

Volume : 02  
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**A LONG  
WEEKEND  
AND WHAT IS  
MY FEAR**

**STUDENTS  
SCAPEGOAT OF  
PARENT'S  
WHIMS AND  
FANCIES**

**COMING TO  
AMERICA**

**THE DEMISE  
OF RUGGED  
INDIVIDUALISM**

**STUDENT  
ATTRITION &  
RETENTION**





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*DPS Faridabad students & Vice Principal with Mayor of Cedar Rapids during the July 2015 SEP trip*

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## ABOUT US

**T**ransitions in Global Education (TiGEs) is a research journal that publishes a compilation of thoughts, analysis, and ideas on the impact of current trends and events on the global education landscape both at micro and macro levels. Conversely, this journal also publishes content on the impact of global education on current trends and events. TiGEs hopes to capture many and diverse perspectives. The sections: Student's Voice, Teacher's Voice, and Parent's Voice present first person insights from those directly affected by current issues. Meanwhile interviews of various movers and shakers of the education landscape deliver a policy perspective. Commentaries and peer reviewed articles supply additional perspectives as well as critical analysis. With a lean toward practice, TiGEs aims to deliver content of practical and contemporary import, thereby valuably informing policy makers, academics, parents, teachers, students, and all with an interest in global education. TiGEs is an affiliate of Trans Lab University Preparatory School and Trans Web Global, an education consultancy practice based in North America.

**N N S Chandra**

Lead Editor





*Gathering in JN University, New Delhi (my Alma Mater)*

# A LONG WEEKEND AND WHAT IS MY FEAR



**N N S Chandra**  
Lead Editor

**Y**esterday was the 4th of July, and that means you might have already seen pictures of the extravagant firework shows America adores pop up on your social media feed, no matter where you live. My favourite story that arose out of the extravagance came from a baseball park in Los Angeles, where they had planned a pre-game celebration involving a live bald eagle

who had been trained to perform an awe-inspiring choreographed routine while the national anthem played and the crowd roared. Unfortunately, when it came time for the handler to release the bird, instead of performing the routine, it simply flew out of the stadium and never came back. An apt metaphor for the state of the American union; even the birds are fleeing.

However, I do not want to spend this valuable time to talk simply about





*The Eagle Flying Away!*



*Young supporters of bernie sanders*

politics. Instead, as I always do, I want to share some of the thoughts and experiences on the new and ever-changing world we live in.

Two months ago, I was standing in an elevator heading up to the seventh floor of our Hyderabad office in India. As the elevator climbed and more and more people joined me, I looked around and took in just how old I was. I was surrounded by a dozen young men and women, with their ergonomic backpacks and sound-cancelling headphones, dressed casually and talking casually. And there I was, standing in my formal business attire, clutching a laptop bag like a briefcase. Whether India, China or Korea, it's the same everywhere I go. The world is

turning younger and younger.

I have always worked with youth, and have largely enjoyed the experience. In my roles of a teacher, a mentor and a counsellor, I've worked primarily with students for the last decade, and I was always proud of my relationship with the next generation; I was proud that I was someone that could keep up with the pace of change. But the pace is getting faster and faster, and some of that pride is turning into fear.

For the last year, I've entered several 'transaction based relations' with a lot of young workers we hired in India as we kick-start the SEP promotion (we also just finished the first phase of the research room project in TiGEs). I moved from the role of a

teacher/counsellor to that of a co-worker and a boss, and this transition has been challenging for me. I was struck by how much the atmosphere of the workplace had changed in the last few decades, a change that is hard to see when you spend all your time in campuses. I observed my new colleagues, who seemed to be connected on a global scale as I had never been, sharp as a razor on a myriad of issues and topics, and articulate and fearless about the opinions they held. It's been said that a lot of the disruptions, the economic and social chaos the world is undergoing, are a result of a burst of this youthful energy - triggering monumental changes in education, immigration, business, and the underlying assumptions of society.

On a fundamental level, they seem to perceive events and react in a different manner compared to older generations, giving the energy necessary for a movement like Bernie Sanders to explode in a fairly conservative country like the United States. This generation has also changed the landscape of Indian politics and economics, even in issues like interstate migration. My home state of Kerala now boasts large populations of young men and women from remote north-eastern sections of India, replacing the labour of a native youth that has by and large fled for





*My farm with my goats and my son – an early 1990 picture*

greener pastures. Why work in Kerala, they think, when we can live in some of the largest and most sophisticated cities in the world? And how can I blame them.

Mark Twain once said that history doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme. I can't help but agree as I examine the world in relation to my own past. The last global upheaval of the nature we're experience in 2016 happened 8 long years ago, and I was actively involved in several of the global movements that captured my imagination at that time, including Occupy Wall Street; I worked closely with Occupy leadership from NYU and Columbia, and still keep in touch with them.

That period was interesting and critical, popularizing new tools and technologies, from the iPhone to Facebook, and new eras in politics, two terms of President Obama. A period of empowerment and growth, but also a growing disenchantment with the system, a lack of trust in institutions. At the time, I had thought that it was going to seen as the climax of the 21st century narrative so far. With Brexit, the campaign of Donald Trump and



*In New York, during Occupy Wall Street Protest 2011  
(Yes – My hair was short and seems to share the anger)*

the continuing terror-filled reign of ISIS looming over the years to come, I am only starting to see how wrong I was; 2008 was only the prologue.

If that was any indication of what's to come, it might be time for me to run back to the goat farm I once owned.

I've broken my promise not to talk about politics in this Independence Day note, and so I'm going to end it here. No matter what country you live

in, I hope you take the opportunity of the passing of July 4th to learn a little more about the struggles of your nation's past and its own fight for self-actualization. Remember, history rhymes.

Oh, and one more thing, if you see a bald eagle in your area, please send it back to America. They need it more than we do.





# ON IOWA CAUCUS - HOW I LEARNED TO WORRYING AND STOP LOVING IOWA



**N N S Chandra**  
Lead Editor

**Today marks the start of the Iowa caucus. This note is about that but more on how I found myself here in Iowa**

**W**hen a non-American thinks of the United States, the first visuals that materialize in their minds are probably the streets and signs

of New York or Los Angeles, immortalized as they are across all swathes of American culture. And to be honest, the same usually holds true even for citizens of America! These





# NO STOP STARTED

iridescent cities of the east and west coast have traditionally dominated the focus of the public, but an unusual thing happens every leap year, right around this time. The entire country forgets about the City that Never

Sleeps and the City of Angels, in their blind focus on a sleepy state in the Mid-West. Today marks the start of the Iowa caucus, and thus the official beginning of one of the greatest entertainment spectacles of the known world: the American presidential election.

Even as I write, media broadcasters from around the world are here in Iowa, bearing with the snow and the ice as they write and debate about the most current topics in American politics: the latest classified Clinton email, Trump's latest ridiculous quote, and the rising popularity of Bernie Sanders. The Des Moines Register polls are out now, and they've been accurate for almost a 100 years. Can you imagine how long we have been perversely obsessed with this?

Yet as Aristotle said, man is a political animal, and being human (in addition, being a teacher and a counsellor) it is difficult not to be fascinated with the whole process, from the nature of the media coverage to the engagement required of its citizens in the process of caucusing. A caucus does not use the normal secret voting method of general elections but rather, delegates group themselves off in a local student gymnasium and raise their hands as

someone goes around, manually counting every candidates supporters. If you think I'm joking, take a look for yourself. It reminds me of my first election as a class monitor in the 5th grade!

