategies for Adjustment.** This section was made of three questions numbered 15 to 17. In this section, the moderator was required to find out how international students were coping generally. The next few questions inquired about the factors that accounted for the inability or ability of students to cope in the university. Finally, in this section, the students were questioned about their coping strategies.

- **Section E - Recommendations.** This section was made of a single question. The students were asked how the university could best address the adjustment challenges of the international students enrolled there.

4.4.2.3 Interview schedules (Qualitative)

There were two interview schedules. One was for faculty and the other for administrators. The semi-structured interview schedule for faculty differed slightly from that of the administrators. However, in both instances, it consisted of two sections. The first section asked for biographic information which did not include their names but required them to state their faculty and/or department. For faculty, the second section asked about their involvement with international students and their opinions on the students' adjustment challenges and performances in their courses. For the administrators, the second section asked them about their experiences with international students and their observation of students' challenges. The schedules are attached (See Appendices C 1 and C2).

4.4.2.4 Piloting of questionnaire

Piloting of a questionnaire is a trial run of the instrument before the main study is conducted (Polit & Beck, 2013). Piloting is important, particularly when using a modified version of an instrument. It serves as a basis for adjusting certain sections and checking procedures (Johanson & Brooks, 2010). The pilot survey thus served as an advanced warning to determine the appropriateness of the instrument, the methodology and whether the questions were understandable (Teijlingen & Hundley 2001; Roberts 2004). In addition, the piloting checked the relevance of the questions and if the layout was user-friendly. It also was used to check for content validity (Creswell, 2014). Lastly, the pilot survey ensured that ethical issues were not overlooked. It also helped to determine the most appropriate type of sampling as well as the sample size (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005).

The sample instrument was piloted at two similar university colleges. The Registrars of each of the institutions were first contacted by phone and then visited. They, in turn then introduced the researcher to the International Office head who helped with the selection of participants. The International Office head also arranged for the day and time for the piloting to take place.

The International office personnel purposefully selected fifteen participants each at two other private university colleges in Accra, Ghana. The pilot participants were asked to complete and return the questionnaire promptly to the researcher. The promptness was ensured by asking them to fill the form in a classroom and promptly return it to the researcher. The students were both males and females selected from Levels 100 to 400. They were enrolled in the Faculties of Business and Science respectively. The sample was from similar levels and faculties as the potential participants. These sampling selections were based on the advice of Roberts (2004) and Saunders, (2009) that, the sample for the piloting study should be perfectly representative of the sample in the actual study.

Immediately after completing the questionnaire, the same 15 international undergraduate students in brief face-to-face interviews, were asked to point out any aspect of the questionnaire that was unclear to them. While the students said that the questions were very clear generally, they felt it could be better worded in some parts. They also clarified potential areas for discrepancies and confusion. The researcher made minor adjustments to the questionnaire accordingly. They also pointed out that the layout was unattractive. Consequently, the researcher redesigned the questionnaire to be more user-friendly. The final questionnaire for use with the international students was thus amended.

4.4.2.5 Data collection techniques

This section explains how the testing and the data collection of the final instruments took place. A month after the piloting the final instruments were ready for use by the participants at the selected university college. The data was collected in two phases - first quantitatively, then qualitatively. The quantitative was carried out through rigorous sampling while the qualitative phase was carried out through purposeful sampling. The survey was conducted using the ISACQ designed by Gómez et al., (2014) and the revised WCQ by Lazarus and Folkman (1985) while a focus group and semi-structured interview schedule prepared by the researcher, was used for the qualitative phase.

4.4.2.5.1 Quantitative data collection

The survey took a total of two weeks. It took place on the campus as described below. As with the piloting, the international students were selected purposefully at all four academic levels and from two faculties - FOB and FOCS. Ninety-six students made up the sample size and were broken down as already indicated in Table 4.3 above. Data was collected for the quantitative portion by means of the ISACQ (which is a 23- item scale) and the revised WCQ (which had an eight- item scale). These Likert-like items ranged from one to nine for the former and ranged from one to seven for the latter. A description of the instrument is in section 4.4.2.1.

Distribution of the questionnaire to international students in Levels 100 - 400 occurred through the IRO, which in turn, made arrangements with the President of the International Students Association for a meeting. Then after the students gathered for the meeting, he explained the purpose. They were informed that they did not have to answer the questionnaire if they were not comfortable doing so. Several students complied and willingly completed the questionnaire after the explanations of the ethical considerations. However, a few others were not comfortable and declined. The researcher with the assistance of the executives distributed and recollected the questionnaires. A few students requested to take their questionnaires away with the promise to return completed questionnaires later. The researcher distanced herself during the exercise

to reduce the sense of coercion that some of them may have felt in completing the questionnaire for a senior staff member of the university. A total of 82 questionnaires were eventually returned.

4.4.2.5.2 Qualitative data collection

For the qualitative data collection, one audio-recorded focus group was held for Level 100 and Level 400 students. On the other hand, lecturers and administrative staff were interviewed individually. The focus-groups and the semi-structured interviews were conducted in English at the university campus.

The focus group students were some of the same students who had taken part in the quantitative survey. They were selected by academic levels (Levels 100 and 400) and by country of origin (Anglophone and Francophone being the broad criteria). They were placed in two groups representing Levels 100 and 400 respectively with each group having at most five participants. The major challenge was getting the students to meet at the same time due to differences in lecture timetables. To overcome this challenge, the students were excused from the mandatory College Assembly. The focus group was held in a quiet classroom where there were no distractions.

In addition, four lecturers and three administrators were interviewed. The four lecturers were selected because they had the highest numbers of international students enrolled in their courses as compared to other lecturers in the university. The administrators were selected by their roles of dealing with the personal and emotional issues of students. In all cases, the researcher carried out the interviews alone with the individual in his/her respective office.

The rationale was that the purpose of the qualitative phase of explanatory sequential design was to follow up the quantitative results by exploring the results a bit further. It was considered secondary to the quantitative phase (Creswell, 2014). These further

explanations occurred through the personal exchanges with the participants, the extended time on the campus as well as the detailed literature review about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The design thus explains interaction of the variables and is a main strength of the explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2014).

4.4.3 Data analysis and presentation

For this study, the analysis was done in two separate and distinct phases. By using the results of the quantitative data, the researcher then planned the follow-up with the qualitative phase. She realised that the quantitative results helped in developing an appropriate interview schedule. The focus groups and semi-structured interview schedules consisted of open-ended questions that clarified and confirmed sections of the quantitative questionnaire.

The researcher interpreted the follow-up results by first presenting the results from the quantitative before the results of the qualitative. The databases were not merged at this point. Rather, the researcher used qualitative results to simply expand on the quantitative results by providing more insight. Chapter Five provides the details of the data analysis.

4.4.3.1 Quantitative data analysis

The dependent variables of academic, social, personal-emotional adjustment and institutional attachment were analysed using the SPSS version 22. The controlling variables were student characteristics or biographies. Academic performance was the main dependent variable. The students were asked to give their yearly GPAs. These were compared with their current GPAs to check their adjustment levels. Additionally, both descriptive and inferences statistical analysis was performed in answering the research

questions. The table below gives a summary of the analytical techniques and the rationale for the choice made for each question.

Table 4. 6: Analytical technique and rationale

Research Question	Analytical Technique	Rationale for choosing the analytical technique
1. What is the influence of key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) on the academic performance of international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC?	Descriptive statistical analysis (means, standard deviation, and trend analysis)	The analysis is done using the secondary data on performance to show trends in performance over the years
2. What are the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students at XUC	Descriptive statistics Thematic analysis	The coding and theme development is directed by the content of the qualitative data
3. What is the effect of the adjustment issues on the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC?	Inferential statistical analysis (Ordinary Least Square regression analysis) Pearson Correlation Analysis Chi-square analysis	The dependent variable (academic performance) is a quantitative variable Both dependent and independent variables (determinants of adjustments) are measured as quantitative variables. The chi-square is to help determine the level of adjustment across biographies, country of origin and academic levels
4. What coping strategies do international students employ in adjusting to the challenges of the XUC environment	Weighted average mean	Ranking of the coping strategies in terms of the most employed

4.4.3.2 Qualitative data analysis

The researcher performed an inductive thematic analysis on the interview data. In an inductive thematic analysis, coding and development of themes are dependent on the data content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Categories of responses from the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were identified and coded through the searching for emergent themes. The key ideas and emerging themes from the interviews were identified from all the participants by reading through the interview responses and looking for patterns or themes among the participants. Different themes were derived for each research question. However, prior to the derivation of the themes from the interview questions, the relevant literature review was used in the design of the focus group manual and interview schedule. The emerging themes were supported by pre-existing category scheme taken from the literature for each research question. Seemingly, where a variety of themes emerged, the same was grouped using pre-determined themes from literature. The interview responses were triangulated with the quantitative data.

4.5 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

This final section of the chapter deals with reassuring the reader of the quality of the research. The terms reliability, validity and trustworthiness are explained and their relevance to this study are provided. For the reliability section, the researcher explains how she established this in the study. The researcher then establishes the validity of the quantitative results. Finally, trustworthiness of the qualitative aspect of the study is discussed.

4.5.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency of the results of a study, a test or a method and its representativeness of a population. The results should be reproducible if carried out by other researchers, for a similar population using the same methodology in a variety of settings (Zohrabi, 2013).

The ISACQ is a modified version of the SACQ, which has received high-reliability scores for the past three decades (Carter et al., 2014). Portions of the SACQ were used in the ISACQ, and thus those portions had the same reliability. Similarly, the WCQ has also been proven to be reliable for approximately 30 years (Lundqvist and Ahlström, 2006; Rexrode, Petersen, & O'Toole, 2008; Senol - Durak, et al, 2011) despite some calls for revision (Van Liew et al., 2016).

However, since they are being used in a mixed methods research on a sample that differs (first to fourth-year international undergraduate students in Ghana) from its original intent (first-year domestic undergraduate students in the United States for the SACQ), their reliability had to be re-tested. Thus, the questionnaire was piloted with representative samples.

According to Nunnally (1970), if the Cronbach's alpha is less than 0.7, then the indication is that the instrument being used as low reliability and that not all the items met reasonable standards of internal consistency and reliability. Table 4.7 below shows the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for each of the constructs measured with the pilot instrument.

Table 4. 7: Reliability test for pilot survey

ITEMS	NO. OF ITEMS	CRONBACH ALPHA
PERSEMO	8	0.863
SOCADJ	4	0.743
ACADMTV	4	0.835
ACADENV	4	0.857
ATTACH	3	0.217
OVERALL	23	0.847

Source: Piloting data, 2018

In this study, a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of at least 0.7 was obtained for each of the dimensions with the exemption of ATTACH which gives the indication that the items have

relatively high internal consistency as suggested by Nunnally (1970). ATTACH was therefore deleted from the scale of measurement. The reliability test of the coping questionnaire also presented a Cronbach Alpha of 0.82.

4.5.2 Validity

Validity is the most important element in instrument development and refers to the degree that, the instrument measures what it claims to measure (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011; Robson, 2011). It is defined, according to Briggs and Coleman (2007), as the criteria for assessing the accuracy or inaccuracy of the research phenomenon being investigated. Essentially, validity asks the question: “Are the results truthful?” It traverses the entire study and becomes the pillars upon which the study stands. Validity is measured both numerically and by peer reviews (Baumgarten, 2012).

Creswell (2014) warns that, in the explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, additional validity concerns arise. However, the validity of the SACQ instrument (the source of the ISACQ) and the WCQ used in the quantitative phase are well documented. For instance, many researchers (Chartrand, 1992; Napoli & Wortman, 1998; Beyers & Goossens, 2002; Stoklosa, 2015) agree that the strong statistical correlation between the SACQ subscales and several pertinent measurements like academic motivation, emotions, GPA, and social life all demonstrate the validity of the SACQ and thus the portions of the ISACQ, which came from it.

Convergent validity was assessed by means of the Average Variance Extracted (AVR) to determine if measures that should be related are in reality related. According to Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins and Kuppelwieser (2014), if the average variances extracted are all above 0.50, there is an indication that the variance due to measurement error is less than the variance due to the construct. Table 4.8 below illustrates the AVR.

Table 4.8: Validity test using AVR

ITEMS	AVR
PERSEMO	0.851
SOCADJ	0.803
ACADMTV	0.773
ACADENV	0.916
ATTACH	0.723

Source: Pilot study data

In this study, AVR of at least 0.500 was obtained for each of the dimensions which give the indication that the variance due to measurement error is less than the variance due to the construct.

According to Connel, Carlton and Brazier (2018), content validity measures the extent to which the set of items on the questionnaire comprehensively covers the different issues the study seeks to measure while face validity measures whether the items of each component on the questionnaire are appropriate and relevant to the study. In this study, the questionnaire was scrutinised by the supervisor as an expert in the field to determine its face validity. A rational analysis of the questionnaire was also done by other colleague lecturers of the university in determining its content validity where readability and clarity of the items were checked.

4.5.3 Trustworthiness

Robson (2011) uses the term trustworthiness in describing the ability to earn the reader's confidence. Robson (2011) emphasises the need for the researcher to be able to persuade himself/ herself as well as his/her audience that the study's findings can be trusted, is worth taking account of, and is believable. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), to evaluate the quality of a research, it is essential to first consider the underlying philosophical assumptions of the study. As explained earlier, this study adopted the pragmatic philosophical paradigm. Consequently, the quality of both the qualitative and quantitative data was determined. Unlike the quantitative component of this study where more statistical methods including the Cronbach Alpha were used to establish reliability and validity, credibility, transferability and confirmability are the common criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

4.5.4 Credibility

Bryman and Bell (2015) defined credibility as the evaluation of how believable the findings of a research are. To end up with plausible findings, this thesis made use of triangulation. A major means of determining data credibility in qualitative research, according to Creswell (2014), is the use of data triangulation. According to Maulana and Helms-Lorenz (2016), since observation of the learning environment and student interviews have strengths and weaknesses, both methods should be seen as complementary ways to measure quality in research. Thus, the credibility of the results of the study was determined by triangulating the findings of the interviews with that of the focus group discussion. The triangulation helped to cross-check the interview and focus group data for any inconsistencies in the data set. The credibility of the findings was also ensured by treating the responses as anonymous and confidential as recommended by Creswell (2014). This gave the participants the opportunity to provide candid answers. This researcher thus avoided compromising the accuracy of the overall findings by considering all possible options available during the follow-up qualitative phase. Furthermore, in the qualitative phase she drew on the same student samples since

doing otherwise would negate the importance of the second phase being built on the first phase.

4.5.5 Confirmability

Confirmability involves researchers' bias that potentially undermines their results (Galdas, 2017). Addressing research bias is crucial in determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research results. In this study, the researcher asked indirect questions to limit bias using open-ended questions and maintained a neutral stance to the responses of the participants. All information collected from the interviews were also reported by the Researcher in the same way with no attempts to modify the responses. Verbatim description of participants' views has also become a means of enhancing the transparency of qualitative research findings (Birt et al., 2016). In reporting the findings, this study quotes some verbal descriptions of the participants.

4.5.6 Transferability

Transferability involves evaluating how qualitative research findings could apply to other contexts. In this study, the results are only applicable to XUC, Ghana and cannot be directly generalised to other universities. As the data was collected from only a small number of people, the results are orientated to the contextual uniqueness and cannot thus be directly generalised to other universities (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, the findings of the qualitative research could provide grounds for other researchers to attempt transferring the findings of this study to other private universities.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As Fouka and Montzorou (2011) state, ethical considerations are paramount in research when working with human subjects. Moreover, research involves working with a variety of people

and institutions therefore ethical standards must be upheld to engender collaboration (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). Bearing in mind that the participants have privacy rights, the researcher considered a variety of ethical and legal issues before commencing the research. Rudestam and Newton (2015) underscore that fact by insisting that researchers are duty-bound to conceal the identities of their participants when using the information, the participants freely offer. These requirements, the researcher underwent thorough scrutiny by the UNISA Ethics Committee and subsequently the researcher received a Certificate of Ethical Approval. Refer to Appendices G1 and G2 for evidence. Furthermore, a series of other ethical standards such as institutional approval and informed consent of participants were duly observed.

4.6.1 Institutional approval

The researcher wrote to the Registrar of the university college explaining the research and requesting to use the campus site as both the setting and the source of sampling. As required by the UNISA ethical policy, the letter stated the expectations of the researcher, the significance of the study and manner in which the data would be used. Also clearly highlighted in the letter were statements of confidentiality, anonymity and risks. Subsequently, the Registrar granted approval and full access to the site. Appendices D and E illustrate this approval.

4.6.2 Informed consent

As a mixed-methods study, the participants took part in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research. Thus, separate consensual agreements were needed in each phase. For the quantitative phase, the questionnaire clearly stated the purpose of the instrument and included a request for the participants to participate freely. For the qualitative phase, the participants received letters of consent to sign prior to taking part in the focus groups and the semi-structured interviews.

According to Arifin (2018) when conducting qualitative research, informed consent denotes full comprehension as full cooperation. There should be no confusion or feelings of coercion. In this study these requirements were met as the researcher took time to read through the letters of consent with each participant. They all claimed to fully understand the terms and voluntarily signed the portion of the letter as requested. In this way, the researcher met the full requirement of the UNISA Research Ethics policy. Refer to Appendices G1 and G2 for evidence.

4.6.2.1 Risks and benefits

There were no expected risks to participants of the study. The benefits though not immediate, would be that future international students would receive better care and management by the school authorities if the findings recommendations are given maximum attention and implementation.

To protect the participants from unforeseen risks, all participants received information of the benefits of their participation in the study for future policy planning. The researcher granted for them permission to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. In addition, during the focus group, the researcher carefully supervised the conversation and group dynamics to minimise possible risks of over disclosure. After the data analysis, the researcher, through the IRO, invited the participants for a debriefing. The participants at that stage still expressed their consent for their data to be used in the research.

4.6.2.2 Confidentiality, anonymity and trust

The participants were reassured of the confidentiality, anonymity and trust from the researcher. For instance, the questionnaires and the interview schedules had codes for

easy identification by the researcher. Therefore, the names of the participants did not appear on them. All participants were duly informed and were comfortable with the pseudonyms given to them. Furthermore, they were also reassured that their data was inaccessible to the university officials. Consequently, the researcher kept the data, as well as the signed consent forms, in a locked safe at her home in another part of the city. Moreover, the students and participating staff retained a feeling of confidence through a courteous relationship with the researcher.

