

A Transformative Approach To International Graduate Students' Research Experiences

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Abstract

International education has witnessed exponential growth in North America, with a substantial influx of graduate students from the Global South, particularly in Canada, where enrollment numbers exceed 388,000 (CISS, 2022). Despite this surge, the participation of international graduate students in research conferences remains notably limited within the Canadian academic landscape. This study investigates the transformative potential of an innovative introductory research conference preparation initiative on the perceptions, confidence, and capabilities of international graduate students hailing from the Global South. The research delves into the intricate reasons behind the reluctance of these students to share their research ideas with Canadian audiences, even with their rich academic experiences.

This action research embedded in a culturally responsive framework immersed students in weekly 30-minute sessions tailored to facilitate the exploration of individual research topics and the development of conference proposals. The study then evaluates the impact of this initiative on international graduate students, aiming to understand how targeted intervention strategies can enhance their abilities and confidence to share research ideas and present findings within the Canadian academic context.

Through a comprehensive analysis of participants' experiences, self-perceptions, and interactions within the academic community, the study reveals that participants' self-efficacy and willingness to participate in conferences significantly increased after the initiative while their imposter syndromes decreased. The study offers valuable insights into the factors impacting graduate students' conference participation. It sheds light on the efficacy of tailored preparation initiatives and contributes to the ongoing discourse on empowering international students, fostering cross-cultural academic exchange, and promoting a more inclusive and diversified scholarly community in North American higher education institutions.

Keywords: International graduate students; research; conference presentation; culturally relevant pedagogy; inclusion