The caucus has been held from the mid-19th century on, but truly the process as we will see it tomorrow was reinvented by Jimmy Carter in 1976, and then again by President Obama in 2008, drawing an unprecedented 227,000 people to the caucus halls on bitter cold evenings and late, late nights. It was amazing to watch and observe as I worked for Obama campaign then.

Now I am partially active with Senator Clinton. I'm sure many of you feel the same as one of my students in Hyderabad, Ms. Navya Gudimetla, who wondered aloud at me "Why Hilary??", and I could give you a dozen answers, from my earlier support for Bill Clinton, my hippie fascination with Woodstock and the 60s social revolution, to my activist roots.

But that is not what I want to write about today.

Once in every four years, I am reminded of how extraordinarily proud I am of my adopted professional workplace and the place I call my



*My son making snow angels - a 2001 picture in front of his school*





second home, the town of Cedar Rapids, Iowa (second after my beautiful seaside town of Trivandrum of course).

I remember a call that came in the middle of the night, sometime during the early 2000s from my head office to our apartment in Palo Alto, California. I listened with a heavy heart as I was told that my time in shining Silicon Valley was over and I had to take up a new position in Iowa. My wife and I were heartbroken that we had to let go our 'cool' life' as techies in the valley, that we would no longer get to listen to Jack who sings in Castro street on Mountain view, no longer ride our bike through wine country, that we would no longer live what we felt was our dream life.

That night we spent huddled around a map of the United States, wondering where the heck Iowa even was!

We would go on to spend some of my happiest years there. My son finally joined us in Iowa and studied in Grant Wood Elementary, we went on bike rides along the beautiful river that flows through the town, and we went to local art museums and I began my lifelong obsession with the American Gothic.

In Iowa, we changed careers, companies, built new ones, went back to study, got additional degrees/certifications, licenses to practice/teach, hiked and skied, and built deep-rooted friendships. It was in Iowa I again found a passion for activism I had thought I had lost.

Now, I go around the world talking about Student Enrichment Program, Research Program with Universities here and about Study Iowa. I tell my audiences that Iowa is not only a flat country of corn fields and grazing cows. I tell my students that history is made here (sometimes) and this is an exciting and energizing place to be (always). A place to be active academically, professional and grow as a person. I tell them that, because that was what happened to me.

So, finally, for those of you who are just joining us, welcome to the Caucus. Welcome to the world of american politics. Welcome to the land of opportunities. Welcome to Iowa.





# THE DEMISE OF RUGGED INDIVIDUALISM

I am the father of two sons, one of which is within two courses of graduating from college, and another who has accelerated his learning path beyond everyone's expectations. They are both incredibly intelligent, so I realize there is something different in how their passion for education translated from High School to college. And I also know they are not alone.



Doug Wagner

Studies show that 59% of international students who come to the United States for post-secondary education do not graduate. 44% of Korean students in Ivy League schools do not advance to their second year. Finally, one out of every five students from India who

come to the US to study at a degree granting institution do not complete their program, and another two out of that five never achieve their academic goals. Why is this? What separates one student from another, both domestically and internationally?

Researchers have argued about this for years and offer theories of cultural, social and academic differences. But have we examined the effect of modern American academic culture on international students?

I believe that we have observed a degrading of core American educational values, and today's US-based students do not have a deep





enough understanding of what made America and what drives it even today. Surely, there is a modern expectation that our students WILL attend college and they WILL graduate. In my generation, that was hoped for, but not expected. Now, it seems as if there's an expectation of a provision for such an education, rather than simply an opportunity to have access.

This is a story about Gold, Glory and God, American Rugged Individualism...and international students.

Am I surprised to see this number of dropouts among international students in United States? No. But as a free-market conservative, I am sad about it. What is happening to the new international students coming to the US?

When I visited students and schools in India, both their work ethic and their entrepreneurial spirit impressed me. After visiting some of the best students the world has to offer, I now wonder whether they are not able to get comfortable with the American culture, or, if they are succumbing to the siren's song of the expectation that the education WILL be provided to them, and they no longer have to earn it.

While both working and attending university, I took on a job and found that I worked 40 hours per week with a full-time schedule of classes. I also found that when I assumed these multiple responsibilities, I paid much more attention to both my work and my studies.

How many of today's students are

working while in school? Are they ready to work 10-20 hrs a week to deliver pizza and then study? The international student may need time to acclimate, but are they then willing to take on a job in addition to their studies to help them to focus as well as broaden their horizons?

I fear the ruggedness of Rugged Individualism might be lost in the current generation, regardless of their nationality. More appropriately, the ruggedness is lost or simply not encouraged. Instead, we imbue our children with an, "You'll be taken care of," mentality.

My colleague, Professor Noah Siela entered and completed school much differently than I did. He finished his Baccalaureate in seven years, as after each year he took a break to tend to the family farm, working for an entire year to save enough money for his next year at school. Different paths, but success achieved.

Student loan debt is threatening not only the current generation of American college students, but their predecessors and even those before them, the "Sandwich" generation. These are people taking financial care of both their parents AND their children, and find themselves sandwiched between. This has the capacity to create a catastrophic economic situation, and very few are paying attention to what we, as private individuals, can and should be doing. Instead, they turn to the government in order to have them legislate or mandate the easy way out.

As far as international students are concerned, the question is whether they will fall prey to the modern American educational and financial nightmare of racking up huge student debt and taking a leisurely approach to their post-secondary education. Or, will they harness that entrepreneurial gumption I recognized while in India? Will they step into the fray and positively engage both the social and economic aspects of higher education to become the leaders of the 21st Century? For India's and America's sake, I surely hope so.





# POLLING ALL STUDENTS: OUR MISSED OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION IN AN ELECTION SEASON



**N N S Chandra**  
Lead Editor

Every year, McMaster University organizes a ceremonial Gandhi walk, held on the weekend closest to his day of birth (October 2nd). And, like almost every year, I was one of the many who walked through the streets of downtown Hamilton, celebrating the life and principles of one of the greatest men to have ever lived. However, I was a bad attendee this year; I was not thinking about Gandhi as I walked or even peace at all! Instead, all along, I was getting increasingly worried and agitated on the lack of discussion on education I had seen in

this latest round of Canadian elections. As an educator, I suppose I am inclined to think this way.

I have closely and intensely listened to the discourse throughout this campaign, and I try to read and dissect the various parties, looking for information on their positions, values and commitments. To a certain extent, I can agree that there have indeed been references; there are plans in each of the main party's platforms on important issues in education, how to tackle the burgeoning student loan crisis for example.



But I'm surprised to see that Canada, in terms of our leadership and our society as a whole, does not seem to see the investment opportunity that lies in the education sector; an investment that can innovate our way of life, create wealth, and bring in new ideas for long-term positive change. I am concerned about our lack of commitment to our education institutions and making them attractive to the academically driven, talented and resource-rich pool of prospective undergraduate and graduate students. Comparing our efforts with those from the south of the border, we are coming up short, and the gap is only increasing. For illustration, I am directly associated with the efforts of Study Iowa (a consortium of universities and colleges in Iowa) to promote their campuses to international students. Through my position in that initiative, I have the freedom to observe, understand and learn from the efforts of large university systems in the USA, and the resource pooling required by smaller liberal arts colleges in positioning to attract international students.

As Canadians around the country queue up to vote, I will be travelling to

India and East Asia. I will be talking to 100s of students in Mumbai, Dubai, Hyderabad, Delhi, and even remote towns like Varanasi, interacting with students who are dying for an opportunity to come study in the top schools of North America. To them, this usually only means American schools. Whenever I get a chance, I try to converse with them about Canada and the unique opportunities they might receive here. I tell IB students in Mumbai about the 8%+ of international students in our campuses, about Canadian businesses that are more open to providing jobs for international students than their European and American counterparts. I tell students in Hyderabad about how we can provide them with more jobs and long-term careers at almost double the rate that America can. I talk to them about some of my personal students who are already quite successful in UBC and UOIT, the scholarships they've received, and their flourishing in Canadian campuses; meanwhile, the statistics showing that only 59% of International students in America even graduate! Yet unfortunately, the statistics also show that most of the campuses in the United States have a significantly higher International population than most of our global

campuses (such as McMaster, Calgary and Waterloo).