As recommended by Arifin (2018), the transcription was carried out privately by the researcher herself. This was done at her home when she was alone. All information that could lead to easy identification of participants was eliminated from the transcripts. To further consolidate trust and to ensure there would be no “third-party breach of confidentiality” (Sims & Waterfield, 2019, p. 3010), particularly for the Focus Group, the participants were invited for a debriefing session a few weeks later. During the debriefing session, the transcriptions were presented. After reading through the transcriptions, the students were unable to clearly identify each other’s contributions to the dialogue though they agreed that that was what they had discussed. This fact therefore reduced any potential risk of identification by others when the paper is published.

The staff members, likewise, were identified only by their job titles and positions. Given that the semi-structured interviews were held individually and in their offices, there was a general sense of privacy. Moreover, there was no sense of pressure and thus the risk of harm due to vulnerability was considerably reduced (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Furthermore, the researcher modified the names of the faculties they belonged to, thus providing additional anonymity. The researcher further protected the institution by not using its name in the findings of the study. In addition, she blotted out all other identifiable information like, the logo and institutional email address from the appendices attached to the thesis.

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter presented a detailed description of the research methodology used in this study. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was used and descriptions were given of how the processes took place. Majority of the international undergraduate students of the university college participated in the data collection exercises and the data underwent analysis. A summary of the data analysis was presented in this chapter, but the more detailed analysis is presented in the next chapter. Issues of validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations were covered as well. Chapter Five is a detailed report and discussion of the analysis and interpretation of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the research methodology and justification for the research direction. The origins of mixed-method approach and its attendant philosophy were explained in addition to the rationale for using the explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. This current chapter builds on the previous chapter and therefore opens with a brief report on the research process. It then provides a brief biographical description of the student participants before moving into the data analysis and data interpretations in accordance with the research sub-questions.

The discussion involves the possible implications, as well as the interpretation of the data analysis using logical deduction. In discussing the data interpretations, attempts are made to relate them to the pertinent concepts and theories discussed in the literature review in Chapters Two and Three. The results are presented in sections with each focusing on one of the four sub-aims of the study.

The data analysis sections are arranged according to the sequence of the mixed explanatory methods approach therefore starting with the quantitative aspects before the qualitative aspect. The qualitative aspect is also interwoven in the discussion. For the quantitative aspect, the first section presents the biographical characteristics of the participants. The second section involves analysis of the family background of the participants to previous affiliations with their current university. The third section focuses on the school characteristics of the participants including their programme of study, current GPA and post-graduate plans. The qualitative aspect is illustrated by using direct quotes

from participants when deemed relevant. The quotes are coded to provide anonymity to the participants. These codes were extensively explained in Chapter Four.

5.2 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In all, 82 international students participated in the quantitative aspect of the study through questionnaires. Additionally, ten students, (five in Level 100 and five in Level 400) provided data for the validation of the questionnaire responses through a focus group discussion. Out of the five students in Level 100, only one was Anglophone. While out of the five students in Level 400, three were Anglophone and two were Francophone. Codes were used to identify each participant (cf. par. 4.4.1.2.2 for full description). Furthermore, seven staff members (administrators and faculty), as well as the Patron of the International Students' Association, participated through semi-structured interviews. The results of both the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaires and the qualitative data obtained through the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were triangulated.

5.3 BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

5.3.1 Introduction

This section presents the analysis and discussions of the background characteristics of the participants. The theoretical models of Tinto (1993; 2014) and Astin (1993) both indicate that individual biographical characteristics play a role in the outcome of a student's life as he/she interacts with his/her new environment. Consequently, the student participants provided their background information on the questionnaire. Thus, in examining the background characteristics of the students, the following variables were analysed: gender, age, marital status, country of origin, period of staying in Ghana and number of times of

travelling to Ghana before deciding to school in Ghana. Table 5.1 shows the findings on the biographical background characteristics of the participants.

Table 5. 1: Biographical background characteristics of participants

Biographical Background Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Males	36	43.9
	Females	46	56.1
	Total	82	100
Age	< 18	1	1.2
	18-29	79	96.3
	30-39	1	1.2
	40-49	1	1.2
	Total	82	100
Marital Status	Never married	74	90.2
	Married	7	8.5
	Separated/Divorced	1	1.2
	Total	82	100
Country of Origin	Francophone	35	42.7
	Anglophone	47	57.3
	Total	82	100

Source: Survey Data (2018)

5.3.2 Gender

Of the 82 international students that participated in the study, Table 5.1 shows that more than half (56.1%) were females. Thus, the proportion of female international students that

participated in the study was 12.2 percentage points more than that of the males. Available data from the university's IRO shows that 48.6 percent of the international students enrolled in the university are males while 51.4 percent are females.

5.3.3 Age

Table 5.1 also shows that almost all (96.3%) of the students were aged 18-29 years. There was, however no student aged 50-59 years. Comparing the ages to the National Youth Policy of Ghana (2010) that describes youth as a person within the age bracket of 15 and 35, it means that the students were young and youthful. Additionally, relating the ages to the Eurostats (2015) report that defines youth as persons aged between 15 and 29, it means that a substantial proportion of the international students were youth. The youthful nature of the students suggests that adjusting to the university environment could be challenging for that age range just like the findings of Ugwu and Adamuti - Trache (2017) which showed that older students are sometimes able to adjust significantly faster than their younger counterparts are. It, however, contrasted with

Wilson's (2011) findings of younger students having better adjustment levels. It also contrasted with the findings of Alshafi and Shin (2017) who saw no significant correlates between age and adjustment levels.

5.3.4 Marital status

A little over 90 percent (90.2%) of the students had never been married. This marital status was expected since almost all the students were aged less than 30 years, as shown in Table 5.1.

5.3.5 Country of origin

Regarding the country of origin, more than half (57.3%) of the participants were from Anglophone countries with the majority (54.9%) being Nigerians. However, the proportion of students from Francophone countries was equally high (42.7%). Since Ghana is an Anglophone country using English as an instructional language in educational institutions creates some implications for students from Francophone countries trying to adjust to the university environment. Further analysis was done to determine if adjustment was influenced by the students' language origins.

5.4 LIVING EXPERIENCES IN GHANA

The study also analysed the living experience of the students with regards to living in Ghana, as presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5. 2: Living experience in Ghana (years)

Variables	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Dev
Length of stay in Ghana	3.12	1.00	8.00	1.636

Source: Survey Data (2018)

Table 5.2 shows that on the average, the students have been in Ghana for three years with a minimum and maximum period of one year and eight years respectively. Additionally, of the 82 participants, 42 (51.2%) had never travelled to Ghana before deciding to school in Ghana; hence they were new to the Ghanaian environment. This fact made their adjustment an important concept for investigation. According to Udrea and Dumitriu (2015), adjustment is required whenever an individual moves to a new environment. Among the 40 that had travelled to Ghana before deciding to attend school there, the majority (65.0%) had travelled once followed by those

that had travelled twice (20.0%) to Ghana. Three, one and two persons, had traveled three, four and six times respectively to the country.

5.5 FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

According to Hawkes (2014), when taking into account the adjustment issues of international undergraduate students, their family characteristics cannot be ignored. As part of exploring the background of the students concerning living in Ghana, an analysis was also done on family characteristics. Table 5.3. below illustrates the results.

Table 5. 3: Family Characteristics

Family Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Currently, have close family relatives in Ghana	Yes	30	36.6
	No	52	63.4
	Total	82	100
Have had some close family relatives in Ghana	Yes	41	50.0
	No	41	50.0
	Total	82	100
Source of financial support	Family	75	91.5
	Self	5	6.1
	Sponsors	2	2.4
	Total	82	100

Source: Survey Data (2018)

5.5.1 Close family relations in Ghana

Table 5.3 shows that the majority of the students (63.4%) had no close family relatives in Ghana. However, half (50.0%) had had some family relatives residing in Ghana while the other half (50.0%) had not. This could have explained why about 48.8 percent had travelled to Ghana before opting to school in Ghana. The previous travel experience could impact on their adjustment level based on the argument of Morrell, Ravli, Ramsey and Ward (2013), that exposure to other cultures through previous international travel is another factor that has been found to have positive impact on the adjustment of international students.

5.5.2 Source of financial support

Regarding financial support, almost all participants (91.5%) relied on their families for support. Considering the age groups, as shown in Table 5.1, it is unsurprising that the students were dependent on their families since they could not have been involved in any gainful employment before coming to Ghana. It was gathered from the focus group discussions that some international students report late to school at the start of the semester due to the challenges in paying school fees. This fact notwithstanding, the reversal of school fees from dollars to cedis (the Ghanaian currency) by the management of the university lessened the financial burdens of the students.

One of the students explained:

I think the positive experience I have had from Level 100 through to 400 was the fact that initially in Level 100, international students were paying their fees in dollars but when the new Rector came, we were made to pay in cedis, and I think this is one thing that has been a positive experience to me [AS81-400-005]

5.6 SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

In his theory of Student Integration, Tinto (1993) established that the various characteristics of individuals, including post-graduate plans, has a bearing on their integration into the institutions they attend and influences whether they will graduate. The programme of study and post-graduate plans were, therefore, relevant variables in exploring the adjustment issues of international students. According to Ahmadi (2016), international students enrolled in Business programmes were better adjusted than those enrolled in the Sciences, Engineering, Health and Human Services. Table 5.4 presents the results in the school characteristics of the participants.

Table 5. 4: School Characteristics

School Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Level	100	28	34.1
	200	5	6.1
	300	41	50.0
	400	8	9.8
	Total	82	100
Programme of Study	Business	65	79.3
	Science and Engineering	17	20.7
	Total	82	100
Post-Graduate Plans	Work in Ghana	18	22.0
	Work in Home Country	37	45.1
	Enrol for Higher Degree in Ghana	13	15.9
	Enrol for Higher Degree in Home Country	14	17.1
	Total	82	100
Current GPA	Less than 2.0	17	20.7
	2.0-2.49	26	31.7
	2.5- 2.99	23	28.0
	3.0-3.49	10	12.2
	3.5 or more	6	7.3
	Total	82	100.0

Source: Survey Data (2018)

Table 5.4 shows that the majority (79.3%) of the students were studying business-related courses. This was expected since most of the programmes run by the university were business-related and that only few (20.7%) enrol in Science and Engineering programmes. There were no international students studying Nursing or other programmes such as Theology. Regarding post-graduate plans, aggregating the results shows that most (62.2%) had plans of working or schooling in their home country. This fact aside, the proportion of international students, with the intention of either schooling or working in Ghana, was high (37.9%).

5.7 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT XUC

This section focuses on sub-aim one, which is to assess the academic performance of international undergraduate students across background characteristics in the university. Current GPA measured academic performance. For analysis, the GPAs were classified as follows:

a) Fail	=	Less than 1.50
b) Pass	=	1.50 - 1.99
c) Third Class	=	2.00 - 2.49
d) Second Class	=	2.50 - 3.59
e) First Class	=	3.60 - 4.00

In converting the GPAs to the grading scheme of the university, Table 5.5 shows the current academic performances of the international undergraduate students.

Table 5. 5: Academic performance of the international undergraduate students

Grading	Frequency	Percent (%)
Fail	17	20.7
Pass	26	31.7
Third Class	23	28.0
Second Class	10	12.2
First Class	6	7.3
Total	82	100.0

Source: Survey Data (2018)

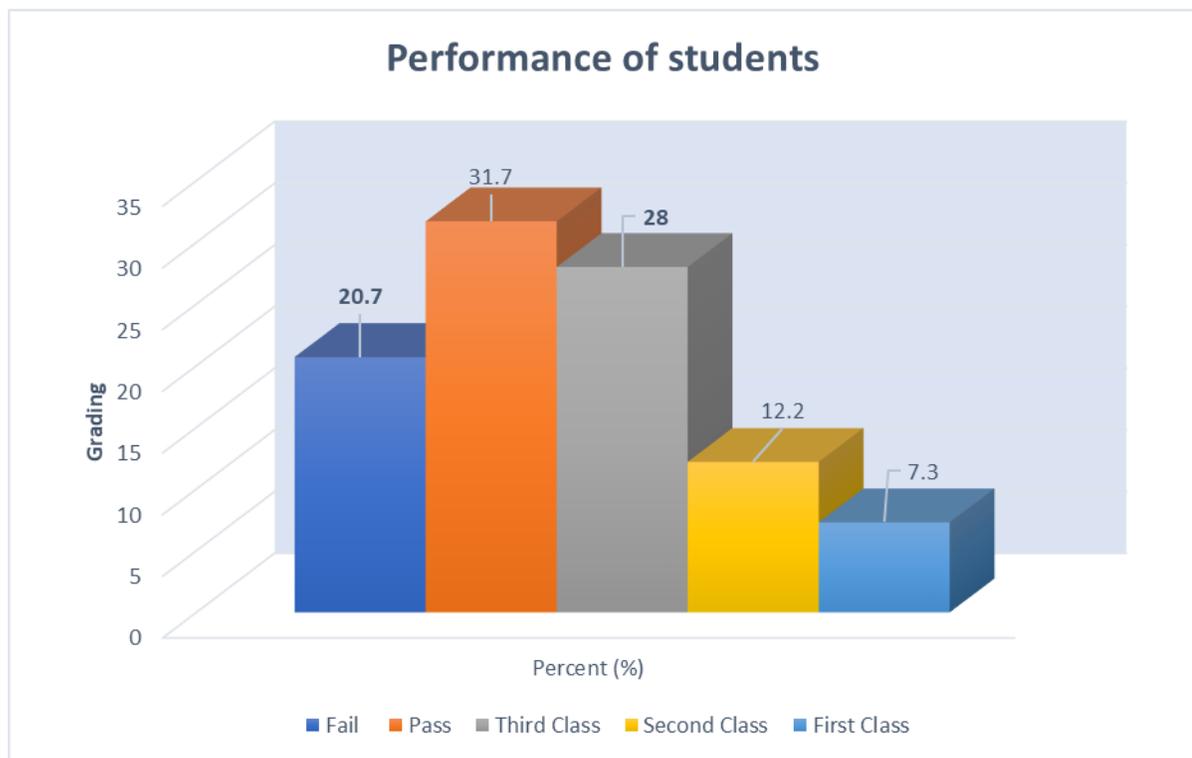


Figure 5. 1: Academic performance of the international undergraduate students (Source: Source Data, 2018)

Of the 82 participants, aggregating the results shows that more than half (52.4%) currently have a GPA of at most 2.49 (Fail to Third Class) while less than 20 percent (19.5%) are in the range of a GPA of at least 3.0 (Second Class to First Class). Available data from the University shows that of the 148 international students that graduated from the university between 2013 and 2017, 15 (10.1%) had First class, 84 (56.8%) had Second class, 37 (25.0%) had Third class, while 12 (8.1%) had a Pass. However, comparing this performance to that obtained in Table 5.5 shows that performance of international students enrolled in the university during the reference period for this study was abysmal as compared to those that graduated between 2013 and 2017. These were clear indications that the students were struggling academically as clearly indicated in Figure 5.1.

One of the Faculty members affirmed:

A lot of international students are not doing so well. There is one that has been repeated; his grades are very bad. I think there are two or three others of the same category. Usually you see a few who do pretty well, but a lot of the time, you get quite a number of them who are not up to par. [Lecturer-IT]

The above point was further confirmed from the focus group discussion where all the students affirmed that most international students in the university do not perform well academically. One of the students explained:

My perception of international students' academic performance is a 50-50 something. You will find those performing very well in their department and also find those lacking behind. Even in the last exams we wrote, international students were caught cheating several times. It is not like we do not know what to do in terms of academic performance, but you will find most of us are slow, particularly the Francophones, because they still struggle a bit with English [AS78-400-003].

Similarly, one of the FS's lamented:

When we write exams sometimes we can tell that this exam is not that hard, but we find it hard because we don't sometimes know when to be using homonym, antonyms and synonyms. So, if we don't memorise our answers and write it exactly that way we have learned, we have trouble expressing ourselves well [FS59-400-001]

The weak GPA, as indicated in Table 5.5 above, is an indication that the students had not sufficiently adjusted academically into the academic environment. According to Baker (2002), a strong GPA often indicates academic adjustment. This also appears to support Tinto's (1993) argument that a student's performance is influenced by his/her academic and social experiences. Despite the low performance, there were some exceptional performances among some of the international students.

One of the lecturers explained:

I think some are very good. There was this Nigerian female student that had a First Class. Well, there are a couple of them. I know about two or three who had First Class too. Pretty decent students, they rub shoulders with their Ghanaian colleagues and even sometimes beat them in some of the courses. They are very sharp students, and I think they were more focused: attending lectures, doing assignments, writing exams and researching [Lecturer-LSCM]

The above statement could be explained by the argument given by Gebhard (2012) that some international students never experience emotional upheavals despite the cultural differences and challenges they encounter. According to Ahmadi (2016), the academic performance of international students is inextricably linked to certain factors such as background characteristics. Further analysis was therefore done to determine the

performance of the students across their background characteristics using the chi-square test of independence.

Table 5. 6: Academic performance across background characteristics

Variable	Chi-square (χ^2)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Significance (p)
Gender	16.467	4	0.002
Age	4.688	8	0.790
Level	28.837	12	0.004
Marital status	7.450	8	0.489
Country of origin	3.155	4	0.532

Source: Survey Data (2018), p is significant at 0.05

The results above suggest that except gender and academic level, none of the background variables significantly influenced the academic performance of the students ($p > 0.05$). In aggregating the results, with regards to gender, more than half of both genders (Male = 51.0%, Female = 53.7%) had low academic performance, though there were more males with very low performance (32.3%) than females (12.2%). Additionally, while none of the males had very high academic performance, five females had same performance. These are clear indications that there are differences in academic performance across gender. Using a level of significance of 0.05, the critical value for a standardized residual would be -1.96 and +1.96, hence using standardised residuals, females contributed significantly to the chi-square result.

The current GPA of the students shows that while none of those in Level 400 had a Fail, the majority of those in Level 100 (60.0%) and 200 (36.8%) had a Fail. However, majority of those in Level 400 (62.5%) had a Third Class while majority (42.5%) of those in Level

300 had a Pass. While none of those in Levels 100 and 200 had the First class, four students in Level 300 and two in Level 400 had First Class. Of the 10 students with second class, eight (80.0%) were in Level 300 while. One was in Level 100 and 400 respectively. There are clear indications that performance of the students seems to get better as they progress through the academic levels. This suggests that Level 100 students could have more difficulties adjusting to the academic environment, though further analysis will confirm this statistically. One of the FS's affirmed:

When I came to Ghana, it was difficult for me and most of the Francophone students that came to Ghana. We just learnt the language in Ghana at a Language school for six months then applied to this university. So, during the first year, it was quite difficult for us, though not all of us, most of us. It was difficult to understand our lecturers. So, Level 100's performance here was not that bad entirely, but as for we Francophone students, it was quite difficult for us to perform well. I am even struggling to get First class, but for now, I can say I am doing well, but when I just came it was very difficult [FS79-400-004]

Relating the academic performance across academic levels, there are indications that international students later adjust and integrate better into the university environment, a fact evidenced through stronger performance as asserted by Gebhard (2012). It was, however, surprising that the country of origin did not have any significant effect ($p = 0.532$) on the academic performance of the students as shown in Table 5.6. However, students from Anglophone countries seem to have better performance academically than those of Francophone origins. However, the difference is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). Almost half of Anglophone (47.5%) students had a performance between Fail and Pass as against 60.0 percent of the Francophone. Additionally, while 20.0 percent of the Anglophone had between a Second and Third Class, 18.8 percent of the Francophone had similar performance.