Most of the students I converse with at schools around the world, be it in India or China, consider Canadian universities with less interest. Are we doing a lousy job at marketing our schools? Are we not bringing in the appropriate tone and focus to our campuses to attract global citizens? Beyond verbal hype and high profile visits by our ministers, are we doing enough to reach out to these prospective students? Do we have a strategy in place to seize this immense opportunity of capitalizing on the rapid growth in the middle class of developing countries and the subsequent explosion of young talent who crave and can now afford a global education?

Student migration is going to be a significant factor in any economy moving forward, and it would be in our best interest to make the best use of it by investing in it, channelling growth and youthful energy, and building a system that incentivizes the next generation of leaders and thinkers to make a positive contribution to the world. It is significant to note that even among the current prospective international students, more than two-third intent to live and work here, given an opportunity. The battle has not been lost, but it must be fought to stand a chance!

I like to think that, in retrospect, Gandhi would not have minded me not thinking too much about him while I walked in his honour. For a man as forward thinking as he was would have recognized the issues we face today, and the fact that discussing solutions for the future instead of focusing on the problems of the past are the only way we can move forward. So I will be watching the results from our election flowing in from the beaches of Goa, and hoping that we, as a community, will just for a moment set aside our debates on niqabs and turbans, the taxes we pay and our paycheques, and start a conversation on our future as a society and the role the globalized, connected, and opinionated young men and women from around the world can play in it.







# THE MAKING OF SEP



**Alphonce O'Bannon**  
Head Coach

**T**LUPS, like many other institutions, thrives to provide exceptional outlets for the intellectual, emotional, artistic, professional, cultural and leadership development of our students. However, what sets us apart is a strong and sincere focus on the holistic enrichment of our students. We want them to find their place in the world and derive meaning and purpose from their experiences. We also want our students to be prepared

for college more than anything else and we believe this approach will bring a sense of direction in the long run in a globalized world.

The best way, we believe, to achieve these goals is to create opportunities for students to take a step back and engage in self-inquiry, as well as reflect upon and articulate about those experiences- which in turn enhances their own personal vision and core values. We started thinking of these as student enrichment programs.





We realize that discussing student enrichment in the context of a common application or in a college admission process makes it a part of university prep, but our goals are far beyond that: the pursuit of integrity, the thrill of collaboration, developing a set of tools for introspection and reflection, and creating genuine desire for success and achievement, just to name a few key components. There are several programs that attempt this overall goal: NASA-sponsored trips, exchange programs to far-away countries, internships in renowned universities like John Hopkins, and our students have done all of these and more. But our quest was to develop a program where they can suspend. Unfortunately, in our opinion, most of the times, these kind of efforts are crammed into final 18 months before the college application.

We started the discussions about SEPs with Dr. Benson, Dr. Betsy, Dr. Pillai, and Dr Brooks to get their academic perspective while at the same, we stayed engaged in conversation with MV,

Pankaj and Shajid to maintain focus on the specific needs of the Indian education system. Additionally, we shared our thoughts with our students (current and past) and parents, and they helped us to refine it further. We wanted to build a cost effective program while keeping it simple and effective - Syam and I personally travelled to India five times, to Europe twice, and a whole host of different cities in America – evaluating programs, ideas, and gathering thoughts and concerns from professionals. Last summer, we gained some experience doing a pilot project in Iowa, USA with 6 of our students from India. We developed and experimented while going back to the fundamentals of university prep, working on increasing intellectual capacity, helping them be engaged citizens and developing their leadership qualities, as well as helping to habituate all these improvements.

Using the results of this initial trial as well as the enormous amount of

feedback we had received from many professors, counselors, students and teachers around the world, the Student Enrichment Program was born.

We have attempted to reveal our thought process throughout our development of this program in this introductory issue of TiGES. Sohom is writing from a student's perspective, while we have people like Doug and Michaela writing on enrichment in specific topics like theatre and American culture. We will continue to come back to this program and your comments and suggestions as well as critiques, and we are committed to publish them.

As a journal we do not wish endorse this or any program for that matter. We just want to share our journey, reveal to you the making of a program. Opinions expressed here are simply opinions of the corresponding authors.

All that being said, we hope you enjoy our explorations.



*There are three groups of people who are intimately affected by and intimately affect our global education landscape: Parents, Teachers, and Students. Broaden your perspective and understanding by gaining insights from these invaluable points of view*

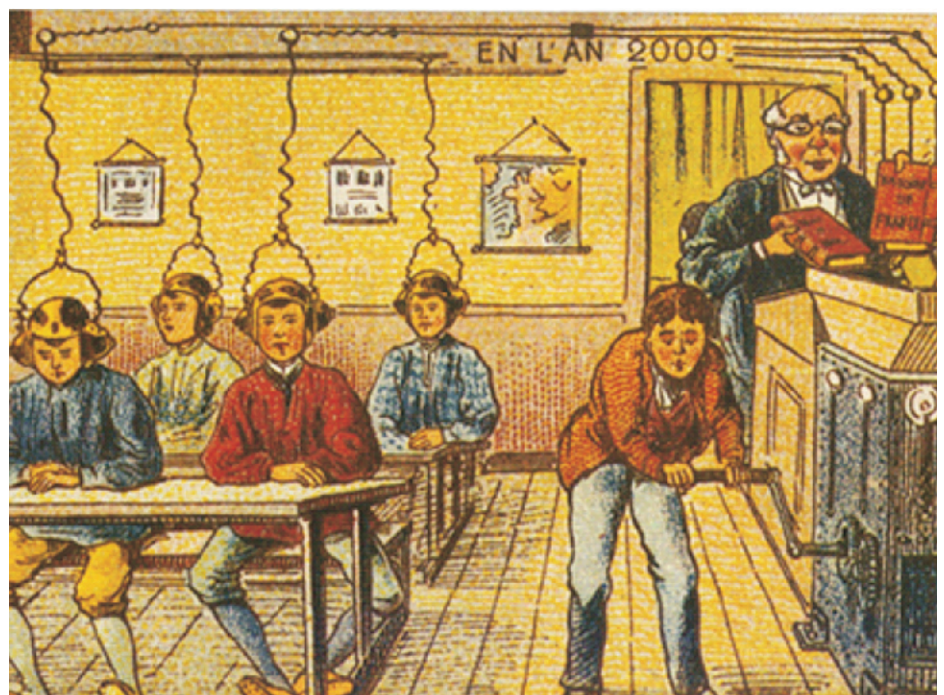


**Sohom Bhowmick**  
Junior, University of Iowa

## COMING TO AMERICA

For the last few years, over the course of my undergraduate degree, I have been an alien in an institution the population of which numbers in the tens of thousands, and a city in which the population numbers in the millions. This feeling of change and alienation forced me to learn many things about myself and the world I live in, but these lessons has never deterred me from my one true motive: succeeding in America, specifically in the American education system. India is a country

that 1.2 billion people call home and I still consider myself proud to be included in that statistic, however it is also a country in which 60% of that population live below the poverty line, many of whom have and will never get the chance to experience the quality of education that I have. I am deeply indebted to my parents for sacrificing so many of their ambitions and resources so that I could study overseas, but I can envision a future in which parents do not have to scrape together the funds to send their children thousands of miles







away to gain the best education, but instead can access it right where they live.