One of the administrators reiterated:

I think the academic performance is very low. International students, mostly the Francophone, when I look at their results, their performance is very low. Actually, not all of them are doing well, just a few [International Relations Officer]

An FS stated:

French is my language but in Ghana the official language is English, so I have to learn it so that I can communicate with people. In Level 100 First Semester, I found it very difficult to communicate and it really disturbed me, and I failed even in one of my courses. I used to feel shy in class to talk. Sometimes people would giggle, also the lecturer, or try to correct me. Even though I knew the answers, after a while I stopped speaking up. I could not write and speak the language properly. It took time for me to really adjust but now I am fine [FS59-400-001]

The above point reaffirms assertions made by Gebhard (2012) that international students later adjust and integrate better into the university environment and that this is indicated by stronger academic performance. However, the insignificant difference ($p > 0.05$) in performance across the country of origin as shown in Table 5.6 implies that regardless of which countries international students come from, there are similar issues that confront them with regards to adjusting to university life in a foreign country. The next section, therefore, analyses how the level of adjustment affects the academic performance of the students.

5.8 ADJUSTMENT ISSUES IDENTIFIED

This section focuses on the second sub-aim, which was to examine the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students at the university. The study explored the adjustment issues of international undergraduate students using three constructs and explored how each construct applied to the students. The three constructs studied were Personal-Emotional adjustment (PERSEMO), Social Adjustment (SOCADJ), and Academic Adjustment with focuses on Academic Motivation (ACADMTVN) and Academic Environment (ACADENV) on a scale of 1 to 9 (1= Applies Very Close to Me) and (9= Does not Apply to me at all). The measures were totalled to provide an overall picture of international student adjustment in the university.

Personal-emotional adjustment consisted of eight items seeking to determine levels of physical and psychological distress. Social adjustment consisted of four items and assessed student response to the interpersonal/social demands of college. Academic adjustment consisted of academic motivation and academic environment. It entailed eight items designed to ascertain student response to the educational demand characteristics of college. Academic motivation, which relates to academic goals and purpose of students, consisted of four items. Academic environment, which relates to coursework and lecturers, also consisted of four items. The total ISACQ score ranged from 20 - 180. See Appendix H for details. The descriptive statistical analysis is shown in Table 5.7. Higher scores on the full scale and sub-scales indicate better adjustment to the institution.

Table 5. 7: Level of adjustment

Variable	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Dev.	N of items
PERSEMO	43.451	11.00	72.00	16.506	8
SOCADJ	19.523	4.00	36.00	8.693	4
ACADMTVN	12.976	4.00	36.00	9.964	4
ACADENV	14.207	4.00	35.00	8.632	4
Overall	90.232	34.00	160.00	26.236	20

Source: Survey Data (2018)

While the total ISACQ score ranges from 20 -180, the sample presented a range of 64 - 160 (\bar{x} = 90.232, sd. = 26.236) as shown in Table 5.7. Thus, the overall adjustment of the students was a little above average. This suggests that there is an improvement in adjustment, though the students seem to be struggling in adjusting positively to the university environment. This finding is consistent with the findings of Akwensivie et al. (2013) as well as Malete et al. (2015) who asserted that adjustment issues experienced by international students appear to be prevalent within universities in Ghana. Additionally, the low adjustment levels have implications for the retention of the students as argued by Tinto's theory of Student Integration and Astin's Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) theory, that due to the inability of new students to overcome the challenges of adjusting to the new educational environment, attrition could be high.

One of the students explained:

Most of the Francophone students could not complete up to Level 400 because of the English language. So, they decided to quit and could not graduate. So generally, international students did well, but with Francophone students, they had a lot of challenges understanding the English language and struggled in Level 100, but some are now doing well [AS77-400-002].

A faculty member also indicated: *In the past, we used to have a lot of international students, a lot of them but now we don't have so many, at least at the Communication Studies department, we don't have so many of them* [Lecturer- Communication Studies]

The data was further disaggregated in determining the adjustment issues using the constructs. Of a possible range of 8 - 72 on PERSEMO subscale, this sample presented a range of 11 - 72 ($\bar{x} = 43.45$, $sd.=16.506$) as shown in Table 5.7. Thus, the personal – emotional adjustment score was above average. This suggests that the students do not largely experience psychological or somatic symptoms of distress, as argued by Ahmadi (2016).

While the SOCADJ subscale offers a potential range of 4 - 36, this sample also produced a range of 4 - 36 ($\bar{x} = 19.523$, $sd. = 8.693$) as shown in Table 5.7. Thus, participants had a score above average for social adjustment. This suggests that the students have somehow been able to fit into the social environment of the university through the involvement in social activities such as the SRC Week Celebration as well as College Assembly and Mentorship programmes. The better personal-emotional and social adjustment as experienced by the students in Table 5.7 explains Tinto (1993) argument that a student's emotional response to his/her campus experience is influenced by how well socially he integrates with the university experience.

The integration of the students into the social environment of the university could not be explained by the social activities organised by the IRO of the university including the following:

- a) Diversity Week: This event aims to educate the university populace on the various cultures. However, this programme, according to the students, is no longer regular.

One of the students lamented:

I remember we once had a programme called "Diversity Week" and international students were so much enthusiastic about that programme wanting to showcase what they know and have. But I don't know, that programme has been cancelled, and we no longer have it, and I think something is missing and that's it [AS81-400-005]

- b) International Students' Association: There is a Nigerian International Students' Association and a Francophone International Students' Association, both led by the International Students' Association President and overseen by a Patron. The associations generally discuss issues concerning the adjustment of the students. However, currently, the associations are no longer independent, but have been merged with the SRC. This merging, according to the international students, could explain the ineffectiveness of the association in recent times, including the non-functioning of the diversity week. However, the Patron of the International Students' Association indicated, during the interview that the association tried to have the diversity week this year by liaising with the IRO and the SRC, but it was to no avail. Diversity Week is now reduced to a day.
- c) Other activities

However, some students mentioned two other activities that take place at the school, namely Mentorship and the College Assembly. These fall under the welfare policy as per the Student Handbook (XUC, 2010). These activities appeared to have helped in their social adjustment as noted by one participant:

I enjoy the College Assembly. They bring different speakers, not just pastors, and they talk about so many different types of things. I have learned a lot about life. [FS16-100-002]

Another commented about the other activity saying:

We have Mentorship every week. It has helped me to get some more Ghanaian friends. In my group, I am the only international student, but now my mentorship group is like a small family to me [FS45-100-004].

Despite the positive adjustment socially, it was observed that the female international undergraduate students find it difficult to co-habitat with their Ghanaian roommates. The Patron of the International Students' Association explained:

Accommodation is a problem. The rooms are crowded in the hostels. So, you find most of them, especially the girls, living off-campus. The girls find it hard to get on with their Ghanaian roommates, but for the guys who stay on campus, they manage, though sometimes there are fights.

Scores on the ACADMTVN subscale can range from 4-36. This sample also revealed a range of scores of 4 - 36 ($\bar{x} = 12.976$, $sd = 9.964$), as shown in Table 5.7. Thus, academic motivation adjustment score was below average. The low adjustment level in academic motivation suggests that there may be some international students who are in school solely for other non-academic reasons.

One of the students affirmed this:

For our academic perception or performance, I would want to rate it on a scale of 0 - 100 and would give it 60 because it's not all of us coming from Nigeria are here for education; some came in because of the lack of freedom, like they are not free at home and so they are here not to study but to play. Most of them come in to play right from Level 100 through to 200, and when they get to Level 300, they realise they have made mistakes by having a lot of re-sit exams. And some, sad to say, had to move out of the hostel [AS78-400-003]

A support staff member also lamented about the low academic motivation by some of the international students and confirmed the previous remark:

Some of the international students have very bad lifestyles. Their performance is not very good at all and they don't seem to have the academic motivation. I counsel a lot of them, particularly the Nigerians. Some were even asked to move out of the hostel because they were not doing well in their studies [Chaplain]

While ACADENV subscale range of score from 4 to 36, the sample presented a range of 4-35 ($\bar{x} = 14.207$, $sd = 8.632$) as shown in Table 5.7. There is a low adjustment to the academic environment by the international students and that generally, the students are struggling academically. Thus, international students are not meeting the educational demands of the university environment. The low adjustment could explain the low performance recorded in Table 5.6.

One of the students illuminated the interviewer on this:

I have a lot of challenges here. The first one is academics because it is the reason I left my country to come to Ghana and I don't want to finish school and not attain the level I want [FS26-100-005]

The low adjustment to the academic environment by international students is partly explained by the attitude of some faculty members. One of the students lamented about the instructional skills of some of the lecturers:

I am also a bit struggling with my friends as we are Francophone. Sometimes when the lecturer is lecturing the class, he doesn't think that there are international students. Because when they gave him the programme and sometimes the period is short, so he has to run faster. So, sometimes when he is explaining in the class, is like he is just talking to Ghanaians. Even though we complain sometimes they slow down for a little bit and then do it again. So, for us to understand, we have to sit beside a Ghanaian and also take notes by copying from our Ghanaian friends about what the lecturer said [FS20-100-003].

The low adjustment to the academic environment could be explained by the fact that some faculty members have not considered international students, particularly the Francophone students, as a group that needs special attention. This is also evident by the fact that some faculty members could not give the exact number of international students in their class despite the small number of international students. As one lecturer stated: *I am not sure how many international students I have, but just a few, I think. I have not really closely checked on them.* [Lecturer and HOD of ECO].

5. 9 CORRELATION MATRIX

The study also analysed the correlation between the dimensions of adjustment with the results shown in Table 5.8:

Table 5. 8: Correlation matrix of adjustment constructs

Variable	PERSEMO	SOCADJ	ACADMTVN	ACADENV
PERSEMO	1	0.313	-0.175	-0.129
SOCADJ	1	0.125	0.251	
ACADMTVN	1	0.628		
ACADENV	1			

Source: Survey Data (2018), p is significant at 0.05

The correlation matrix shows a strong positive correlation between the academic environment and academic motivation ($r = 0.628$). The correlation is also found to be significant ($p=0.00$). This means that the better the academic environment, the higher the likelihood of international students being motivated academically. The positive correlation between academic motivation and academic environment supports Baker (2002) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) arguments that an academically adjusted student is one who is comfortable with his educational institution and therefore spends quality time studying, avoids skipping classes, has a good relationship with his/her lecturers, colleagues and ultimately achieves academic success.

Additionally, a positive correlation is found between personal-emotional adjustment and social adjustment ($r = 0.313$). The correlation was also found to be significant ($p=0.04$). This reaffirms Tinto (1993) argument that a student's emotional response to his/her

campus experience is influenced by how well socially he integrates with the university experience. Thus, integrating socially well in the university environment could result in positive personal-emotional response to the university environment.

The social adjustment also had positive correlation ($r = 0.251$) with an academic environment. The correlation was found to be significant ($p = 0.023$). Thus, the more international students get involved in social activities of the university as well as develop positive relationships with their colleague and lecturers, the likelihood of being satisfied with the university environment as noted by several researchers (Astin 1999; Baker, 2002; Baker & Siryk, 1989; Tinto, 1993, 2014) will prevail.

On the other hand, personal-emotional adjustment has negative correlation with academic motivation ($r = -0.175$) and academic environment ($p = -0.129$) which are also statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). For further inferential statistical analysis, the adjustment was recorded into three categories. Theoretically, the higher the adjustment score, the better the adjustment. In this study, any score less than half (90) of the total adjustment score (180) is rated as low adjustment, while scores in the range of 90-126 are rated as average adjustment. Adjustment scores above 126 are rated as high. Table 5.9 shows the adjustment levels.

Table 5. 9: Recoded overall adjustment levels

Adjustment Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	41	50.0
Average	31	37.8
High	10	12.2
Total	82	100.0

Source: Survey Data (2018)

Half (50.0%) of the international students rated their overall adjustment level as low, while less than 20 percent (12.2%) rated it as high. It is clear that the international students had low adjustment levels as depicted earlier in Table 5.7.

Tinto (1987) theorised that the personal characteristics of an individual student bear a strong correlation to his/her likeliness to successfully adjusting to university. International students' level of adjustment was also explored across their biographies and school characteristics. This was done using the chi-square test to determine if the adjustment level of the students is statistically dependent on their background characteristics.

Table 5. 10: Adjustment across background characteristics

Variable	Chi-square (χ^2)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Significance (p)
Gender	3.155	2	0.206
Age	5.328	6	0.503
Level	16.308	6	0.012
Marital status	6.606	4	0.158
Country of origin	2.535	2	0.281

Source: Survey Data (2018), p is significant at 0.05

Table 5.10 shows that none of the background variables statistically influenced the overall adjustment level of the students, except the academic level ($p < 0.05$). Regarding gender, there is no statistically significant difference in adjustment levels across males and female ($p > 0.05$). Thus, although more than half of the males (55.6%) had low adjustment as against 45.7 percent of the females, the difference is not statistically significant. While this finding contradicts with Lee et al., (2009) and Razek and Coyner (2013), it is consistent with Mustaffa and Ilias (2013) who found no significant gender difference in the adjustment

process of international students in Malaysia. The findings also supported Baker and Siryk (1989), who established that there was no gender disparity in overall adjustment to university life.

Regarding country of origin, 60.0 percent of those from Francophone countries had low adjustment as against 42.6 percent of those from Anglophone. Additionally, 14.7 percent of the Anglophones had high adjustment against 8.6 percent of the Francophone. Therefore, the inability to communicate in English could have some effect on the adjustment of non-English speaking international students in Anglophone countries as indicated by Chen (1999). However, the results in Table 5.10 shows that the level of adjustment does not vary significantly across the country of origin ($p = 0.281$).

However, adjustment levels were found to be statistically dependent on the academic levels of the students ($p = 0.012$). While 80.0 percent of the students in Level 100 had low adjustment, 64.3 percent, 62.5 percent and 34.1 percent of those in Levels 200, 300 and 400 respectively, had low adjustment. None of those in Levels 100 and 200 had high adjustment. Further correlation analysis shows a positive and significant correlation between students' academic level and adjustment level ($r = 0.267$, $p = 0.015$). It implies that students can better adjust as they stay longer in the school through their progression across academic levels.

One of the students explained:

For we the international students, when we got to Level 200, it became quite easier for us understanding the lecturers and whatever we have been taught. So Level 200, 300 and 400 were quite easier than Level 100 [AS81-400-005]

The Patron of the International Student Association also commented:

Usually, by the end of the first semester, the new students are more at ease with the school, with being in Ghana and so on. By that time, they have made friends and know their way around.

The statements above are consistent with Young et al. (2013) who found that adjustment for international students is not a one-time event, but a process that takes place over a while. According to Baker and Siryk (1989), an adjustment involves the interactions of the student with his/her environment, until harmonisation is achieved between the environment and his/her issues and requirements. Therefore, the higher the academic level, the better the harmonisation between the university environment and students' issues and needs.

5.10 ADJUSTMENT ISSUES AND THEIR EFFECT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

As per the third sub-aim of the study, this section analysed the extent to which students' adjustment in the university affects their academic performance. The third sub-aim is to examine how adjustment issues affect the academic performance of international undergraduate students at the university. Pearson correlation analysis was also done to determine the association between adjustment and academic performance.

Table 5. 11: Correlation between adjustment and academic performance

Variable	PERSEMO	SOCADJ	ACADMTVN	ACADENV	ACADEPERFO
PERSEMO	1	0.310	-0.175	-0.129	0.098
SOCADJ		1	0.125	0.251	0.128
ACADMTVN			1	0.628	0.066
ACADENV				1	0.249
ACADEPERFO					1

Source: Survey Data (2018), p is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Correlations between types of adjustments and academic performance were observed as presented in Table 5.11. It is noted that all the sub-scales of adjustment had a positive correlation with academic adjustment. The correlation between academic performance and the adjustment variables: PERSEMO, SOCADJ, ACADMTVN and ACADENV are respectively 0.098, 0.128, 0.066, and 0.249. Though the correlations are not strong, they are significant in a positive way with academic performance. Thus, a student's commitment to graduate from the university as well as his/her academic goals all interacts with the university environment to culminate in academic performance. The positive correlation here also means that if the social systems, meaning the social interaction between the students, staff and lecturers that take place on campus are effective, students are likely to perform better academically (Tinto, 1993).

On the other hand, Table 5.11 shows that there exists a positive relationship between the independent variables except for the relationship between PERSEMO and ACADENV and PERSEMO and ACADMTVN which were negatively related. Even though the correlations between the independent variables were not strong, the relationship between ACADMTVN

and ACADENV proved otherwise. A correlation of 0.628 recorded suggests that there is a stronger relationship between how a student is academically motivated and the academic environment.

5.11 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

An ordinal regression analysis was performed to determine if adjustment had any significant effect on the academic performance of the students. The ordinal regression analysis was performed because the dependent variable (academic performance) was measured using an ordinal scale. Table 5.12 shows the Nagelkerke value for both regressing adjustment against academic performance and controlling the background characteristics.

Table 5. 12: Pseudo R-Square

Model	R-square
Main model	0.701
Controlled model	0.772

Source: Survey Data (2018)

Predictors (Main model): Adjustment,

Predictors (Control model): Gender, country of origin and academic level, p is significant at 0.05

The Pseudo R-Square analysis presented a Nagelkerke value of 0.701, which implies that 70.1 percent of the variation in the general academic performance of the students was explained by the adjustment. However, after controlling for background characteristics, a Nagelkerke value of 0.77 was obtained, indicating that about 77.2 percent of the variation in the academic performance of the students has been influenced by adjustment issues and

students background characteristics. Thus, the predictive power increased by 7.1 percent after controlling for background characteristics. Table 5.13 shows the regression model fitting information.

Table 5. 13: Model summary

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-square	df	Sig
<i>Main model</i>				
Intercept only	214.892			
Final	136.044	78.848	51	0.007
<i>Controlled model</i>				
Intercept only	214.892			
Final	119.916	94.976	56	0.001

Predictors (Main model): Adjustment,

Predictors (Control model): Gender, country of origin and academic level, p is significant at 0.05

Source: Field Data (2018)

As part of testing the significance of the ordered logistic regression analysis, the significance of the model that includes the predictor variable, which, has been arrived through an iterative process that maximises the log-likelihood of the outcomes seen in the outcome variable was performed. It is noted that the main regression model is significant ($\chi^2 = 117.602$, $p = 0.011$) as shown in Table 5.13 and that at least one of the regression coefficients in the model is not equal to zero. It is also seen that by including the predictor variables and maximizing the log-likelihood of the outcomes seen in the data, the "Final" model has improved upon the "Intercept Only" model. This can be seen in the differences in the -2(Log-Likelihood) values associated with the models. It is noted that in Table 5.13 that there is a statistically significant chi-square statistic ($\chi^2 = 143.499$, $p = 0.000$) and that

at least one of the regression coefficients in the model is not equal to zero. This meant that the significant value of the test-statistics (p-value) obtained is less than 0.05. In other words, if: $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05 \Rightarrow \text{Accept } H_1 \text{ at } 0.05$. In this case, $0.000 < 0.05 \Rightarrow \text{Accept } H_1 \text{ at } 0.05$

Since the significance value of the test-statistics (p-value) obtained is less than 0.05, the hypothesis that adjustment significantly affects students' academic performance is accepted. Thus, the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis. Generally, it is concluded that their level of adjustment significantly influences the academic performance of international students. Thus, higher adjustment levels are correlated with higher academic performance. This is consistent with the Astin's I-E-O theory and Tinto's Theory of Student Integration which demonstrate that the ability of a student to adjust to his/her educational environment, ultimately affects his/her academic outcomes. Table 5.14 also shows the contribution of the four adjustment variables to the academic performance of the students.

Table 5. 14: Regression coefficients of adjustment subscales

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig
PERSEMO	1.310	0.172	3.292	1	0.072
SOCADJ	0.472	0.179	6.929	1	0.008
ACADMTVN	0.100	0.234	0.182	1	0.670
ACADENV	0.500	0.176	8.173	1	0.004

Table 5.14 shows that social adjustment and academic environment are significant predictors of students' academic performance. Personal – emotional adjustment (Wald $\chi^2_{(1)} = 3.292$, $p > 0.05$ and academic motivation (Wald $\chi^2_{(1)} = 0.182$, $p > 0.05$), though had a positive correlation with academic motivation adjustment, the effect is statistically insignificant. A better social adjustment is associated with an increase in academic

performance with an odd ratio of 1.274 (95% CI, 0.121 to 0.823), Wald $\chi^2(1) = 6.929$, $p < .005$. This means that a student's academic performance is influenced by how well academically and socially he/she integrates with the university experience as argued by Tinto (1993).

The result is therefore consistent with Astin's Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) theory and Tinto's theory of Student Integration that both argue that the involvement and integration of a student should be viewed as both academic and social activities. Therefore, the ability of the student to adjust positively to the social as well as the academic environment both have a significant effect on their academic performance. This result supports the arguments by McGarvey, Brugha, Conroy, Clarke and Bryne, (2015) as well as Bek, (2017) that there is the need for students to actively involve themselves in the environment and integrate into the new culture they find themselves. Additionally, academic environment having a significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on the academic performance of the students was not surprising since all academic activities take place in the academic environment. This, according to Petersen et al., (2009) makes the university environment an important factor to the adjustment of university students and their expected academic outcomes. Therefore, if the academic environment is not supportive enough, definitely, students will struggle academically, though there are few exceptions.

5.12 COPING STRATEGIES

Sub-aim four was to explore the coping strategy employed by international undergraduate students at the university in adjusting to the challenges of their new environment. According to the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, a transaction between a person and his/ her environment is stressful only when the person evaluates it as harmful, threatening, or challenging to the person's well-being (Greenblum, 2010).

The low adjustment experienced by half (50.0%) of the students as depicted in Table 5.9 is an indication that the majority of the students found the university environment to be challenging, particularly the academic environment. As such, the study examined the most important coping strategies the students employ in responding to adjustment situations in the school. This was done using the weighted mean.

$$\text{Weighted Mean} = \frac{\sum w}{N}$$

Where w is the weighting given to each coping strategy by the participants, ranging from 1 to 7 and N is the total number of students that participated in the study (82). Table 5.15 shows the weights across the seven coping strategies.

Table 5. 15: Weighting of coping strategies

Strategy	Weights							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Confrontational coping	22	8	19	12	14	3	4	82
Distancing	6	22	16	7	7	7	17	82
Self-controlling	11	9	13	5	9	12	23	82
Seeking social support	11	16	13	10	10	5	17	82
Accepting responsibility	10	7	11	11	13	10	20	82
Escape-Avoidance	21	3	9	19	8	12	10	82
Relaxation	11	7	8	20	6	12	18	82

Source: Field Data (2018)

Using the weights in Table 5.15, the important relative index and the ranking are shown in Table 5.16. A higher weighted mean suggests the most important coping strategy. The

ranking is as follows: Rank 1 = Least Important Coping Strategy and Rank 7 = Most Important Coping Strategy.

Table 5. 1: Ranking of coping strategies for adjustment

Factors	Weighted mean	Rank
Confrontational coping	3.16	1
Distancing	3.93	4
Self-controlling	4.45	6
Seeking social support	3.91	3
Acceptability responsibility	4.46	7
Escape-Avoidance	3.80	2
Relaxation	4.35	5

Source: Field Data (2018)

The three most important coping strategies in responding to adjustment issues by the students as shown in Table 5.15 include accepting responsibility (Weighted mean = 4.46), self-controlling (Weighted mean = 4.45) and relaxation (Weighted mean = 4.35). Relaxation is one of the first three coping strategies could be explained by the level of support provided by some lecturers to international students that makes them less anxious.

One of the students explained:

Factors which are helping us to do well are the lecturers because as a private university we have lecturers who are always opened to us to listen to us and understand us. They are able to give proper instructions and explain to us again what we couldn't understand, and this makes us feel so comfortable and relaxed [AS81-400-005].

Another student explained:

I just go to my HOD and talk to him. That's how I handle my situations when I am stressed, and I feel that I can't take it anymore because I pay my fees. He is my Mentor, and he understands me, so I try to explain it the way it is, and he gives me the best advice to help solve the situation at hand [AS15-100-001].

Though not a very strong coping strategy among the students, some students seek support from their colleagues and faculty members of the university college.

As a final year student noted:

As for me personally, if I am doing well academically, it is because of how I relate with others, how I am always motivated to know more. After class and before the exam, I need to know the things we have done. So I get close to my Ghanaian friends and talk with them. I try as much as possible to ask questions. I go to the lecturer's office and ask him questions. That's how I cope. [FS79-400-004]

On the other hand, confrontational coping as well as an escape - avoidance were the least used coping strategies employed by the students in responding to adjustment issues in the university college. According to Stoeber and Renner (2008), international students who perceive stressors as challenges rather than threats are more likely to show problem-focused coping skills. They are thus less likely to use avoidant coping strategies, or strategies that ignore the presence of the stressor. Therefore, students have not used problem-focused coping skills. Problem-focused coping strategies, including actively trying

to change the situation and alter the stressor instead of perceiving it as stressful, could be the most worthwhile approach (Holahan & Moos, 1984; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008).

5. 13 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an analysis of the data gathered through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This was carried out in line with the research questions. Through logical deductions, the discussion covered the potential implications and interpretations of the findings. The researcher attempted to relate them to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapters Two and Three respectively. The results were presented in sections with each aimed at answering a specific objective.

The results show that despite the challenges of international students in adjusting to the university environment, the university college seemed not to have specific and strong support services for such students, except during the admission process. The IRO is responsible for assisting international students in getting residential permits and Identification Documents (ID) cards from the Ghana Immigration Service. It is also responsible for the supervision of student associations. However, beyond these services there currently appears to be minimal involvement with the students. Thus, the university college needs to be more proactive with these students to ensure they adjust well and can succeed academically.

In the next chapter, the major findings emanating from the study are presented with the relevant recommendations and conclusions. The implications of the study for practices and policy formulation are also presented in the next chapter. Also, presented in the chapter will be the contributions of the study to knowledge, policy and practice.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

There has been an increase in international students globally, with students leaving their home countries to travel across the globe for higher education. The numbers are steadily increasing yearly around the world and Africa is also attracting students intracontinentally (cf.par.1.1). Majority of the international students who come to Ghana are from neighbouring countries and other parts of Africa. However, as is the case with international students who travel to countries outside their continent, there are adjustment issues that these African international students also face when they study in Ghana (cf. par. 1.2 & 3.5). These issues are more evident in the first year of study and affect these students in many ways, but the main effect that this study focuses on is their academic performance. However, the ability to handle issues gradually increases as the students ascend in educational levels, stay longer within the country (cf. par. 3.5.2.2.5) and exercise coping strategies (3.6).

This current chapter presents a summary of the major findings from the study as well as the conclusions, recommendations, and directions for further research. The chapter presents the implications of the findings for policy formulation in caring for international students and mitigating the adjustment issues they face at the private Ghanaian university college, which was studied. It also outlines the significant lessons emanating from the study that may be used for the promotion of adjustment among international undergraduate students.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This section gives a summary of the six chapters of the study. The study explored adjustment issues faced by international students in a private University College in Ghana. It examined whether adjustment issues affected their academic performance. It was an explanatory mixed methods research; therefore, more emphasis was placed on the quantitative aspect rather than the qualitative (cf. par. 4.1). To this end, the researcher conducted a literature review consisting of several types of publications.

The following sub-aims and objectives (cf. par. 1.5) provided the guidelines for the formulation and development of the research:

- To assess what key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) influence the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC.
- To examine the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students enrolled at the university.
- To examine how these adjustment issues affect the academic performance of the students.
- To explore the coping strategies of these students as ways of addressing the adjustment issues for international undergraduate students at the university.

With these sub-aims and objectives and through the literature review, the researcher identified and selected an appropriate approach for conducting the study. Using the explanatory mixed methods approach, data was collected through closed and open-ended questions to obtain an ontological perspective of the prevailing situation. The study's population was all international undergraduate students, all lecturers and administrative staff at the university college. The sample size for the students was determined using the

Slovin formula (cf. par. 4.4.1.2.1) and 96 questionnaires were distributed. Eighty-two students returned them. For the quantitative aspect, the researcher chose a questionnaire entitled, “International Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (ISACQ)”, and combined it with a modified version of the “Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ)” to collect the data (cf. Appendix H) from international undergraduate students in all four academic levels, namely, Levels 100 to 400. The questionnaire designers for the ISACQ were contacted, and permission was granted for use (cf. par. 4.4.2.1 & Appendix A). For the qualitative aspect, on the other hand, ten students (five from Level 100 and another five from Level 400) were selected from amongst the 82 participants who had answered the questionnaires. These students participated in a focus group. Besides, seven staff members and the Patron of the International Students’ Association were selected for semi-structured interviews. (cf. par. 4.4.2.3). Hence, the sample was purposive and convenient.

Chapter One - offered an orientation of the study. It highlighted the global movement of students seeking out higher education in countries other than their nations. Though the Western nations were traditionally more popular study destinations, the chapter stated that Africa and Ghana where the study was conducted were part of this global phenomenon (cf. par. 1.1). Further, the chapter provided an overview of the theoretical underpinnings (cf. par.1.1), the conceptual framework (cf. par.1.1) as well as the background of the study (cf. par.1.2). The motivation (cf. par. 1.3), research problem (cf. par. 1.4), aim, sub-aims and objectives (cf. par. 1.5) were also discussed. Also, briefly discussed within the chapter were the research paradigm, approach and philosophy (cf. par.1.6.1), population and sampling, (cf. par. 1.6.2), instrumentation and data collection (cf. par. 1.6.3), data analysis and presentation (cf. par. 1.6.4), reliability (cf. par.1.7.1), validity (cf. par.1.7.2), trustworthiness (cf. par.1.7.3), credibility (cf. par. 1.7.4.), confirmability (1.7.5) and transferability (cf. par. 1.7.6). The chapter closed with a brief discussion of the considerations taken about ethical issues (cf. par.1.8), a layout of the organisation of the study (cf. par.1.9), contribution and significance (cf. par.1.10), and definitions of key terms (cf. par.1.11). The summary (cf.par.1.12) provided an abridged view of the entire chapter.

Chapter Two - The theoretical and conceptual frameworks underlying adjustment issues faced by international students was the focus of this chapter. Two major theories, underlying undergraduate student adjustment to university were explored. These were Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) theory (cf. par. 2.2.1.1) and Tinto's (1993) Student Integration Theory (cf. par.2.2.1.2). Additionally, a coping theory (Transactional Stress and Coping Theory) by Lazarus and Folkman (cf. par.2.2.1.3) was highlighted as a supporting theory to the other two theories. Lastly, the researcher developed a conceptual framework (Figure 2. 3.) illustrating the relationship between adjustment issues and the academic performance of international undergraduate students.

Chapter Three - This literature review chapter provided the context of student adjustment in higher education (cf.par.3.2), explored the concept of university student adjustment, indicators and issues (cf. par. 3.3), the pre-arrival expectations versus the realities of university life (cf. par.3.4), an overview of adjustment issues (cf. par. 3.5). Lastly, the chapter explored common coping strategies (cf. par. 3.6) of these students.

Chapter Four - Chapter Four focused on the research methodology and approach. The researcher opened with a rationale for conducting empirical research by presenting a detailed description of the mixed-method research. The chapter continued with an identification of the research approach (cf. par. 4.3.1). Before launching into the population and sampling descriptions, there is an illustration and discussion of the interplay between the approach, design and method (cf. par. 4.3.1.1). Next, the population and sampling (cf. par. 4.4.1). Turning to the research methods, the instrumentation and data collection techniques (cf. par. 4.4.2), were specified. A modified version of two standardised questionnaires was used to gather and measure the adjustment levels and coping strategies of the international student participants. Pilot testing was carried out and the questionnaire was further modified to suit the study. The Focus Group Manual and semi-structured interview schedules were also piloted and modified based on suggestions.

Further, the research methods section ended with a discussion that covered data analysis and presentation (cf. par. 4.4.3). Matters of reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the study (cf. par. 4. 5) were next. Finally, details of ethical consideration (cf. par.4.6), as mandated by UNISA were stated.

Chapter Five - Chapter Five reported on the empirical data analysis, findings and discussion of the data from the quantitative and qualitative aspects. Using the questionnaire, information was gathered on the participants' biographical characteristics (cf. par.5.3), their living experiences (cf. par. 5.4), family characteristics (cf. par.5.5), school characteristics (cf. par.5.6), their academic performance (cf. par.5.7) and adjustment issues (cf. par.5.8). After that, the correlation matrix (cf. par.5.9), adjustment issues and their effects on the academic performance of international students at XUC (cf. par.5.10) were discussed. Regression analysis was then carried out (cf. par.5.11). Lastly, the coping strategies (cf. par. 5.12) used by the international students were examined and conclusions are drawn. The analytical findings were merged with the qualitative aspects. Excerpts from the focus group and semi-structured interviews were merged with the quantitative findings; hence, the reliability of the study was established.

Chapter Six - In this concluding chapter, the summary, findings and recommendations for possible intervention programmes to address the adjustment challenges are presented. The development of these intervention programmes for the international students of the university is the researcher's contribution to both theory and practice in this field. Finally, the chapter makes comparisons and connections between the findings of the research and the literature review.

6.3 FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

The study was designed around the following research question stated in Chapter One, section1.4: What are the main adjustment issues facing international undergraduate

students at this Selected Private University College (XUC) and how do these issues affect their academic performance?

Based on this research question, four sub-questions were derived. This section of the chapter gives a summary of the key findings that emerged for each sub-question. Each sub-question had a corresponding sub-aim (cf. par. 1.4 and 1.5). This section compelled the researcher to look back at the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three to compare it with the data analysed in Chapter 5 and subsequently draw conclusions. The findings of each sub-question and the sub-aims are therefore discussed as presented below:

6.3.1. Findings for sub-question one and sub-aim one:

Sub-question one - What is the influence of key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) on academic performance of international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC? (cf. par. 1.5)

Based on the first sub-question, the first sub-aim of the study was to examine the academic performance of international students across key biographical background characteristics at the university college (cf. par. 1.5). Astin's I-E-O theory (cf. par. 2.2.1.1) was the overarching theoretical framework for this sub-aim. Astin's I-E-O theoretical framework indicated the connection between a student's background characteristics (denoted as his/her inputs), the environment (the campus) and the outputs (in this instance academic performance).

The following key findings emerged:

- As seen in Table 5.5, generally, international undergraduate students at the university are struggling academically. The current performance of more than half (52.4%) of the international students is within the range of fail to pass (cf. par. 5.7). Both faculty and students affirmed this finding. For instance, a lecturer stated that in his experience the international students were unable to keep up academically. A student also said many of them were struggling in class, and several cheated in their examinations (cf. par. section 5.7). This finding also affirmed the comments often made during Faculty Board meetings that international students were not performing well academically (cf. par. 1.4).
- Except for gender and academic levels, none of the background characteristic variables influenced the academic performance of the students significantly. Nevertheless, concerning gender, it was found that there were more males than females with very low academic performance, but it was not a significant difference. The literature review in Chapter Three revealed that while there are differences of opinions in the findings of the effect of gender on the ability to adjust, many researchers found the difference was not significant (cf. par.3.5.1.1 & 5.9). This study's findings thus agree with the findings of some researchers (cf. par. 3.5.1.2) mentioned in the review.
- It was found that although the country of origin had insignificant effect on levels of adjustment there were implications. The study found that the FS's had lower levels of adjustment than the AS's (cf. par. 5.7.) Thus, the challenge of English language proficiency (cf. par. 3.5.2.1. & Table 5.10) could have had some effect on their ability to perform well academically since lectures were taught in English (cf. par. 3.5.1.5).
- It was also found that the academic performance of the students seems to improve as they progress through the academic levels (cf. par. 5.7).

6.3.2. Findings for sub-question two and sub-aim two

Sub-question two – What are the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students at XUC? (cf. par. 1.5)

Based on sub-question two, sub-aim two was to examine the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students at the university. Again, with reference back to Astin's I-E-O and Tinto's Student Integration theoretical frameworks, the academic environment has some bearing on the output or academic performance of students. The following major findings emerged:

- Half of the international students had low adjustment levels and seemed to be struggling in adapting positively to the university environment.
- Adjustment among the students was better for personal-emotional and social adjustments than for academic adjustment. Thus, implying that the students have been able to respond positively to the emotional and social demands of university life, but not to the intellectual demands (3.5.2.1.1) and perhaps to other academic adjustment issues (3.5.2.1).
- Academic motivation and academic environment (Academic adjustment) however, recorded low adjustment levels.
- None of the background variables influences the adjustment level of the students significantly. However, adjustment level gets better as the students progress through academic levels.