Achieving this will be a monumental task. The current (general) education system in India is essentially a holdover of a pre-WWII philosophy, in which English-style rote learning is the heart and soul of every classroom. This form of learning has its uses, but crucially, it lacks any attempt at developing critical thinking. Though it must be admitted that this education system in India has brought out some of the brightest minds of our era, Nobel laureates such as Rabindranath Tagore and C.V. Raman for example, however in many ways this can be seen as an exception to the rule. In my opinion, the Indian system continues to live in the age of educational dinosaurs, though the developed world has rapidly begun to move on to a broader perspective; not only in how they challenge their students to think and learn but also by giving them the opportunity to ask “how can what I learn be applied?”. Similarly, there are many hard questions that we need to ask ourselves as well, not only we the students but also we the parents, we the teachers and we the entire Indian community. For example, does spending 8 hours in school, and

then an additional 4, 5 hours in tuition help us gain any true, practical and applicable knowledge?

Of course, it is easy to point out all the problems of a given issue, but figuring out a solution that addresses them is a much harder task. One possible option is to simply replace the entire education infrastructure and imbibe some of the core values that would help build up students as engaged and active citizens in a globalized future, rather than creating robots, capable only of accomplishing one specific task over and over again. This would require a complete revolution in Indian educational philosophy that seems utterly impossible to achieve.

We might look to the United States for a more practical solution. Schools here opt for a Student Enrichment Program; Clendening and Davies (published in 1983) defined enrichment to be ; ‘any learning experience that replaces, supplements, or extends instruction beyond the restrictive bonds and boundaries of course content, textbook, and classroom and that includes depth of understanding, breadth of understanding, and relevance to the student and to the world in which he or she lives’. There has been a large amount of research

that has been conducted over the last three decades on this very subject and researchers around the world have identified many of the key learning outcomes of this program that would make it successful.

Over the last six months, we have been trying to bring students from India to be a part of this program. Our association with the Cedar Rapids School District Board has helped us in not only having students come from India to learn and interact with their peers in America, but it has also given the American students to indulge in activities with a person who lives halfway around the world and has a complete alien cultural background, much like what I experienced when I first came to study here.

As our first batch prepares to go back home and finish up their Student Enrichment Development, I have seen these kids change for the better. This is evident especially with Pragnya, the girl who I recruited in Hyderabad. When I first meet her a few short months ago, she struck me as incredibly shy and timid, though my few interactions with her gave me an idea about the brilliance of her work (she has earned a number reputable accolades in the field of fashion designing). After spending two weeks gaining international exposure as a part of SEP, she has ‘enriched’ herself in the fields of Theater, Writing and American Culture and she has also garnered a number of memories that she assured me she would never forget. This program was developed to enrich students and improve certain interpersonal and critical thinking skills, but I never expected that the students will experience a change that will completely alter the way they look at life. Though not as sweeping a solution as it would be to simply topple the entire education system of India and begin again, I believe that this small act of introducing students to true enrichment of the things that they might not get in a traditional Indian environment, is incredibly helpful on its own.





# STUDENTS; SCAPEGOAT OF PARENT'S WHIMS AND FANCIES!



**Aswani Dravid**  
Research Team

**A**s soon as I finished my 10th grade with brilliant score, all my relatives and neighbors rushed home to enquire whether I would be opting to become an Engineer or a Doctor. I said neither and to their heart's surprise, I opted to pursue Humanities. No one stood with me in this. The total strength of my class was

20, while science classes had 60+ students in each division. From then onwards my decision to study Political Science, joining M.Phil, Ph.D etc were seen with contempt as for them it all seemed a waste of money and time. They still believe I am 28 and jobless instead of understanding that I am undertaking a path breaking research in India's strategic arena. My sister who is





6 years younger to me joined the engineering frenzy and is a graduate now who is successfully placed in Tata Consultancy Services as Systems Engineer at the age of 22.

To the common man in India, a job with decent salary is all that matter. The life cycle of an average Indian is once you are born; you go to school, then to college, get a job, get married, have a child and die. This is the frenzy in which each child is born and raised.

Until the advent of liberalization in India's job sectors, the common man who was trailing under the caste chains could only look up to administrative jobs as a way to improve their economic and social status. Those limited numbers of government jobs ensured lifelong security to the family and an upward mobility in the class strata. But after the adoption of LPG measures in 1991, much of India's youth received the outsourced work of foreign companies. Many Multinational companies were established here which again threw open abundant job

opportunities, that generated the demand for engineers in Computer Science, IT, Electronics and Communication. Thus started the IT bloom in Indian job sectors and the frenzy for engineering degrees.

Since 2000, India has witnessed millions of engineering degree holders graduating from various universities- Public and Private. Even though IITs' top the list of these institutes, other colleges are nothing less to majority of the parents who wish to send their wards to earn degrees. Kerala tops the nation in number of engineering colleges and number of graduating students to an extent that there is a popular joke which says every junction in Kerala has an Engineering College. The popular culture has addressed this issue through many films like Om Shanthi Oshana, Makante Achan etc.

The state level entrance exam which is ranked as one of the toughest exams to crack is the decisive factor for admissions to the Engineering colleges. To clear this exam, there are many

coaching institutes which are gravely infamous for their inhuman treatment of students. At the age of 14 or 15, these children are churned out to become mere robots who can answer multiple choice questions. This system cannot even be called 'education' as there is no learning process involved in it. No amount of quality education is imparted on the children nor are they allowed to think- killing their creativity and individuality, thousands of such robots are extracted out from such coaching institutes.

I have my cousins and friends who studies/ studied there. And with a hidden smile on the corner of their faces, mothers merely say that these institutes are making their children 'disciplined'. Reading the suicide note of the girl who committed suicide in Kota, which says that her mother manipulated her into liking science, I felt a weird pang in my mind. When will parents understand that each child is an individual in herself/himself?





# THE POWER OF RESEARCH



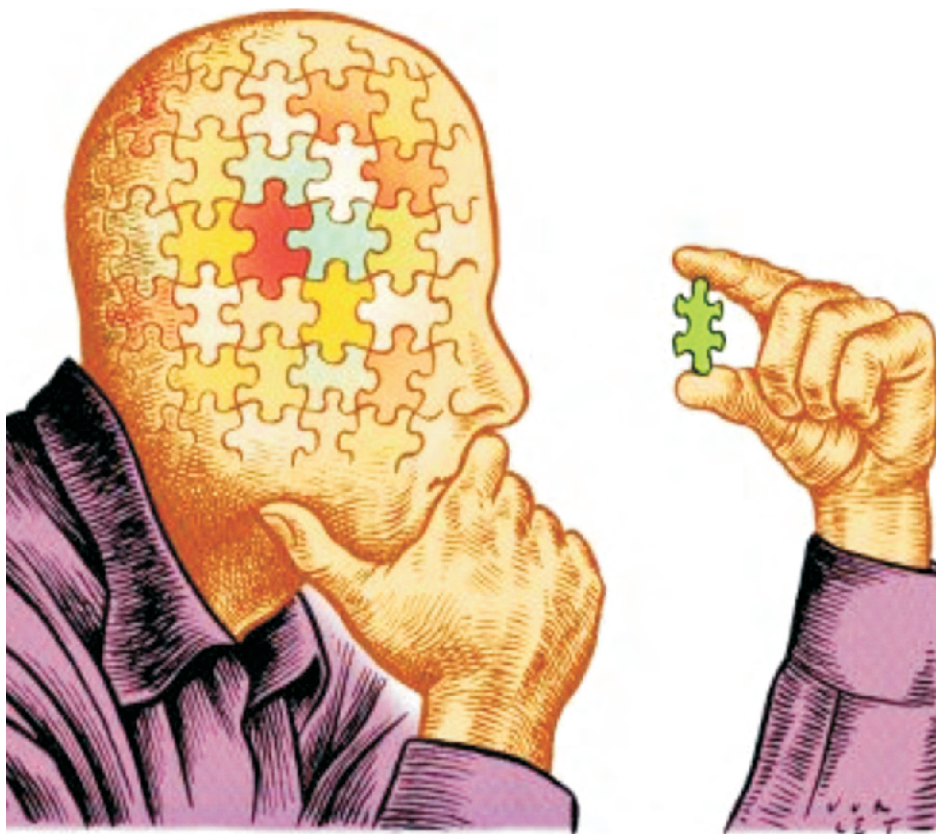
**Achyuth Chandra**  
Grad Student, McGill University