- Majority of the international students found the university academic environment to be challenging.

6.3.3 Findings for sub-question three and sub-aim three

Sub-question three – What is the effect of the adjustment issues on the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC? (cf. par. 1.5)

Based on sub-question three, the sub-aim three was, to examine how these adjustment issues affect the academic performance of international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC.

The key findings are as follows:

- All the sub-scales of adjustment (personal-emotional, social, academic motivation and academic environment) had a positive correlation with academic performance (cf. par. Table 5.8). About 70.1 percent of the variation in the general academic performance of the students was explained by their adjustment level.
- Social adjustment and academic environment are significant predictors of international students' academic performance at XUC while personal-emotional and academic motivation is not (cf. par. Table 5.14).
- The level of overall adjustment (cf. par. 5.7) influenced the academic performance of the international students significantly.

Therefore, interaction with college students, faculty and staff of the university are important factors in helping international students overcome their adjustment issues and ultimately performing well academically. These findings confirm the theoretical assertions of Tinto (1993) and Astin (1993) as stated in Chapter 2 (cf. par.2.2.1.2) that when the academic environmental needs are met, students' output will be positive (Astin) and they will attain their academic goals (Tinto). Thus, this study has proved that these theoretical statements though predominantly affirmed in the USA, are relevant for Ghana.

6.3.4 Findings for sub-question four and sub-aim four

Sub-question four – What coping strategies do international students employ in adjusting to the challenges of the XUC environment? (cf. Par. 1.5)

Based on the fourth sub-question, the fourth sub-aim was to explore the coping strategies international undergraduate students used in addressing the adjustment challenges at XUC. The key findings are as follows:

- There has not been any standard adjustment management strategy by the management of the university to address adjustment issues of international students at the university college. This was confirmed by the review of the university's welfare policy (cf. par. 3.2.4.3) which lacked any clearly defined aspects for caring for international students. The welfare policy also lacks any clear redress for students who need extra assistance academically, socially or emotionally. This finding confirms the researcher who posited that when overall enrolment figures are low for a student population, their needs would be inadequately addressed by the institution (cf. par. 3.2.4). As already noted the total population of international students is only 126 in a total population of 2,800.

- The three most important coping strategies used by international students in responding to adjustment issues at XUC are accepting responsibility, relaxation and self-controlling strategies (cf. par. Table 5.15). Therefore, it can be concluded that the international undergraduate students at this university are using emotion-focused coping strategies (cf. par.2.2.1.3) to overcoming their adjustment issues themselves since the university has not helped them with developing problem focused coping strategies. Confrontational coping, escape-avoidance and seeking social support are the least coping strategies adopted by the international students in addressing adjustment challenges at the university (cf. par. Table 5.15).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY

In response to the findings arising from the study, the following recommendations are presented and offered for policy formulation and improvement of existing policies at the university. They are arranged in the same order as the sub-questions and sub-aims and their corresponding findings.

6.4.1. Recommendations for sub-question one

What is the influence of key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) on the academic performance of international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC? (cf. par. 1.5)

6.4.1.1. Re-assessment of admission policy for Francophone Students

Using the English language as the instructional medium in Ghana (cf. par. 3.5.1.5) suggests that FS's with low English proficiency will undoubtedly face challenges during instructional hours (cf. par. 5.8). Language barriers could also affect their participation in

different social events (cf. par. 3.5.2.2). Thus, the existing admissions policy (3.2.4.1) should be reassessed for non-English speakers who apply for admission as earlier described (6.5.2.1).

6.4.1.2 Establishment of an academic success learning centre

A learning centre can be developed through a partnership between the IRO and the Department of Communication Studies. The learning centre will offer English language skills development, study skills, tutorials in various courses and examination strategies. For language skill development, the content of such programmes would focus on the use of proper grammatical pedagogical techniques and the use of simulation or scales in grammar lesson preparations. This is essential to enhance the competence and effectiveness of students in influencing a positive attitude towards the appropriate use of the English language.

Further, the study skills and exam preparation and strategies would ensure students understand the importance of basic examination etiquette, correct usage of examination answer booklets, how to answer essay questions and multiple-choice questions (cf. par. 5.7). Study skills would help the students in developing time management and academic motivation. These services could be done both in group and individual formats. Moreover, the rest of the student body could also benefit from these programmes.

6.4.1.3 Incentivising well-performing international students

Incentivising well-performing international students can serve as a motivation for others who may be struggling. Therefore, the IRO should develop reward schemes that can be used to incentivise non-performing students. Thus, academic performance of international students would be made more attractive. Both intangible and tangible reward systems could be employed. The reward system is further described in section 6.5.2.2.

6.4.2 Recommendations for sub-question two

What are the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students at XUC? (cf. par. 1.5)

6.4.2.1 Institutionalisation of a coordination forum for adjustment

There is a need for all activities that aim at enhancing high adjustment among international students to be harmonised and synchronised to enhance coordination. This recommendation is illustrated in the section on contributions to practice (cf. Figure 6.2) and will involve the overlapping of other recommended practices. This forum is described in section 6.5.

6.4.2.2 Engagement in other extracurricular activities

The finding that social adjustment is significantly affecting the academic performance of international students requires that XUC creates avenues for international students to engage in many social activities. These activities can include visiting tourist sites, the reintroduction of Diversity Week among others. These extra-curricular activities may help reduce academic pressure.

Besides, there should be an amendment of the name of one of the smaller associations under the parent association, the International Students' Association. Currently, there is a Nigerian International Students and Francophone International Students Association (cf. par. 3.2.3). However, since there are other AS's apart from Nigerians in the parent

association, it is essential that the name, Nigerian International Students' Association is changed to a more inclusive name like Anglophone International Students' Association.

6.4.2.3 Monitoring class attendance

Since the majority of the international students found the university academic environment as challenging, if class attendance is monitored, regular absentees could receive written cautions. Since class attendance and participation (cf. par. 3.2.4.2.1) is part of the assessment, its importance must be stressed to students. Considering this, on-campus residence could be made compulsory for all unmarried students, as this will possibly ensure that their class attendance will be unaffected.

6.4.3 Recommendations for sub-question three

What is the effect of the adjustment issues on the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC? (cf. Par. 1.5).

6.4.3.1 Orientation of lecturers and support staff

To promote higher adjustment levels, the university should have faculty and staff that are not only well trained in communication skills, but are also passionate and caring enough to willingly assist international students (cf. par. 3.5.2.2.3). As the literature indicated, the academic environment has some bearing on the academic performance and academic motivation of students (cf. par. 3.3.2.1.1). Thus, all staff members must be oriented to embrace multiculturalism and inclusion thereby creating an academic environment that meets the academic needs of international students. The orientation would also cover

certain cultural aspects of the various nationalities enrolled at the university. This cultural awareness would prevent unintentional discriminatory acts on the part of the lecturers and staff.

Specific training should be provided for faculty members that work with international students due to the various constraints that confront them academically, socially and personal-emotionally. This recommendation is made with respect to the findings of subquestion three and sub-aim three. It is because there was an apparent lack of awareness on the part of some lecturers of the presence of international students in their classes (cf. par. 5. 8). During the focus group, there were complaints about the speed at which some of the lecturers spoke despite reminders that FS's were in their class thus making the students have to rely heavily on their Ghanaian friends for clarifications and notes (cf. par. 5. 8).

Furthermore, the faculty must ensure that xenophobic remarks are not tolerated and excessive use of vernacular is avoided during lectures. They must also express interest in the students' backgrounds and current life situations as this has been shown to have a positive effect on the overall well-being and academic performance of the students (cf. par 3.5.2.2.5). In class, lecturers can encourage multiculturalism by regularly reminding students that they have opportunity to learn global perspectives from each other. Doing this could cause students to value and appreciate their colleagues. It also will foster a safe environment for international students to speak and contribute.

6.4.4 Recommendations for sub-question four

What coping strategies do international students employ in adjusting to the challenges of the XUC environment? (cf. par. 1.5).

6.4.4.1 The development of an adjustment management programme

Currently, there is no standard approach or guidelines in the university college for managing international student adjustment issues. The existing welfare policy in the students' handbook is inadequate as there is no specific mention of the welfare for international students (cf. par.3.2.4.3). Thus, there is the need for a coordinated and coherent adjustment management programme, which will help students, faculty and staff to assist in the adjustment of the international students. Its implementation should be discussed and developed during the coordination forums, which could be held at the start and, end of each semester.

6.4.4.2. Embracing diversity between students

Intercultural competence between students will also need addressing. International students need guidance to succeed in their academic learning, while their psychological stress should be managed (cf. par. 3.6). Ghanaian students across departments and programmes should be encouraged to embrace international students, as that kind of interaction has been known to have a positive effect on the wellbeing of students in every area (cf. par. 3.5.2.2.2). Sharing collective experience could enhance the intercultural relationship (cf. par. 3.6.2.8). In addition, both domestic and international students should be taught how to appreciate their unique differences.

6.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The contributions of this study to scholarship are stated below according to each area of participation namely, contributions to knowledge, policy and practice. Within each of these sub-sections, apart from the policy section where there is some overlapping, the researcher has attempted to match the sub-question to the contribution as illustrated in Figure 6.1.

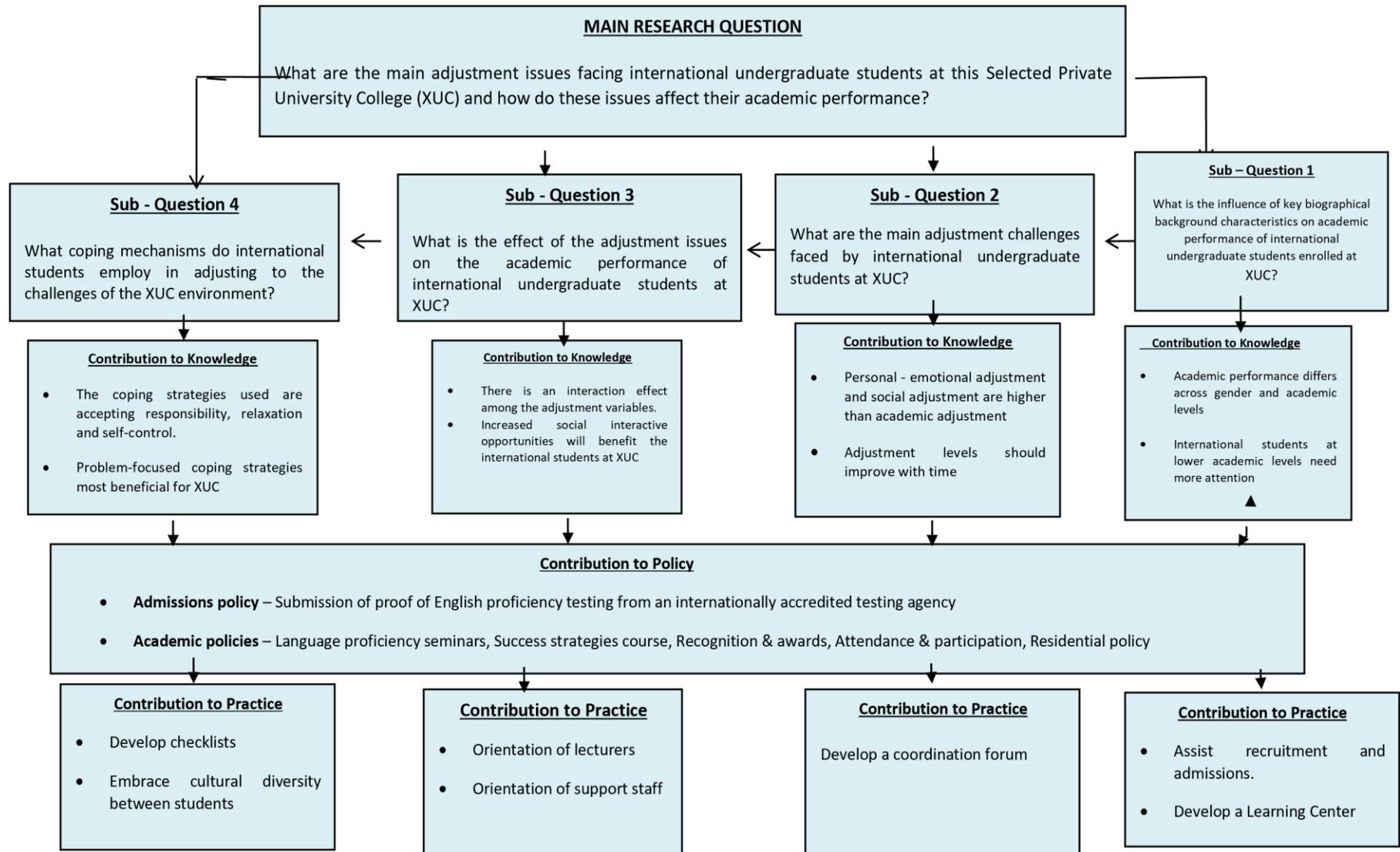


Figure 6. 1: Summarised illustration of the study’s contributions

6.5.1 Contributions to a knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge in several ways that will benefit the institution under review as delineated in the following sub-sections. The reviewed literature revealed that no studies on adjustment issues apparently had been carried out on this cross-section of the students' population at XUC. Also, very little apparently, has been researched about international students' adjustment at private universities in Ghana (cf. par. 1.1). Thus, the findings of this study would be beneficial to the immediate university community – students, administrators and faculty and beyond. Through this study, international student's orientation can be enriched from the information, which would be presented to the university. In addition, workshops can be held to enlighten the students on what challenges they are likely to encounter during their time at the university and how they can be addressed. The administrators and the faculty, on the other hand, can assist international students in coping with or overcoming the challenges. Furthermore, since information on the topic appears to be very limited in Africa (cf. par.1.1), this study can be a modest contribution to the discussion. The study can contribute to the development of international student management for other private universities in Ghana and other African universities by creating awareness of the need to be cognizant in international student adjustment.

6.5.1.1 Sub-question one: What is the influence of key biographical background characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and country of origin) on academic performance of international undergraduate students enrolled at XUC? (cf. par.

1.5)

The findings for sub-question one contributed the following knowledge:

- There is a significant difference in the academic performance of international students across gender and academic level at XUC.

- International students in Levels 100 and 200 need more attention in order to improve their academic performance.

Figure 6.2 illustrates this relationship

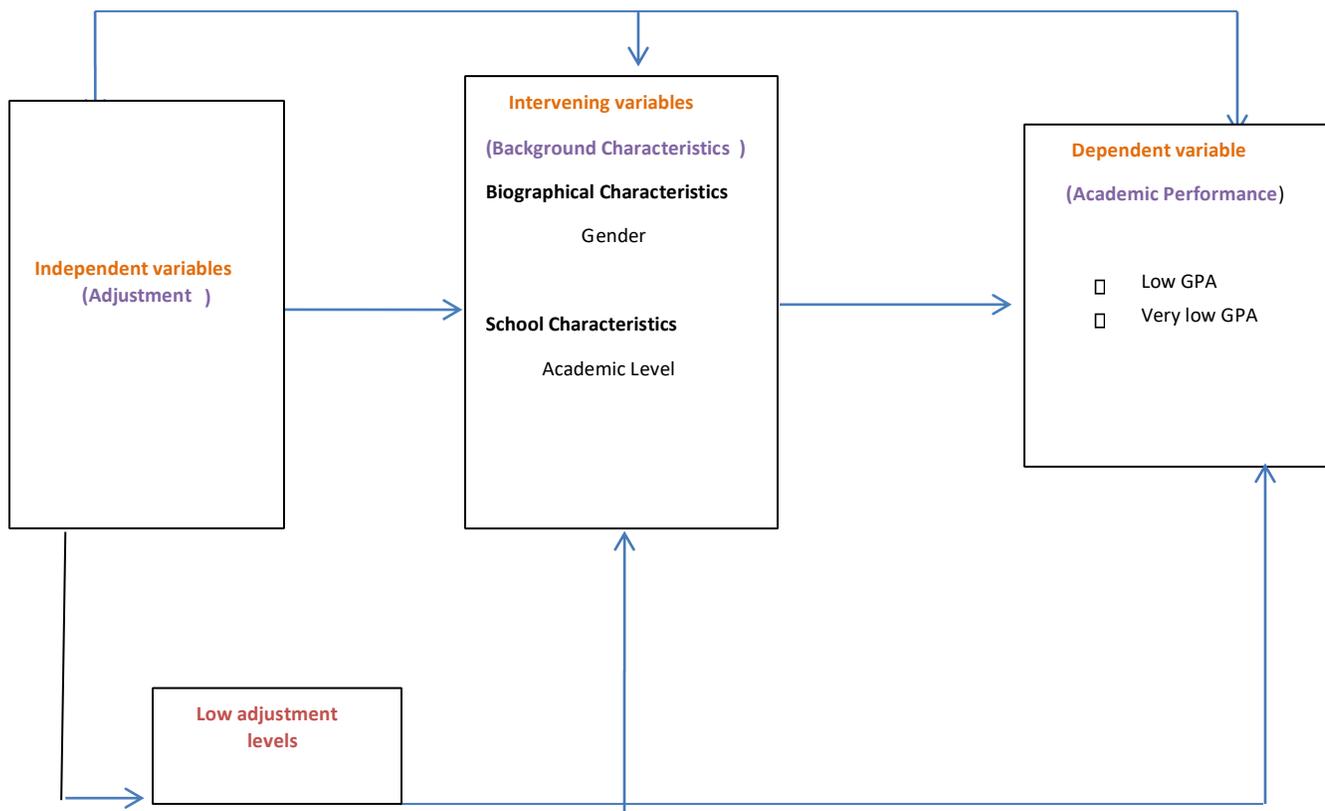


Figure 6. 2: Modified conceptual framework illustrating finding on sub-question one

6.5.1.2 Sub-question two: What are the main adjustment issues faced by international undergraduate students at XUC? (cf. par. 1.5)

- The students had better adjustment levels in personal-emotional adjustment and social adjustment than in academic adjustment. Thus, academic adjustment was the main issue the students faced. The contribution to knowledge is that with enhanced social activities, international students are more likely to positively adjust to interpersonal and social demands.
- Adjustment levels international students improve as they progress through the academic levels are another contribution to knowledge.

6.5.1.3 Sub-question three: What is the effect of the adjustment issues on the academic performance of international undergraduate students at XUC? (cf. par. 1.5)

How the adjustment variables interact among themselves (mediating effects) to affect the academic performance of the international students has apparently not been extensively discussed in the literature. This study found out that there is an interaction effect among the adjustment variables. Thus, a student with high social adjustment levels is more likely to have a high personal-emotional response to the university environment.

6.5.1.4 Sub-question 4: What coping strategies do international students employ in adjusting to the challenges of the XUC environment? (cf. Par. 1.5).

- The three most important coping strategies used by international students in responding to adjustment issues at the university are accepting responsibility, relaxation and self-controlling strategies.

- Problem-focused coping strategies could be the most beneficial approach to handling adjustment challenges among international students (cf. par. 2.2.1.3 & 5.12).

6.5.2 Contributions to policy

This study can contribute to the policy when the university management realises that international students need to be bolstered in their studies primarily because they are experiencing an ongoing transition. Existing policies can be modified to ensure greater sensitivity and responsiveness to deal with that segment of the student population.

Furthermore, new policies should be direct outcomes of the recommendations given in this chapter. In this way, the study can also contribute to quality assurance of higher education institutions by ensuring that international students have their needs holistically met. This section is not arranged according to specific sub-questions as the policies address all parts of the study.

6.5.2.1 Admission policy

In addition to the required documents submitted at admission (cf. par. 3.2.4.1), part of which currently includes an English language certificate from a language centre (cf. par. 3.2.4.1.3 & 5.7), the university college should conduct its English language proficiency test to ensure that FS's have adequate proficiency in English before admission. Though stated in the admission policy for international students (cf. par. 3.2.4.1.3), these requirements have never been implemented (cf. par.5.7). Alternatively, the university college could insist on a certificate from an internationally recognised language proficiency test such as TOEFL or IELTS before admission. The new admission policy could then read as follows:

Proof of Language Proficiency

All applicants from non-English speaking countries must submit proof of English proficiency testing from an internationally accredited body such as TOEFL or IELTS. In addition, all applicants must pass a mandatory interview conducted by the university college.

6.5.2.2 Academic policies

New academic policies must be added to the existing ones and two existing policies modified. The proposed policies are as follows:

(a) Language proficiency

All non-English speaking international students who score low passes in English entry exams are required to attend language seminars held weekly at the learning center.

(b) Academic success

All fresh international students and any others who require academic assistance are mandated to enrol in the Success Strategies course. This course is a Pass / Fail course, meaning that it does not count towards the GPA, but is a mandatory requirement for graduation.

(c) Recognition and awards

All international students who fall into the following categories will receive the corresponding recognitions at the end of the semester:

- *GPA 2.50 to 3.24 - Head of Department's Award - Name displayed on website and notice boards.*
- *GPA 3.25 to 3.59 - Dean's Award - Name displayed on the website, notice boards and a letter of recognition.*
- *GPA 3.60 to 4.00 - Rector's Award - Name displayed on the website, notice boards and a certificate of recognition.*

Students who earn a GPA of 3.60 to 4.00 after their programmes will receive a certificate of recognition, educational materials and a monetary gift at graduation ceremony.

The existing policies on attendance and participation as well as that of students' progression (cf. par.3.2.4.2.4) must be modified. Requiring students to leave the halls of residence for failing to meet the minimum GPA is unfair to all students, but particularly to international students who often do not have family support in Ghana and are far away from home for extended periods. The proposed policies are as follows:

(a) Student attendance and participation

Participation is encouraged for all students. Students who miss more than three classes will receive a written warning. Continued absenteeism will attract a penalty deduction of 10% on the final grade.

(b) Residential living

On-campus residence is compulsory for all unmarried international students in Levels 100 and 200 to ensure that class attendance is unaffected.

6.5.3 Contributions to practice

This study contributes to practice in several ways that will benefit the institution. An adjustment management programme can be developed from the findings of the study. The following steps are a pilot action plan for its implementation with the final step being the development of an international student adjustment management handbook.

The first step is the implementation of the adjustment management programme is setting up a coordination forum. A coordination forum would ensure a strategy for the adjustment management of international students. The forum will help the various offices on campus work together. Relevant information from the various offices that affect the international students would be shared during this forum. The Academic Affairs Office, by compiling a database of international students across each academic department, would start the formation of the forum. Thus, other arms of university administration, such as the Admissions and Recruitment office, Chaplaincy Office, Student Support Office, Counselling Unit, Hostels and Mentorship offices, would also get a list and make aggressive efforts to reach out to students as a preventative measure rather than an intervention. This is important because some lecturers appear not to be aware of the presence of international students in their classes (cf. par.5.8). Others do not seem to know how many international students there are even though the numbers are low (cf. par. 5.8).

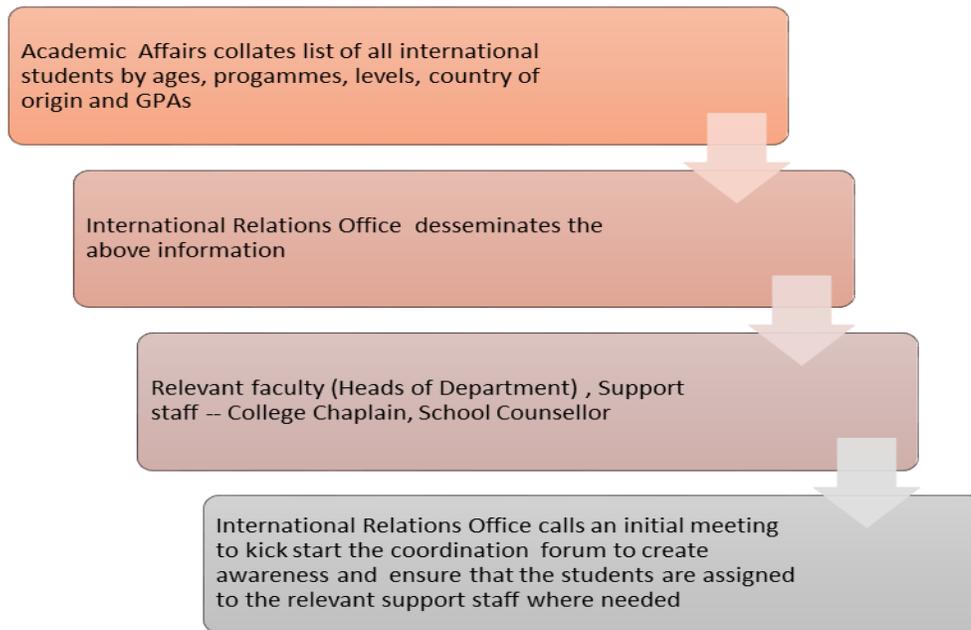


Figure 6. 3: Dissemination of information via coordination forum

The following is a description of how the various stakeholders would be guided through this adjustment management programme:

(a) *Admissions and recruitment office*

This study has the potential to help recruiters in understanding the needs of international students. Thus, during the forum, the admissions and recruitment officers would be equipped with the needed sensitivity to market the university to potential international students and their parents. In addition, admissions officers will be able to check their criteria by using the researcher's checklist for the admission of international students (See Table 6.1). This checklist would be placed on each admitted students' file.

Table 6. 1: Checklist for crosschecking additional admissions procedures

Instructions: Use this form to ensure the international student has completed all admission requirements. Admissions officer should sign and date completed form.

International student admission procedure		Remarks
1.	Language proficiency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview and English test (for non - English speakers) • Submission TOEFL/IELTS scores (non-English speakers) 	
2.	Financial clearance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of financial statement indicating ability to meet all expenditures • Payment of fees before registration 	
3.	Security clearance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police clearance from country of origin • Registration with Ghana Police Service 	
4.	Immigration clearance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopies of valid passport • Foreign resident ID card • Residential permit 	

Name & signature of officer

Date

(Adaptation of international students' admission requirements in XUC, 2010)

(b) Awards and Recognitions

Those faculty and staff who are already promoting multiculturalism and inclusion (cf. par. 5.12) should be recognised at the forum. This would be done by the distribution of evaluation forms during International Student Association meetings at the end of the semester. If they continue in this trend, they would receive awards at the end of the year.

(c) Teaching and learning workshops

During these workshops, lecturers will receive opportunities to share and improve their various teaching methods that have worked with international students. In addition, lecturers will be encouraged to be more flexible during their instructional hours and should be trained to use various communication styles and methods to ensure international students fit in as best as possible. For instance, watching the pace of their speech could assist in the ability to understand (cf. par. 3.5.2.1.2 & cf. par. 5.8 b). Therefore, lecturers with international students would need to speak slower. Additionally, they may have to repeat and draw attention to important points. Likewise, they may need to plan their lectures differently. For instance, they could consider using pictorial examples to enhance understanding of FS's.

Furthermore, lecturers should make international students understand that confidence is not about accuracy, but rather, an attitude that helps them to get their point across despite the mistakes they make (cf. par. 5.7). During the coordination forum (mentioned previously) lecturers would learn that to enhance international students' confidence level in English, lecturers should not correct them excessively in free-speaking activities.

Though it is essential to correct students' mistakes, lecturers should not interrupt them during performance activities, as this interruption apparently reduces their confidence level as the findings indicated (cf. par.5.7).

d) *Enhancing the interaction of domestic and international students*

Ghanaian students should be encouraged to befriend international students as that kind of interaction has been known to have a positive effect on the well-being of students in every area (cf. par. 3.5.2.2.2). Sharing common experiences could enhance intercultural relationships (cf. par. 3.5.2.2.3). Lecturers can encourage these common experiences by having in-class group work that would oblige students to interact with each other and not just their friends. This type of group work may be less threatening and more fulfilling than out - of - class group work (cf. par. 3.5.2.1.3) as dialogue and sharing would be encouraged. In addition, both domestic and international students should be taught how to appreciate their unique differences. Ghanaian students need to develop intercultural competence and acceptance, as this will help in their interaction with international students. For instance, there need to be regular seminars with female students to help reduce the tension between Ghanaian and international female students in the hostels (cf. par. 5.8). However, this also depends on how willing international students are motivated to talk to and intermingle with their Ghanaian colleagues. Consequently, the Diversity Week must be strongly reconsidered and given its prominence and not subsumed under SRC events as reported (cf. par. 5.8). A weeklong event with the display of international cuisine, dress and culture should be a priority in helping with adjustment of international students and a means of developing campus-wide intercultural competence.

e) *Monitoring of academic adjustment*

A form entitled, International Students' Academic Checklist (see Table 6. 2 in the appendices section) developed by the researcher, can be used by the International Relations Officer to monitor the students' academic adjustment. The information will be gathered by talking to the faculty member in charge of the language and study skills courses as well as the Academic Affairs Office. For each of the categories listed on the form, the International Relations officer will offer his/her remarks and discuss each students' progress with the affected student. This will take place at midterm and at the end of the semester. There after the officer can refer the student to the appropriate office for further assistance. This form can also be issued to faculty members who, in turn, will follow the same procedures. Please refer to Appendix J.

(f) *Adjustment management handbook for international students*

Finally, the IRO in conjunction with the Academic Registry, University Counsellor, Chaplain and the various faculties, could develop an international students' adjustment management handbook that, can be a reference manual for international students and those who work with them. The handbook would provide a systematic guide to initiate a strategy to help international students manage adjustment issues. The handbook should also contain both cognitive and behavioural components that aim at managing specific external and internal demands of the university environment. The handbook would be one of the ultimate outcomes of the adjustment management programme and coordination forum (please refer to Appendix K).

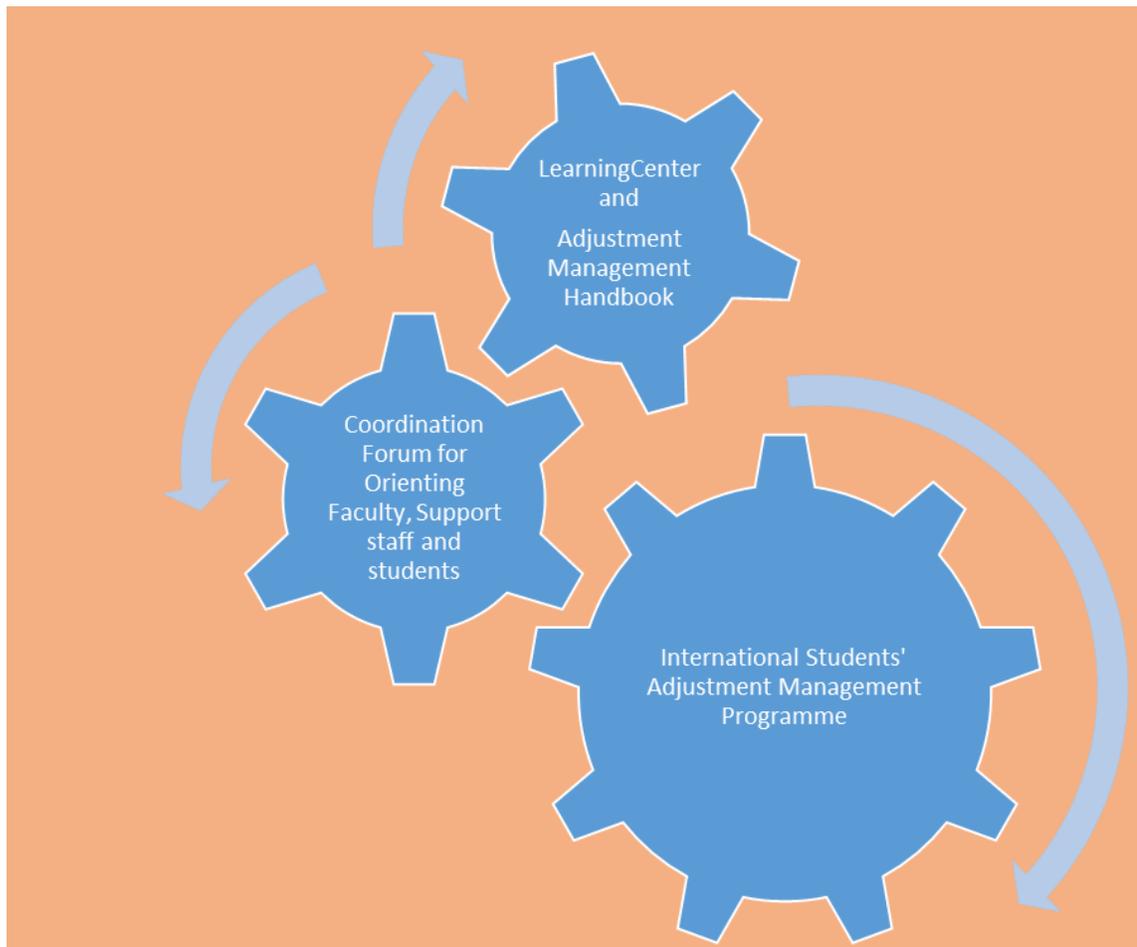


Figure 6. 4: Summary presentation: International students' adjustment management programme

6.6 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although each of the four sub-aims was achieved, clearly acknowledging the limitations of the study and using the results as a basis, there are two suggestions for further studies on the topic:

First, following the low levels of adjustment, there are implications for students' retention due to the inability to overcome the challenges of adjusting to the university environment. A further study should be conducted to examine attrition rates of international undergraduate students at the university studied.

Second, the study was limited to only international undergraduate students at the university. Future research could explore comparing adjustment issues of international post-graduate students against undergraduate students. This approach could make the results more generalisable for the institution.

Third, the study was limited to only international undergraduate students at the XUC. However, to make it more generalisable to private universities in Ghana, another study could be carried out with international undergraduate students at three or more private universities.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.7.1 Limitations in generalisations

The study is not without limitations. It took place at one selected private university college in Ghana; thus, the results may not be generalisable to other private universities in the

country. However, since the university is being mentored by a larger public university and undergoes regular evaluation checks it is possible that the findings could be applicable to other private universities under the mentorship of the said public university. Thus, these fellow mentee private universities could be beneficiaries of this study.

6.7.2 Limitations in participants

Even though anonymity was assured to all students, faculty and staff, some may have felt uneasy about rating their observation regarding the negative aspects of the university, hence may have demonstrated behaviours that may not reflect the practical situation. This situation may have introduced errors into the results.

Furthermore, as international students, there is the possibility that language may have affected their understanding of the questions asked on the questionnaire. This language barrier issue could have been particularly true for the FS's. These limitations notwithstanding, the results are relevant.

6.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The academic performance of international students enrolled at the university at the time of the study was abysmal, and the students were struggling to adjust academically. Thus, the study concludes that a large proportion of international students have not successfully adjusted to the academic environment. Generally, these international students struggle with adjustment issues, and they are unable to overcome the inherent challenges of the university environment satisfactorily.

Except for gender and academic level, none of the biographic variables significantly influenced the academic performance of the students. In other words, the academic performance of the students significantly differed across gender and academic level. International students later adjust to the university environment, however, and this is indicated through improved academic performance.

With regards to adjustment, most of the students are struggling to adjust positively to the university environment and had low academic motivation. However, they have somehow been able to respond positively to the interpersonal/social demands of the university environment. Therefore, adapting well socially in the university environment could result in positive personal-emotional response to the environment. The adjustment level of the students was insignificantly influenced by their background characteristics. Thus, regardless of gender, age and country of origin, international undergraduate students are likely to be confronted with similar issues regarding their adjustment to the university environment. However, the longer international students stay in an academic environment, the more likely they are to positively adjust to the environment.

Several international students are unable to sufficiently respond to the academic demands of the university college. This study, however, concludes that adjustment is a significant predictor variable for academic performance and that a highly adjusted international student is likely to attain a higher academic performance as indicated by GPA. Social adjustment and academic environment are significant predictors of international students' academic performance while personal-emotional and academic motivation is not. Therefore, the ability of the students to adjust at high levels to the social as well as the academic environment has a significant effect on their academic performance.

University faculty and staff must undergo training to recognise international students' needs. When they have a better understanding of international students' adjustment

issues, then they can effectively offer supportive campus resources and services. However, developing appropriate coping strategies among international students at the university has been demanding for the students, hence accepting the challenges of the university environment has been difficult for them

Generally, there have been insufficient coping strategies at the university that focus on international students and ways to help them cope with the demanding university environment. Additionally, no formal framework exists by the management of the university to assist international students in dealing with the demanding university environment. Moreover, those services that do exist are not sufficiently pro-active. While there is no way to completely eliminate adjustment issues from the university environment, the university must now consider acquiring relevant resources and support services for doing so. Thus, if the management of the university works with the knowledge of the adjustment needs of international students and pays more focused attention to their special adjustment needs, they could position the students to perform better academically.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION FROM DEVELOPERS

Permission to use the ISAQ

Inbox	X
Denise Anatsui <danatsui@[REDACTED].edu.gh>	Fri 4 May, 15:07

to Gómeze17

Dear Dr. Gómez,

I am currently undertaking research at the University of South Africa with Prof. R. J. Botha, on International students' adjustment issues in Ghana.

In the course of my literature review, I came across the questionnaire you co - designed with Glass and Urzua. I am thus writing for permission to utilize it.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Regards,

Denise

Denise Anatsui <danatsui@[REDACTED].edu.gh>

Wed 30 May,
15:43

to Gómeze17

Hello again,

I would like a response either way, please.