**I**n the last year of my international baccalaureate career, I was confronted with a problem I had not faced before. To write my extended essay in history, I had to do undergo a rigorous and exacting amount of research into my topic of interest. I had done research on smaller scales before and for specific assignments, but it was the process of writing that 4000 word essay on the origins of Islam that

helped open my eyes to what ‘research’ truly was. What follows is a short primer on what the term means to me, and how understanding its essence has helped me.

Research, at its core, is the process by which one can learn the truth, whatever form that truth may take. There are specialized tools and instruments that a researcher in a particular field utilizes that others in other fields would not, but the principle remains the same: how can





I get the right answer to an important question? Looked at in this way, research becomes less of a stuffy academic term that conjures up images of old dusty men flipping through old dusty books, and more of a necessary component of humanity. We, as a species, have been attempting to get answers ever since we evolved from our primate ancestors (though perhaps one day, our own research into primate biology will show that we were not the only ones with that capacity!) and most likely always will. Modern students may not recognize the work of ancient thinkers such as Parmenides and Confucius, or ancient texts such as the Upanishads and Tao Te Ching as research, but they all explore ideas on how our world was formed, where we came from, and how to live one's life, questions that continue to motivate current researchers.

Today, of course, many of the questions that we are interested in are best answered through the scientific method; wherein instead of merely thinking about the world as the philosophers and prophets of the past

did, we test the world and study the nature of its response. This allows for a more objective lens, one that is not coloured as much by the various ideological biases we are all inevitably burdened with (but does not eliminate them altogether). Science has allowed us to determine our place in the world, in the galaxy and in the cosmos, it has gotten us on top of moons and distant planets and unlocked the secrets of the beating heart but it has also helped unleash destruction on a scale that was hereto unimaginable. Scientific research is what is known as descriptive rather than normative, it tells us the nature of things as they are instead of how they should be, and there is no tool better at the job. When we ask questions on how things should be however (e.g. should nuclear weapons ever be used?), we are forced to turn to research in philosophy and ethics (a specific branch of philosophy that studies the nature of good and evil).

Research, whether it be scientific or philosophical, is about getting answers, and we live in an age that bombards with questions from all directions: is global

warming a threat, can we travel faster than light, is there life on other planets, which drugs should be legalized and which should not be, how can we fight ebola and ISIS, the questions are seemingly endless. Knowing how to get answers, then, is a vital skill to have, and it is a skill that will be tested in whatever academic stream that a student wishes to pursue. In my freshman year of university, I received the opportunity to accept a laboratory position that many of my peers were hungry to receive; the reason I was selected, above all else, was my experience with talking about and understanding what it means to get answers to questions, to conduct research. It was a skill that I have used again and again in a variety of classes and extra-curricular activities, and even in my leisure time to understand more about things that interest me (film, literature, sports, video games, etc.).

In addition to giving you the building blocks for a modern academic life, having a good understanding for the process of research also instills in you an innate curiosity and creativity. When you know the correct and best way to get answers, you will find that the questions bubble out of you in an ever-increasing pace, questions that might help determine the future of not only your life, but the lives of humanity as a whole. Figuring out the right question to ask, after all, is sometimes half the struggle.

This is not a call to arms for everyone to become researchers, rather it is to help let you all realize that, knowingly or not, you have conducted research over and over and over again (no matter how young or old you might be), just as we have all ran or jumped or punched at one time or another. But just as there is a correct way to run and to jump and to punch, so is there a correct way to conduct research; knowing the proper technique to do so can help you write extended essays, as it helped me write mine; or perhaps, it will help you achieve things much greater? And if you want to answer that question, then you better get researching.



*Read peer reviewed articles on current trends and events in global education. Be informed and join the dialogue! Policy makers, academics, teachers, parents, students, and students of international education are all invited. And of course, all minds curious about our transitioning global education landscape.*



**Dr. M S R Dev**  
International Educational and Management  
Consultant.

# STUDENT ATTRITION AND RETENTION

## International Student Community in US Higher Educational Institutions / Universities

I had the privilege and opportunity to visit a number of Higher educational institutions / universities around the world. I was fascinated with the Art and Architecture, Class and Culture of a number of universities in the United Kingdom, Australia and United States. This article is centered around the thoughts lingering on the universities in the United States. Most of the universities in US have their own uniqueness as well as the commonalities in campus culture, creative environment, systems, structure and strategies and so also the associated challenges and opportunities in teaching, research and learning systems. I am going to address and analyze one of the top most challenges / issues that is being discussed, debated and reported in the present time – the international student's attrition in campus, a growing concern. As I visualize the above issue in my mindscape, I could observe many thoughtful scenarios that I am going to sketch down.

Most of the Better Universities in the US are constantly struggling and striving to imbibe / evolve unique campus characteristics such as, United Campus (students – staff – faculties – management ---), Culture Friendly Campus, Peaceful Campus (sans violence and crime), Smart Campus (technology friendly), Green Campus (sustainable), prosperous Campus (infrastructures, ---) and Spiritual Campus (divinity, Enlightenment, ---). These campuses visualize the university education and enrichment mission for the students:-

- To imbibe an ability to think logically, analytically and independently
- To communicate clearly and effectively
- To make learn on one's own
- To broaden the knowledge in the form of variety of academic fields and potential interest and to deepen the skill set in specific fields in order to have a sense of power that comes with the learning
- To acquire a set of personal and professional values
- To develop and enhance the inner potential of individuals – intellectual, moral, emotional, physical, social, cultural and spiritual
- To prepare to take up a career with the required professional knowledge and skill sets

Year after year, millions of students strive to get admission to diverse higher educational institutions / universities with the above mission in their mind. In the above journey, one of the trend we witness in this century is that a growing number of international students mostly from the developing world are seeking admission to the universities in the developed world. Yes, the American universities do welcome these international students and we could witness the crowd especially from the countries such as, China, India, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Korea, etc. American universities do kindle the



creative and innovative thinking. It is striving continuously to seek and reach out the best of higher education in the 21st century. Today, the US host around world's 4 – 5 million students – than any other country. The average percentage of international students varies from 10 – 30 % of total number of students in most of the universities today. In the year 2013 – 14, US enrolled around 880000 undergraduate and graduate students to its colleges and universities. The students from China, India and South Korea represent about half of the international students in US.

The US Universities welcome the International student community keeping in mind the following benefits :

- The international students add diversity to a university enriching the experience of other students in the campus
- Schools with strong global presence often have a wealth of cultural groups and events – allowing national students an opportunity to share their food, music and traditions with their US peers.
- The fees remitted by international students is a major share of revenue for the universities' total income

Yes, the number of international students in US colleges and universities continues to climb year after year. There is market growth in international student enrollment at present. It is interesting also to note that there is larger scale growth of international students leaving the universities in recent years. This is the thought process that being tried to address in this article. What makes the international students leave? Why they prefer to leave? The percentage of attrition today is touching 50% -- 80% -- even 90% in specific cases. The investigative research on the above issue of attrition of international students is getting initiated and growing. What are the Causes, Consequences and Cure (3 Cs) for attrition? It does call for focused research and analysis.

The growing Attrition (A) of international students is the top most challenge for the universities as

compared to other challenges such as, Behaviour (B) and Culture in Campus, Conflicts (C) and Crime in the Campus, Discrimination (D) in the Campus and Engagement (E) in the Campus.

When we start visualizing the root cause of Attrition, we come across a number of reasons such as, Financial reasons, Academic reasons, Socio Cultural reasons, etc.. The root cause study and analysis can be based upon the following sources of investigation:

- Federal laws and Acts
- Interviews (international students, faculties, etc.)
- Academic research
- Case studies and analysis
- Database
- Reports published
- Specific analysis

In general, the following factors are arrived as the cause of attrition of international students and can vary between region to region:

1. Financial issues – Affordability – higher education is going to be expensive. The factors most cited by the students were squarely economic / financial – access to jobs / internships / availability of scholarships etc. Today, total fee is 2.5 to 4 times that of national inflation. The Indian currency severely devalued against US Dollar – many Indian students were hard hit by that.
2. Academic issues – Parental pressure, disappointed program expectations, disorganized life style, large class rooms ---
3. Environmental issues – The instances of prejudice and discrimination, exclusion, humiliation, ---- observed in the campus.
4. Socio – Cultural issues - Socialization, communication, not-interacting --- dissatisfaction with local food and dormitories.
5. Psychological issues – Loneliness, homesickness, depression, stress and anxiety, family problems and frustration - --

6. Emergence of growing online options – Off campus higher educational trends with the aid of modern technologies – virtual campuses – Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) ---
7. Spending of 4 years in the college is too much – taking the yardstick of time span for new generation
8. Cultural pressure to go to college immediately after the high school is slowly melting down
9. Formal university degrees not yielding ROI (Return on Investment) that it used to be
10. The educational loans and debts cripple the students during the career start phase itself
11. Lack of social adjustments – local American students are observed more socially adjusted to university life when compared to international students
12. Language and communication – English language difficulties.

The next part of the article will try to address the Consequence of Attrition of International Students and the possible and feasible cure of the problems. The ultimate outcome must be to learn the lessons – the Ways and Means – ‘How to bridge the Gap – What the International Students want and what is provided with the backup of creative and innovative research policies and programs.

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# The Effect of Generational Status on College Adjustment and Psychological Well-Being among South Asian American College Students

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines whether there is a difference between first-generation South Asian American college students and continuing-generation South Asian American college students in their college adjustment and their psychological well-being. Despite being the third largest Asian subgroup, South Asians continue to be underrepresented within educational and psychological literature. This study found that first-generation students were more likely to live and work off campus, have lower household incomes, and spend fewer hours per week participating in co-curricular activities than continuing-generation students. First-generation students also demonstrated lower levels of social and academic adjustment as well as personal growth. International students may be first generation or continuing generation, but will have some of the college adjustment problems considered in this study. Educators and psychologists can use insights gained from studying generational differences to form strategies to help international students successfully navigate college adjustment.



Elizabeth Altmaier,  
Ph.D

Munni Deb,  
Ph.D

## Introduction

College education is recognized as a means to upward economic and social mobility. Although the transition from high school to college is challenging

for many college students, first-generation college students are especially disadvantaged because of demographic characteristics, pre-college experiences, knowledge of the institution of college, levels and quality of social support, and various other factors. These academic, social and cultural factors have been found to significantly impact these students' college-going experience and psychological well-being. This study focused on first-generation South Asian students, students whose parents had no college experience either within the United States or another country.

Compared to continuing-generation students, first-generation students are disadvantaged (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Mehta et al., 2011). They are more likely to live and work off campus, thus missing out on social life and extracurricular activities available on campus. In addition, they report spending less time studying and have lower grade point averages than their continuing-generation peers. Choy (2001) documented that regardless of demographic characteristic, including race and ethnicity, first-generation students are twice more likely to drop out of college before degree completion compared to students whose parents had college experience.

This differential may be partly explained by the Social Capital Theory (SCT; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, &

Terenzini, 2004). Social capital is the knowledge, skills and attitudes that exists and are shared or transferred within relationships. A common source of social capital for many students are parents. For this reason, students who are continuing-generation may learn from their parents the skills and attitudes necessary for college success. In contrast, first-generation students lack parental social capital for academic challenges which may impact their college going experience. For example, they may not be familiar with resources available on campus.

Social Capital Theory may also help explain how and why international students, whose credentials suggest a high likelihood of academic success, may still fail. If these students cannot find necessary knowledge or information from their parents or close friends, who are in another country and thus unfamiliar with the students' college experience, they suffer. If they are also alienated from sources at their own institution, or they do not feel able to ask for help, they will not know necessary information.

In general, studies that examined the experience of Asian American students in the United States have omitted students from countries defined as South Asian. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate differences between first-generation and continuing-generation South Asian American college students in their adjustment to college and in their psychological well-being. In this study, data was gathered concerning demographic characteristics previously identified through research to be potentially influential to the college experience.

## Methods

**Participants.** The research participants were 100 first- and continuing-generation South Asian American students enrolled at two Midwestern four-year universities in the United States. To be eligible to participate, students met the following criteria:

Had parents who were born in South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal,

Pakistan, or Sri Lanka)

Self-identified as South Asians living in the United States

Were between 18 and 22 years of age

Were enrolled in 9 or more credit hours.

**Measures.** Three measures were used in this study: a demographic questionnaire, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1999), and the Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SWB; Ryff, 1989).

The SACQ is a 67 item self-report measure covering adjustment to college. Each item is a statement to which the participant responds along a 9 point scale ranging from 1 "applies very closely to me" to 9 "doesn't apply to me at all." A higher score indicates better adjustment on academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional commitment domains. The SACQ is scored by converting raw scores into T-scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10.

The SWB is a 84 item self-report measure of aspects of well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each item is a statement to which the participant responds along a 6 point scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 6 "strongly agree." Higher scores reflect greater well-being; scores are reported as item averages, thus ranging from 1 to 6.

**Procedures.** Recruitment of participants was conducted using methods approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Iowa. Subject recruitment and data collection were conducted using several methods, including a recruitment email sent to course instructors and various campus organizations. The study was administered online using Qualtrics and contained an introduction page, the informed consent document, the three measures, and a debriefing page.

## Results

Of the 100 students who participated, 75% were continuing-generation, 74%

were female, 72% lived off campus, and 64% were employed. Students' college status (e.g., freshmen, sophomore) was evenly distributed across all years. The majority of students reported a high school grade point average in the A range (63%) and a college grade point average in the B range (55%).

Demographic characteristics were compared between first- and continuing-generation students. There were statistically significant differences in the following areas: first-generation students were more likely to live off campus, live at home with parents, work off campus, have a lower family income, and report fewer hours participating in extracurricular activities.

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for study measures. Visual inspection reveals that continuing-generation students scored higher on all measures than first-generation students with the exception of the Autonomy subscale of the SPWB. A multivariate analysis of variance compared first- to continuing-generation students on the 4 subscales of the SACQ. The F test was significant,  $F(4, 95) = 2.90, p = .03$ . Analyses of variance for each subscale revealed that this effect was primarily due to large differences on Social Adjustment. Therefore, the data reveal that first-generation students reported less success coping with social-emotional demands of college than continuing-generation students. A multivariate analysis of variance compared first- to continuing-generation students on the 6 subscales of the SPWB. The overall F test was non-significant, revealing statistically insignificant differences on the subscales.