Thanks

Gómez, Edwin <GÓMEZE17@ecu.edu>

Wed 30 May,
17:54

to me

Hello Denise,

Yes, you have permission to use the ISACQ. My apologies for not responding earlier, it was a busy time of the year and I just "missed" the e-mail. I'm glad you re-sent your request. Please proceed with your research and good luck!

Edwin Gómez, Ph.D., CPRP

Professor and Chair

College of Health and Human Performance

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

300 Curry Court | Mail Stop 540

Greenville, NC 27858-4353

Office: 252-328-4638 | Gómeze17@ecu.edu | Fax: 252-328-4642

<https://hhp.ecu.edu/rcls/>

From: Denise Anatsui [mailto:[danatsui@\[REDACTED\].edu.gh](mailto:danatsui@[REDACTED].edu.gh)]
Sent: Wednesday, May 30, 2018 11:44 AM
To: Gómez, Edwin <GÓMEZE17@ECU.EDU>
Subject: Re: Permission to use the ISAQ

Denise Anatsui <[danatsui@\[REDACTED\].edu.gh](mailto:danatsui@[REDACTED].edu.gh)>

Wed 30
May, 22:16

to Edwin

Thank you so much! Warm regards

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION MANUAL



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ ADJUSTMENTS TO UNIVERSITY
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION MANUAL

This Focus Group Discussion Manual has been designed purely for academic purposes. It is designed to explore the adjustment issues facing international undergraduate students at this Selected Private University College (XUC) and how such issues impact on their academic performance.

You have been selected as one of the international students to respond to the issues to the best of your ability. You are assured that information provided to complete this study will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. I shall be grateful if you could spare some of your busy schedule to answer the questions.

Thank you in advance for participating.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Group Type.....
2. Composition of Group.....
3. Size of the Group.....
4. Start of Discussion.....
5. End of Discussion.....
6. Name of Moderator.....
7. Date of Discussion.....

SECTION B: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

8. What is your perception on the general academic performance of international students in this University?
9. What factors are accounting for the level of academic performance associated with international students in this University?
10. What interventions can be instituted to improve the academic performance of international students in this University?

SECTION C: ADJUSTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

11. Comment on the positive and negative aspects of your experience in this university
12. How would you describe the general level of adjustment of international students in this university?
13. Which areas of adjustment in this University are international students most challenged in?
14. How would you relate the adjustment of international students in this University to the following?
 - a. Personal Emotional Adjustment (ability to cope emotionally)
 - b. Social Adjustment (Ability to engage social activities)
 - c. Academic Motivation (Ability to cope academically)

SECTION D: COPING STRATEGY FOR ADJUSTMENT

15. Generally, are international students able to successfully cope in this University? Explain.
16. What factors are accounting for the
 - a. Inability of international students to cope successfully in this University?
 - b. Ability of international students to cope successfully in this University?

17. What specific strategies do international students adopt in order to cope in this University?

SECTION E: RECOMMENDATIONS

18. How can the adjustment challenge of international students in this University be addressed?

APPENDIX C 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LECTURERS



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LECTURERS

Section 1: Biographic questions

1. What Faculty or Department are you in?
2. What is your highest educational qualification?

Section 2: Involvement / Experiences

1. First of all, can you start by telling me how long you have been doing this job?
2. How many international students do you have enrolled in this course?
3. What is the average grade earned by the international students in this course?
4. Do you feel that there are difficulties that these international students are undergoing?
Can you share them with me?
5. Do you feel that these difficulties affect their academic performance in any way?
6. Does the presence of these international students provide diversity and different perspectives on topics you may discuss in class?

APPENDIX C2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ADMINISTRATORS



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Section 1: Biographic questions

1. What Department are you in?
2. What is your highest educational qualification?

Section 2: Involvement / Experiences

3. First of all, can you start by telling me how long you have been doing this job?
4. What have been some of your experiences with the international students when they just arrive?
5. What are some of the common problem you see them having as they try to adjust to Ghana and the university?
6. After the end of the semester, what are some of the things you have observed with them?
7. What are some of the experiences that you are aware of with them having in lectures and on campus?
8. How do you find their behaviour in general?

APPENDIX D: LETTER TO REGISTRAR REQUESTING PERMISSION

Monday, 27 November, 2017

Ref: 2014 AUGUST/50763547/MC

Title: Adjustment issues and its effects on international undergraduate students: a case study in Ghana.

The Ag. Registrar

Main Administrative Block

Registry Office

030 [REDACTED] 057; registrar@[REDACTED].edu.gh

Dear Mr. Gyimah,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I, **Mrs. Denise Anatsui**, am doing research with **Prof. R. J. Botha**, a professor in the **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT** towards a **Ph.D** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled, **Adjustment issues and its effects on international undergraduate students: a case study in Ghana.**

The aim of the study is to examine the adjustment issues and its effects on international undergraduate students at your University College, Ghana. Your institution has been selected because of the rapidly increasing number of international students within your student population.

The study will entail conducting semi-structured interviews for just 5 international students as well as the distribution and collection of questionnaires for 100 international students. There may also be semi-structured interviews conducted with 5 of your staff

members. This will ensure that the study offers a balanced perspective of the university community. The benefits of this study are delineated as follows:

- **The study can add to knowledge** – Since, no studies have been generated on this section of the population at your university college, this study will add to knowledge. Furthermore, future international students of the university college and beyond will benefit from the study as they will gain some insight into some of the processes they undergo as they adjust to life as students in Ghana.
- **The study can help improve practice** – Through this study, administrators, faculty and domestic students will better appreciate the adjustment processes international students in the institution may experience. This insight may enable administrators and faculty to develop existing structures such as the student orientation programmes, the curriculum, counselling and other student services to better meet the needs of the international students in their institutions. Moreover, it has the potential of improving existing recruitment practices to attract international students to the University College campus and retain them.
- **The study can help to improve existing policy** – Specifically, studying the adjustment issues of international students will offer university authorities insights into the processes international students undergo as they adjust to life in Ghana and at this University College in particular. In addition, the data generated from this study has the potential to improve existing practices and policies regarding the management of international students, particularly those originating from the West and Central African sub-region, on the university campus. Such insight can enable both administrators, faculty and staff in becoming more culturally sensitive and responsive when dealing with the growing international student population on the campus. It can also provide useful information and general guidance to both the international students and the domestic students at the private university under consideration in Ghana.

Potential risks are negligible and will not amount to more than the inconvenience involved in the time taken for the interviews (approximately 40 minutes) and the sharing

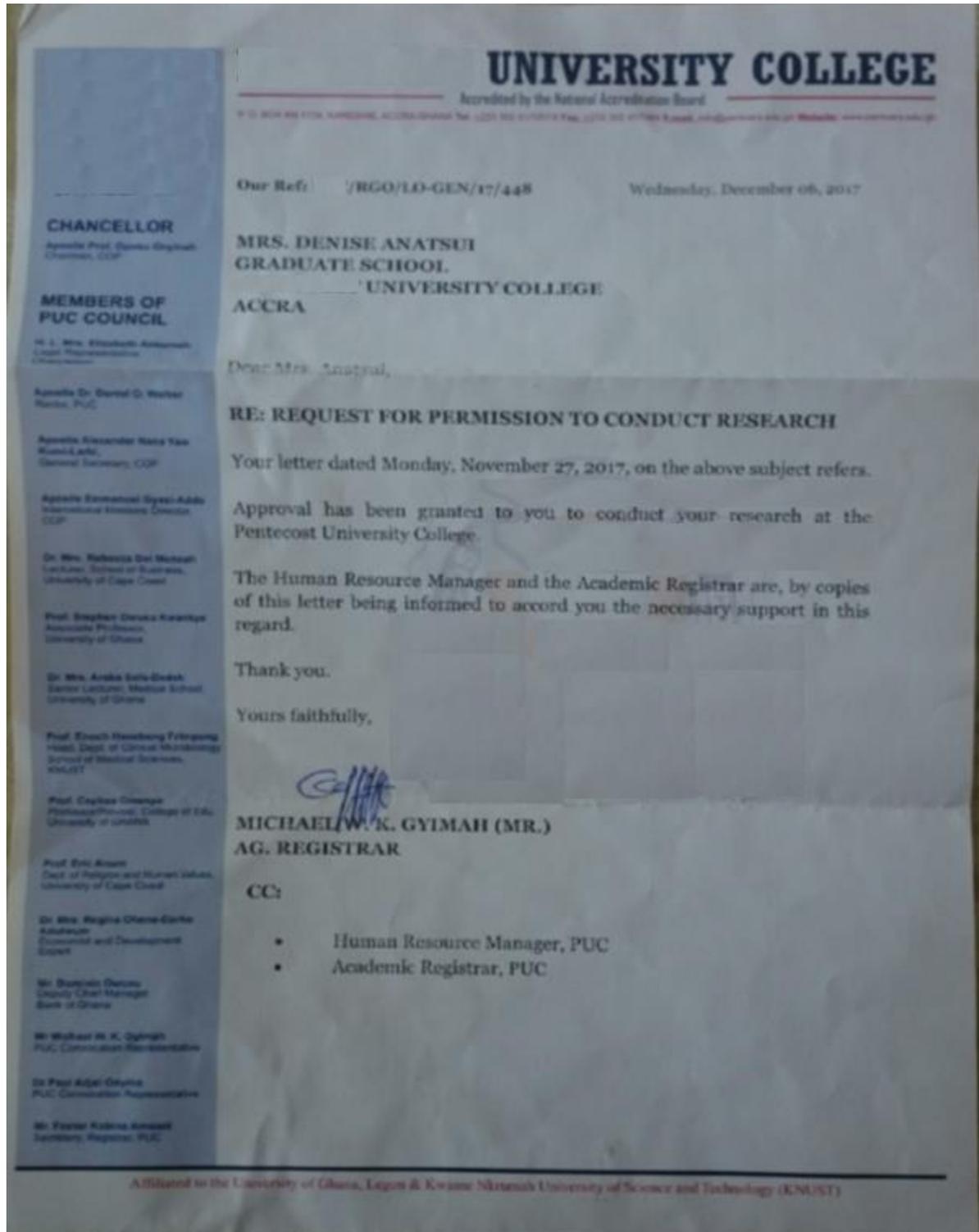
and distribution of the questionnaires. These interviews will be arranged to work within their most convenient times. There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to either the participants or the institution. Pseudonyms will be adopted for the protection the institution.

In addition to the above stated request, I will also need to collect statistical data from the Academic Registry on the enrollment, academic progression and graduation of international students from 2005 to date. This data will need to state the country of origin, and basic demographic information without the names of the respective students. Feedback procedure will entail copies of the results and findings of the study.

Yours sincerely,

Denise Anatsui

APPENDIX E: REPLY FROM THE REGISTRAR GRANTING PERMISSION



APPENDIX F: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Ref: 2014 AUGUST/50763547/MC

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had it explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the **Focus group discussion / semi-structured interview**. I have been assured that I will receive a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Name & Surname of participant

Name & Surname of researcher

Signature of participant

Date:

Signature of researcher

Date:

APPENDIX G1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE 1



Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

DV Oluonye [50763547]

for a D Ed study entitled

Adjustment issues and its effects on international undergraduate students: a case study at Pieterse University College, Ghana

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KP Dzvimbho".

Prof KP Dzvimbho
Executive Dean : CEDU

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Claassens".

Dr M Claassens
CEDU REC (Chairperson)
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Reference number: 2014 AUGUST /50763547/MC 19 AUGUST 2014

APPENDIX G2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE 2**UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Date: 2017/11/15

Dear Miss Oluonye

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2014/09/12 to 2018/12/30

Ref: **2014 AUGUST/50763547/MC**

Name: Miss DV Oluonye

Student: 50763547

Researcher:

Name: Miss DV Oluonye

Email: danatsui@pentvars.edu.gh

Telephone: +233 24 372 6996

Supervisor:

Name: Prof RJ Botha

Email: Botharj@unisa.ac.za

Telephone: +27 82 411 6361

Title of research:

Adjustment issues and its effects on international undergraduate students: a case study at Pieterse University College, Ghana

Qualification: D ED in Education Management

Thank you for the application for an extension of research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. An extension of the clearance is granted until 2019/12/30

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2017/11/15 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date 2019/12/30. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

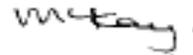
Note:

The reference number **2014 AUGUST/50763547/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

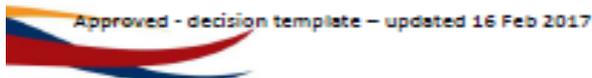
Kind regards,



Dr M Claassens
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
 mcdtc@netactive.co.za



Prof V McKay
EXECUTIVE DEAN



University of South Africa
 Pretter Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
 PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
 Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
 www.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX H: QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENT TO UNIVERSITY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire has been designed purely for academic purposes. It is designed to explore the adjustment issues facing international undergraduate students at this Selected Private University College (XUC) and how such issues impact on their academic performance.

You have been selected as one of the international students to respond to the issues to the best of your ability. You are assured that information provided to complete this study will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. I shall be grateful if you could spare some of your busy schedule to answer the questions.

Thank you in advance for participating.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please supply answers and tick (√) where appropriate.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Age (Years): a) Less than 18 b) 19-29 c) 30-39 d) 40-49 e) 50-59
2. Gender: a) Male b) Female
3. Marital Status: a) Never Married b) Married c) Separated/Divorced d) Widow/Widower
4. Country of origin:
5. How long have you been in Ghana?
6. How many times did you travel to Ghana before deciding to school here?

SECTION B: FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

7. Do you have some close family relatives in Ghana? a Yes b. No
8. Have some close family relatives resided in Ghana before? a. Yes b. No
9. Primary source of financial support: a) Family b) Self c) Sponsors d)
Other (please specify)
10. Secondary source of financial support (if applicable):

SECTION C: SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

11. Level: a) Level 100 b) Level 200 c) Level 300 d) Level 400
12. Programme of study: a) Business b) Science and Engineering c) Nursing d)
Other (please specify).....
13. Post-graduate plans: a) Work in Ghana b) Work at home country
c) Enrol for a higher degree in Ghana d) Enrol for higher degree at home
14. Current GPA: a) Less than 2.0 b) 2.0 – 2.49 c) 2.5 – 2.99 d) 3.0 – 3.49
e) 3.5 or more

SECTION D: ADJUSTMENT ISSUES

Below is a set of items that describe college experiences. Read each one and decide how well it applies to you at the present time (within the past few days). For each statement, select the asterisk at the point in the continuum that best represents how closely the statement applies to you on a scale of 1 to 9 where **1 = Applies Very Close to Me** and **9 = Does Not Apply to Me At All**.

STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Personal- Emotional Adjustment (PERSEMO)									
I've given a lot thought lately to whether I should ask for help from the Psychological Counselling Centre or from a psychologist outside of this university college									
I have been getting angry too easily lately									
Recently I have had trouble concentrating when I try to study									
I haven't been sleeping very well									
I am not doing well enough academically for the amount of work I put in									
Sometimes my thinking gets muddled up too easily									
I am having a lot of trouble getting started on homework assignments									
I am experiencing a lot of difficulty coping with the stress imposed upon me in this university college									
SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT (SOCADJ)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I am very involved with social activities									
I have several close social ties at this university college									

I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities in this university college									
I am quite satisfied with my social life at this university college									
ACADEMIC MOTIVATION (ACADMTVN)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I have been keeping up to date on my academic work									
I know why I am in university and what I want out of it									
My academic goals and purposes are well defined									
Getting a university degree is very important to me									
ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT (ACADENV)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I am satisfied with the number and variety of courses available at the university college									
I am satisfied with the quality or the calibre of courses for this semester/quarter									
I am satisfied with my programme of courses for this semester/quarter									
I am very satisfied with the lecturers I have now in my courses									

SECTION E: COPING STRATEGIES FOR ADJUSTMENT

Kindly rank the most important coping strategy which you usually use in responding to stressful situations in the university environment where One (1) = Least Important Coping Strategy and Seven (7) = Most Important Coping Strategy

Coping Strategy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Confrontational coping (Aggressive efforts to alter the stressful situation and suggests some degree of risk-taking)							
Distancing (Detaching oneself and to minimize the significance of the stressful situation)							
Self-Controlling (Regulating one's feelings and actions towards the stressful situation)							
Seeking Social Support (Seeking support from friends/management for managing stressful situation).							
Accepting responsibility (Acknowledging one's own role in the stressful situation and trying to put things right)							
Escape-Avoidance (Escaping or avoiding the stressful situation)							
Relaxation (Doing something with the implicit intention of relaxing)							

COMMENTS

Comment on the positive and negative aspects of your experience at your university college:

.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX I : PROOF OF EDITTINGGhana Contact:

P. O. Box GP.18106,

Accra,

Ghana

Tel: 233 248 666 007

233 302 983 244

E-mail: adconsult@excite.comOur Ref No: FADCON/001/ASL1/4/20UK Contact:

65A Llanrumney Avenue,

Llanrumney, Cardiff, CF3 4DN,

United Kingdom

Tel: 44 7491 060 468

44 2920 364 076

Email: adconsult@excite.com

12th June 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have proofread and edited the doctoral thesis of **Denise Anatsui** on “Adjustment issues and their effects on international undergraduate students: A case study in Ghana“, which is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education by the Department of Education Management at the University of South Africa.

I wish to state that I used Windows ‘tracking system’ to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student’s action.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. Frankie Asare-Donkoh (PhD)****Chief Executive**

(Former Head, Department of Media and Communication Studies

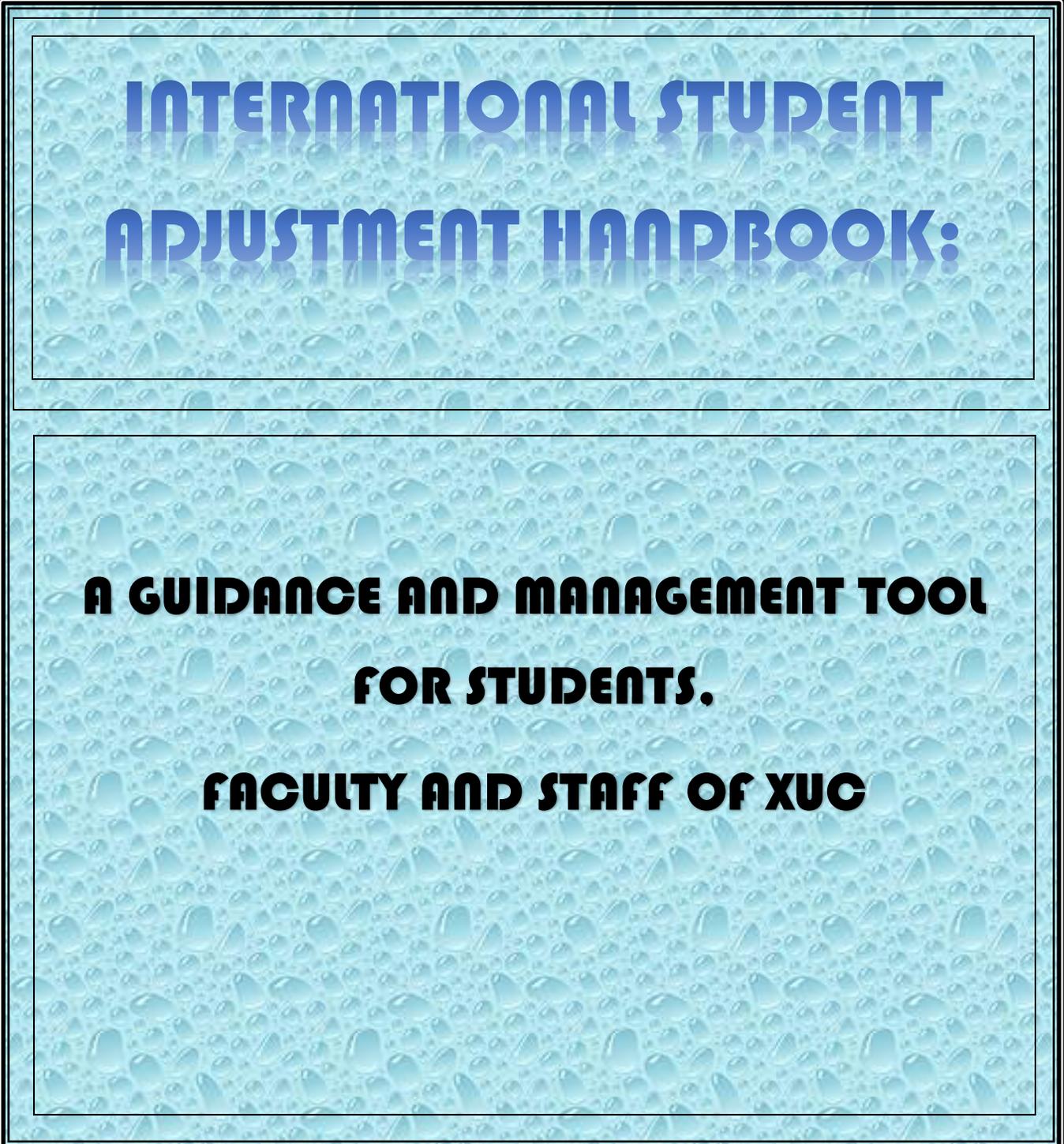
University College, Accra, Ghana)

APPENDIX J: ACADEMIC PROGRESSION CHECKLIST

Instructions: Discuss students' progress with the relevant officer designated for each of the categories listed. Record their remarks/observations. Invite student for discussion and advice.

Academic progress									Remarks
Study skills course	Attendance								
	Exams preparedness skills								
	Reading skills								
	Writing skills								
	Note - taking skills								
English Proficiency Course	Attendance								
	Reading								
	Speaking								
	Writing								
GPA	Sem. 1	Sem. 2	Sem. 3	Sem. 4	Sem. 5	Sem. 6	Sem. 7	Sem. 8	
Lectures	Attendance								
	Participation								
	Interactions (with students and faculty)								
	Understanding								

APPENDIX K: SAMPLE ADJUSTMENT MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK



**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
ADJUSTMENT HANDBOOK:**

**A GUIDANCE AND MANAGEMENT TOOL
FOR STUDENTS,
FACULTY AND STAFF OF XUC**

FOREWORD

Dear students and staff of our prestigious university, after following the prescribed course of approval processes of the university and having thus received it this manual is hereby presented to all stake holders. Through this manual we hope to assist our new and continuing international students in succeeding in every areas of their lives - academically, socially and personal-emotionally. The primary focus is on helping students to succeed academically since this is the main reason they are at XUC. Based on scientifically proven facts, this manual offers practical suggestions to both students and faculty on how to get through the myriad of challenges that may confront students as they navigate their way towards obtaining a degree. Thus, there are suggestions covering their academic, social and personal–emotional areas. It is important to note that this manual is a guide and does not claim to be a panacea for all adjustment ailments. The language is simple and straightforward to aid understanding. The Manual is in two parts: Students Section (Accessible to students, staff and faculty) and Staff Section (Accessible by password only to Staff and Faculty). In all instances, the sections are printable.

STUDENTS' SECTION

ADMISSIONS

Reasons to come to XUC, Ghana

- Safety - In a region where there is lots of conflict and political turmoil, Ghana, and XUC in particular, offers a relatively safe, friendly environment where you can focus on your studies.
- Proximity - XUC, Ghana is not far from home for you if you live in any of the African nations. You will find many things similar to what you left at home.
- Language - If you already speak English fluently, you will find that though we love to speak our local languages you should have little trouble communicating as English is the main language of communication and classroom instruction. If you are from a non-English speaking country, XUC offers a great opportunity for you to practice and improve your spoken and written English skills.
- Quality - Due to rigorous assessment standards, XUC offers you the best education you can find in West Africa.
- Affiliations - We have affiliations to three of the best public universities in Ghana, one of which confer you with their degree when you complete your affiliated programme. We boast of four faculties namely, Faculty of Business (FOB), Faculty of Theology (FOT), Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS) and Faculty of Computing and Science (FOCS).
- Location - We are located in a quiet area of Accra with a green, serene campus, which is ideal for studying. However, we are just 15 minutes away from a major highway that links us to the city center and other highways leading to major towns and cities.

Qualifications you need

In order to get into XUC you should complete the free application form and submit it with your results from an internationally recognised examination body. These details are up on our website. You have to pass a simple interview. This simple interview lets us know what help we need to offer you to make sure you succeed. You will need submit a financial statement showing that you have enough funds to cover all expenditures and you must pay all fees in advance before registration. Lastly, you must present passports to the International Relations office so that they can secure your residence permit. The International Relations office will take you for registration at with the Ghana Police for your continued safety and comfort here at XUC.

ORIENTATION

Once admitted you will attend Orientation. This is a very important event, which helps answer to many questions. This week-long session, run by the administrative staff helps you understand the rules and regulations of XUC and gives you an idea of how you can live and study at XUC successfully. One session is specifically for you to be orientated as an international student so you can settle in nicely.

There is another Orientation for you to meet with students – both international and Ghanaian within your department. During the first two weeks, your department organises this event. This event will allow you to get to know older students who will help you to feel at home and share their experiences in the programme. They will also help you to navigate your way through the programme so that you can try to avoid pitfalls.

MANAGING YOUR ACADEMIC LIFE**Lectures**

Your lectures are very important, as they are the stepping-stones to you achieving your degree. Thus, there are some things you must pay attention to avoid academic issues.

- The first is participation in class. Though you may feel shy, try to ask and answer questions. Share your experiences with the class so they learn about your country.
- The next is attendance. Your lecturer will be marking attendance. This is an easy way to get some points in the course. So, try to be regular.
- Get to know your lecturer even if the class is large then they can put a face to your name.
- When you do not understand an issue talk to the lecturer right after class or visit him/her during office hours.

Examinations

All examinations are important. The mid-semester exam is in the eighth week and the end of semester examination is in the 14th week. You need to prepare well for them. You are required to

enroll at the Learning Centre for Success Strategies course. This course is a Pass / Fail course, meaning that it does not count towards the GPA, but is a mandatory requirement for graduation. This fun, informative course will help you to be ready for life not just examinations.

Awards

We look forward to you performing well academically consistently. We have an awards package that you should aspire to get. These are as follows:

- GPA 2.50 to 3.24 - Head of Department's Award - Name displayed on website and notice boards.
- GPA 3.25 to 3.59 - Dean's Award - Name displayed on the website, notice boards and a letter of recognition.
- GPA 3.60 to 4.00 - Rector's Award - Name displayed on the website, notice boards and a certificate of recognition.

When you complete your programme if you earn a GPA of 3.60 to 4.00 you will receive a certificate of recognition, educational materials and a monetary gift at graduation ceremony.

THE LEARNING CENTRE

The Learning Centre is located on campus and is staffed by experienced tutors who will assist you in developing your skills in several areas

- Language Proficiency - All non-English speaking international students who score low passes in English entry exams are required to attend language seminars held weekly at the learning center. Even if your scores were good, this programme will enhance your English skills.
- Study skills - This is a vital skill you will acquire in the Success Strategies course on how to manage your time, how to prepare for lectures, how to give presentations and so forth.
- Examination skills - This skill set will develop your ability in taking different kinds of examinations

MANAGING YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

You are far away from home, but we want you to see XUC as a home away from home. For this reason, we have a number of programmes designed for you. We realise that when your social life is comfortable you will feel more committed to studying here and will very likely do well.

Diversity Week

Through this week long activity, you will get a chance to display your cultural heritage such as your local dishes, dances and so forth. It is advisable to come prepared with some cultural artifacts and clothing as well as your national flag to help make this event a memorable, fun-packed learning experience for all.

Students Representative Council (SRC)

This is a student governmental association that looks out for the welfare of all students by acting as a liaison between the students and the university management and organizes educational, political and entertainment activities. It is the umbrella organization for all other student-led clubs and associations. It is an opportunity to get involved in leadership. So, consider being a part of the executive wing of the SRC and help to influence what happens on campus.

International Students Association (ISA)

This is a student-led association for all international student. Membership is automatic as an international student. The association allows your voice as an international student to be heard by the university management. You also have the chance to participate in programmes and events that will educate the university community about your nation as well as a chance to hob nob with diplomats and top ranking government officials. We encourage you to get involved.

Anglophone Students Association (ASA)

This association helps to meet the unique need of a smaller cross section of international students, who by virtue of language and a common colonial history have several things in common. The parent association is the ISA.

Francophone Students Association (FSA)

Like the Anglophone Association, the Francophone Students' Association is the meeting point for all international students with a French background and colonial history. It is a place where your communal needs can be addressed in your own language. The ISA is the parent association.

Sports Clubs

We do not expect you to be studying or doing assignments all the time. Thus the sports clubs are great opportunities to let off steam, by getting a vigorous workout and joining your team mates to thrash your opponents in various sporting activities and competitions. The clubs are in various sporting categories though football is the most popular sport in Ghana. Come , get involved and have a blast!

MANAGING YOUR PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL LIFE

At times you will feel stressed about money, school work, relationships with roommates and friends and so forth. Please find a way to prevent build - up of these feelings. We have very skilled counsellors, a chaplain, mentors and even lecturers who are trained to assist you. The International Relations Office is always available to guide you to the officer best suited to meet your needs. Please do not hesitate to ask. All contact details for these officers are available on the university website.

STAFF SECTION

PREAMBLE

The management of the adjustment needs of international students at XUC is pressing and crucial as their poor academic performances have adequately demonstrated this fact (with a few exceptions) over the years. Research has clearly indicated that globally international students suffer similar challenges which cause them to lose focus on their studies and affect their final academic output. Bearing this predicament in mind, the manual offers a systematic approach to assisting in the improvement of the academic output of international undergraduate students. Scientifically proven research is at the heart of this manual which serves as a skeleton for development of the adjustment management programme by all stake holders. This section of the manual is intended for use faculty and staff who interact regularly with international students.

OBJECTIVES

- To highlight the benefits of having international students
- To stress the importance of positive interaction with international students
- To increase the knowledge of the needs of international students
 - Academically
 - Socially
 - Personal-emotionally
- To enhance the teaching and learning of international students

ADJUSTMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

This management programme will be rolled out in stages as follows:

- Stage 1 Coordination Forum
- Stage 2 Policy Formulation
- Stage 3 Learning Centre Development

STAGE ONE: COORDINATION FORUM

The coordination forum is a meeting of supporting staff and faculty members. This forum is intended to ensure a strategy for the adjustment management of international students. The forum will help the various offices on campus work together. Relevant information from the various offices that affect enrolled international students would be shared during this forum.

Terms of reference

- o To be the coordinating wing of the adjustment management programme
- o To have operational oversight of all aspects of the adjustment management programme
- o To develop research based-recommendations to Executive Management
- o To develop/present policies that benefit international students to Executive Management

Composition

- o International Relations Officer - Chairperson
- o Academic Affairs Records Officer
- o Recruitment & Admissions Officer
- o Chaplaincy – Representative
- o Student Support Officer
- o Faculty Officers
- o International Student Representative

The International Relations Office plays a key role in ensuring the coordination and facilitation of the development of an effective adjustment management programme for international undergraduate students. As such the officer in charge of this programme will be the Assistant Registrar heading this office.

The Initial Meeting

This will be held during the long vacation two weeks to the commencement of lectures

~ Memo of invitation to relevant staff is sent out via university email

~ Agenda - Tea time fellowship

Welcome address

Presentation 1 - Benefits / challenges of having international students

Presentation 2 - Proposed management programme

- Coordination Forum (Stage 1)
- Policy Formulation (Stage 2)
- Learning Centre Development (Stage 3)

Discussions/Feedback

Closing remarks

Departure

Preparation for initial meeting

The Academic Affairs Office, by compiling a database of international students across each academic department, would start the formation of the forum. Thus, other arms of university administration, such as the Admissions and Recruitment office, Chaplaincy Office, Student Support Office, Counselling Unit, Hostels and Mentorship offices, would also get a list and make aggressive efforts to reach out to international students as a preventative measure rather than an intervention.

Subsequent Meetings

After the initial meeting, subsequent meetings will be held twice in a semester. This will be the first and eighth weeks of the semester which represent the commencement and mid-semester points respectively. The duration should not exceed 60 minutes.

Notice will be sent out two weeks to the meeting as a reminder to all members of the forum. The date, time, venue and agenda will be duly communicated in this notice. Thus prior to the meeting,

the Chairperson will take the opportunity to gather relevant information pertaining to the wellbeing of international students and include these items on the agenda for discussion and formulation of an action plan.

During the meeting the atmosphere should be cordial and cooperative to foster openness and constructive communication. Minutes must be taken and circulated before the next meeting with actionable points clearly itemised. The Chairperson must follow through on these action plans. Discussions must revolve around the teaching and learning of international students and monitoring of their progress. However social and psychological activities principally designed to enhance teaching and learning must also be discussed. Sub - committees may evolve from these discussions to deal with welfare, sports and events to enhance international students' adjustments. There should be free flow of ideas for the development of best practices all aimed at improving the academic performance of international students.

Staff and faculty orientation

An immediate outcome of the Coordination Forum will be an Orientation for the staff and faculty. It will be held within the first two weeks of the semester, to train participants embrace multiculturalism and inclusion thereby creating an academic environment that meets the academic needs of international students. The orientation would also cover certain cultural aspects of the various nationalities enrolled at the university. This cultural awareness would prevent unintentional discriminatory acts on the part of the lecturers and staff.

In academic matters, staff must be made aware to pay attention to the following:

- Altering pace of speech when lecturing
- Avoiding the use of vernacular when explaining
- Avoiding unintentional xenophobic behaviours
- Encouraging global awareness
- Emphasising attendance and participation
- Paying closer attention to the male students

NB- The list is not exhaustive

In social matters, staff must be made aware to pay attention to the importance of the following:

- Visiting tourist sites
- Reintroducing of Diversity Week
- Participating in sports and other interactive events

NB - The list is not exhaustive

In personal – emotional matters, staff must be aware to pay attention to the importance of the following:

- Interactive experiences between Ghanaian and international students through
 - ✓ In-class group work
 - ✓ Interpersonal relationship seminars (female students especially)

NB - The list is not exhaustive

Meetings for specific officers

The IR Officer will hold individual meetings with the following officers:

- *Executive Management*
 - ✓ Discussion and approval of proposed policies
 - ✓ Implementation and monitoring of adjustment management programme
- *Recruitment & Admissions*
 - ✓ Ensure the English language proficiency certificate is credible
 - ✓ Ensure all admission criteria are noted on newly introduced form - *Admission Checklist*
- *Deans of Faculties*
 - ✓ Discussion of newly introduced awards criteria
 - ✓ Discussion of new form - *International Students' Academic Checklist*
 - ✓ Ensure enrollment in newly introduced course - *Success Strategies*

- ✓ Ensure enrollment of all Francophone students in weekly language seminar
- ✓ Development of teaching and learning workshops

STAGE TWO: POLICY FORMULATION

The existing policies must be reviewed each academic year to ensure relevance in the following categories:

- Academic
- Social
- Welfare

Policy formulation for the adjustment management programme is carried out by the Coordination Forum Members or their selected representatives. As each policy is developed or modified the team must ensure they meet the following criteria:

- ✓ It aligns with the vision of the university
- ✓ It has feasible and clearly stated objectives
- ✓ It is based on awareness of students' needs
- ✓ It can be monitored after enactment

STAGE THREE: LEARNING CENTRE

The Learning Centre will primarily work to ensure that the international students receive needed tutorial help. To this end a Director of the Centre will be appointed to will work closely with the IRO and the Coordination Forum team, the Deans and the students themselves.

Responsibilities

The Director of the center will be responsible for developing and implementing the following strategies:

- Success Strategies Course – Semester 1 and 2
- Tutorial Assistance – ongoing and need – based
- Monitoring of Students' Performances – on-going

Success Strategies Course

This course will cover these three main areas:

- ✓ Language Proficiency - All non-English speaking international students who score low passes in English entry exams are required to attend language seminars held weekly at the learning center.
- ✓ Study skills – This skill set will teach students how to manage their time, how to prepare for lectures, how to give presentations and so forth.
- ✓ Examination skills - This skill set will develop students' abilities in taking different kinds of examinations

Tutorial Assistance

Experienced tutors will be assigned to tutor in various areas where individual students are struggling. These students may come for assistance on their own or could be mandated by their respective Deans based on academic progress reports.

Monitoring of Students' Performances

By working in close conjunction with the Academic Deans the Centre will monitor international students' performances in the following areas:

- Assignments
- Continuous assessments
- Final examinations

For each of the following categories, the assessor is to be guided by the questions within each category. By adhering to the following standards, monitoring should be considered adequate:

Assignments

- ✓ Are the students doing them?
- ✓ Are they getting relevant feedback?
- ✓ Is the feedback early enough for corrections?

Continuous assessments

- ✓ Are assessments taking place in line with to the Academic Calendar?
- ✓ Are assessments clear and understandable?
- ✓ Are feedbacks early and explanations given to students?

Final examinations

- ✓ Are instructions clear and easy to understand?
- ✓ Are international students' performances being analysed by faculty/IRO?
- ✓ Are strategies for improvement being developed by Coordinating Forum team in conjunction with Deans and this Centre based on the analysed results?

THE END