## Discussion

Consistent with previous research, this study found that first-generation students were more likely to live off campus, live at home with parents, work off campus, have a lower family income, and report fewer hours participating in extracurricular activities than their continuing-generation peers. Although living at home reduces the expense of college, it comes at the price of removing



students from successful integration into the college environment. Living at home may also come with household responsibilities and family obligations that influence lower participation in campus activities.

The significant difference in the Social Adjustment subscale of the SACQ between first- and continuing-generation students suggests the difficulty first-generation students have in coping with the interpersonal challenges of a college environment. These challenges can range from making new friends, to speaking up in a class discussion, to visiting a professor during his or her office hours. If a first-generation student is lonely, or socially distressed, or sees less hope for a satisfying future in the college, it makes sense that he or she will drop out. These challenges seem also likely for international students, in that they are not only coping with a new environment, they are also separated from support from their families and friends.

Wang and Castaneda-Sound (2008) argued that regardless of generational status, ethnic minority students generally find college to be

challenging. Much research exists to document these difficulties. Interestingly, this research stands in contrast to the “model minority” myth that Asian American students are considered to be high academic achievers and well-adjusted psychologically. An international student typically is of a different minority, racial or ethnic status than other students in the college. Thus, difficulties of being first generation may be compounded by minority status.

This study has several limitations. It studied students at only one point in time, and thus we do not have data on their eventual college graduation. It also consisted of participants who agreed to complete the on-line survey, and may have missed students who chose not to be included for various reasons.

The Social Capital Theory would suggest several applications. First, international students, especially those who are first generation, could benefit from services that enhance their personal, social, and academic adjustment. These might be offered in ways that allow access: online, in a

location away from campus, and with older peer mentors. Second, professional development for faculty might emphasize the importance of connection with all international students, especially students of color and those who are first generation. It is important that all academic institutions be aware of the challenges associated with college transition and aim to improve the college experience among nontraditional students by developing and implementing culturally appropriate instructional strategies, programs, and services.

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**Table 1**  
**Study Measure Means and Standard Deviations**

| Measure    | Overall Mean (SD) | FGCS Mean (SD) | CGCS Mean (SD) |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| SACQ       |                   |                |                |
| Full scale | 48.21(10.67)      |                |                |
| AA *       | 49.58(10.06)      | 46.32(10.22)   | 50.67(9.84)    |
| SA*        | 50.08(10.65)      | 46.24(9.13)    | 51.36(10.86)   |
| PEA *      | 44.58(11.36)      | 42.88(10.96)   | 45.15(11.51)   |
| ATT*       | 50.25(9.50)       | 49.04(8.92)    | 50.65(9.71)    |
| SPWB       |                   |                |                |
| Autonomy   | 4.17(.83)         | 4.27(.81)      | 4.14(.84)      |
| EA *       | 4.09(.89)         | 4.00(.78)      | 4.12(.92)      |
| PG*        | 4.87(.66)         | 4.67(.58)      | 4.94(.68)      |
| PR*        | 4.74(.81)         | 4.70(.80)      | 4.75(.82)      |
| PIL*       | 4.55(.84)         | 4.33(.78)      | 4.63(.85)      |
| SA*        | 4.21(.99)         | 4.13(.96)      | 4.23(1.01)     |

\*SACQ Academic Adjustment (AA), Social Adjustment (SA), Personal-Emotional Adjustment (PEA), Attachment (ATT); SPWB Environmental Mastery (EA), Personal Growth (PG), Positive Relations with Others (PR), Purpose in Life (PIL), Self-Acceptance (SA)

# IMPACT OF DIFFICULTY IN ADJUSTING AND ADAPTING ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ATTRITION

## Introduction

Raj graduated from an International Baccalaureate secondary school in Mumbai. He was at the top of his class. He was accepted into a top level university in the United States – he had all that they were looking for! Raj arrived in Boston in late August and leapt into “frosh week” activities. By December his grades reflected his academic struggles. By reading week in his second semester he was only attending classes periodically. He failed all of his April exams. In May he was back home, with no plans for returning.

This real example is not unusual. 20-25% of international students fail to complete the undergraduate program into which they were accepted. To understand this phenomenon there are a variety of factors that need to be considered. Amongst a variety of factors, those which continually rise to the surface include 1) difficulty in adjusting and adapting to the new environment and 2) the consequences of social isolation, precipitated by seeking to meet familial expectations of academic performance. This article will explore difficulties in

adjusting and adapting, which has implications for social isolation factors as well.

## Difficulty in Adjusting and Adapting

The challenge of international study is initially, and perhaps naturally, centered on academic performance. After all, the student has met the application qualifications that are based on academic standards and language comprehension assessments. Academically, perhaps even intellectually, the student is on equal ground with other students in her program. Academic performance, however, rests on a foundation of psychological and socio-cultural congruence. That is, if the student is not disturbed by psychological dissonance or has developed adequate coping mechanisms, she can concentrate on her academic studies. If the student is functioning in a social and cultural environment that responds to acquired understandings and social skills, she can concentrate on her academic studies. Difficulties emerge when those normal conditions are no longer the case, as in a student studying in a setting that is complicated by an international displacement alongside unknown social



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and cultural expectations.

### **Making Sense of the Difficulties**

Psychological adaptation for international students requires the development of adequate coping mechanisms for dealing with stress. A major geographic move and loss of family are at the top of all research on causes of stress. An international student is dealing with both of these factors, coupled with the inexperience of early adulthood (often ages 17-23).

Interestingly this inability to cope in the early stages of transition to another culture is often referred as “culture shock.”

However, in order to make sense of this time period, we need to separate social and cultural challenges from the inner psychological responses that are, in fact, normal for anyone making a move and losing family. This phenomena is just as real when a student moves from their home town to a city in another region of their own country to study. A life move has happened and family has been left behind. Rather than culture shock, the international student is actually experiencing “change or transition fatigue.”

Inability to cope with the stress of “change fatigue” produces lack of concentration, loss of interest, lack of energy, irritability, emotional outbursts, increased absence from class, social isolation and increased alcohol and drug use. Academic capacity is not sufficient to counter the impact of this psychological dissonance – other resources must be brought to bear on the situation. If adequate coping mechanisms are not developed, students will withdraw from their academic programs.

Three responses have been found helpful in developing coping mechanisms which aid the psychological adaptation of international students:

1. Opportunities for short experiences (in advance of a major move) that develop and stretch coping mechanisms, such as international

travel, extended time spent away from home and family, and involvement in group activities with previously unknown participants.

2. Awareness and understanding of what may emerge in the normal adaptation and adjustment process. Advance understanding allows students to identify their ensuing experiences as “normal” and therefore able to seek out help in a timely manner. This allows for positive re-framing of experiences as they emerge.
3. The development of meaningful relationships which provide a sounding-board for processing change. Building friendships with roommates or fellow classmates is very significant because they are experiencing similar phenomena and are able to help project objectivity.

This is particularly challenging however, when culturally-based understandings and acquired social behaviors contribute to communication barriers and misunderstandings, thus creating further isolation.

Socio-cultural adaptation for international students requires the acquisition of cultural understanding and accompanying social skills and behaviors for bridging the differences between cultures. All human beings have been shaped by the unique set of beliefs, values, thought processes, communication systems and social behaviors in which we have been socialized during our formative years. Culture is the total way of life of any group who have common ground through a kind of collective programming – what Geert Hofstede refers to as “software for the mind.”

When an international student meets with students and faculty who have been shaped by a different cultural software, he has to decide to acquire knowledge and understanding, coupled with regular engagement, in order to develop skills in moving back and forth between the various points of

reference.

Early in the international student’s experience – during his first semester – many of his challenges relate to “change fatigue.” He is only beginning to recognize that the cultural differences may also be more significant than originally imagined. The student is, in fact, “unconsciously incompetent.” He doesn’t know that he is continually missing cultural markers, thus promoting consistent misunderstandings.

The most common stumbling blocks to good intercultural understanding are:

1. The assumption of similarity, rather than difference. While most cultures will find some common ground on which to base initial engagement, it is the differences that will have the most long-lasting impact. The international student who assumes, “this person, this teacher, this assignment” is just like a similar person or situation I might encounter in my own cultural context, is already losing ground in understanding what is going on.
2. Language comprehension. A student’s ability to pass a language examination for university application purposes may not actually be sufficient to understand or communicate appropriately with someone raised in a differing cultural environment using that language.
3. Non-verbal misunderstandings. If communication is up to 85% non-verbal and most of our non-verbal communication tools are profoundly shaped by culture, then understanding the vocabulary and syntax of a second or third language may not be sufficient for what “actually” was communicated or “meant” in any given exchange. Furthermore, common cultural etiquette guides help develop understanding of gestures and body language. However, knowledge of how time and space are used from one culture to another, or how status

affects interpersonal relationships, takes much longer to make sense of. Everyday life, in class and outside, is navigated through non-verbal cues – many of which the international student will miss completely.

4. Stereotypes and Preconceptions. Since human beings are shaped by cultural frameworks, it is like we are viewing the world around us through a particular lens, or way of seeing. Every new encounter is viewed through that cultural lens; that is, preconceived or built around stereotype. Many experiences of international students are impacted by preconceptions of what they “think” is happening.
5. Tendency to evaluate. Human beings naturally discern, or evaluate, all the experiences we encounter. Good, bad, indifferent. The challenge is that good and bad are largely determined by our cultural software. When we have an experience we tend to evaluate it on the basis of our culturally constructed frameworks. Since those “lenses” don’t give an accurate view of the experience from the other’s perspective, our evaluation may be premature. We need to understand the other’s perspective as “missing data” from our own evaluation.
6. High anxiety. All of the foregoing stumbling blocks contribute to anxiety or stress about many intercultural experiences. Tension is common in intercultural exchanges because of uncertainties and ambiguity. Often, pre-encounter anxiety creates additional misunderstandings.

For the international student, these communication stumbling blocks are an underlying, every-day set of circumstances. They are unavoidable. Needless to say, any one of them has the potential to contribute to declining academic performance. Combined with the challenges of psychological

coping, it is no wonder that many international students struggle during their first months of study. Failure to pay attention to the socio-cultural challenges often results in greater social isolation, contributing to depression and students dropping out of their programs.

Three responses have been helpful in developing resilience in the face of socio-cultural challenges:

1. Development of international mindedness (or global mindset, cultural intelligence) during secondary school years. Students who gain an understanding of cultural construction and how they have been shaped by their own culture will have a framework for making sense of the new cultures they encounter.
2. Acquisition of knowledge and understanding regarding the culture in which the student will be immersed. Using the cultural framework gained in #1, students can research and investigate the cultural beliefs, values and behaviors of the culture in which they will be living and studying.
3. Personal motivation to learn and press beyond existing knowledge and experience. The student with an inquiring, curious, approach to life in general will enter into relationships across cultures with confidence.

The difficulties in adjusting and adapting to a new cultural environment have direct impact on student success rates. These challenges should not be minimized. The surprising fact is that 75-80% of international students actually succeed in meeting their academic objectives and graduate. They do so because they have found the appropriate internal and external resources to aid them during this period.

The development of adequate coping mechanisms and cultural frameworks

help to make sense of this often overwhelming period in the student’s life. Providing opportunities for growth and development in these areas is incumbent on parents of students considering international study, as well as the secondary institutions that recognize many of their students will pursue studies internationally.

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*Read, listen to, and/or watch interviews of the leaders who shape our global education landscape. What are their issues of concern and why? What are their long and short term educational objectives? What solutions do they propose?*

## IN CONVERSATION WITH THE VETERAN CONSULTANT TO USA -USHA THYAGARAJAN

Three years ago, a young bright girl from BITS Pilani went to a consultancy with her brilliant academic scores but a poor GRE score. She was encouraged by the consultancy to give the exam once more and improve her GRE score. Half heartedly she left the office, but informed the consultancy later that she got admission to some university in US through another consultancy which did not make an issue with her lower GRE scores.

What happened to this girl at the United States port of entry is an issue worth pondering. She was stopped by the immigration officers and while checking her certificates, they asked her, “When you are eligible to go to Stanford, why opt for such a lower

grade university?”

Long story short, she came back crying to India.

I don’t know this girl personally. But I met the founder of the consultancy she approached at first. Here is the excerpt from my meeting with Usha Thyagarajan, this veteran consultant from Hyderabad.

The deportation of hundreds of Telugu students from US port of entry despite having a valid Visa made me curious to study the issue and hence I flew to Hyderabad and met Usha. Here are some excerpts from the interview and a valuable perspective in understanding the whole deportation issue.



Aswani Dravid  
Research Team



*Usha Thyagarajan - Veteran consultant from Hyderabad.*

**Q: All the 200 students who were deported were from Telugu speaking land; Andhra and Telengana. Is there any specific reason to it?**

A: Yes. Nearly 80 % of the Indians in US are telugites. Parents of these students are the primary reason for this trend. It is a fashion here to say, 'My son is in US'. What he does there is not a relevant question. Because of this, boys and girls have a fad for it and in the marriage market they specifically look for US settled persons. The daughters won't get married if they don't get a job/admission in US!

Hence there are definitely forces in society ready to explore this crazy psyche. But now students will understand that it is not a joke. I hope they take up their primary homework about potential colleges seriously.

**Q: But why this bulk deportation suddenly? What you think are the reasons?**

A: It was very difficult to get a visa to US earlier. There is a temple here named Chilkor Balaji, which is popular by the name 'Visa Balaji.' It is believed that if you do some rituals there, the American visa will be granted in a jiffy. But now, the procedures have been made liberal and since 2 years everyone who applies for visa has been getting it.

This deportation trend started towards the end of 2015. Some documents were randomly checked and 2-3 students were sent back at the port of entry first, but then they were sent back in groups.

**Q: There were wide spread reports that these students did not fulfill the parameters needed to join the US universities. Is it true? What**

**are the parameters needed?**

A: The students should have a score of more than 80 % in academics and a GRE score of more than 6.5 to join any course. I don't encourage applications without the minimum of these scores. I don't know about the deported students. But most of the students who approach us for admissions don't check anything about the colleges or their courses.

**Q: What is the role of consultancies in this whole procedure?**

A: It is very minimal. We assist them in selecting a University or a course and also help them in filling applications. But some consultancies have tie-up with universities in US and they don't bother about the scores. If someone without minimum grade comes to me, I ask them to go and improve the scores, but some consultancies take them in. The poor students do not understand that without good scores, their selection process is restricted.

**Q: What is the most sought after course in US?**

A: Computer Science, mostly for Masters. It is mainly because IT field is highly paid and it is easy to get jobs in US.

**Q: From your 20 years of experience in the field of consultancy, do you have any message to future students?**

A: Everyone does extensive research before choosing a school or college in India. Shouldn't you do the same when you go to a foreign country? At least from now, take the selection process seriously. Do proper homework about universities, before applying. This is a learning lesson for all. Don't approach consultancies by saying, "you do anything, but send me to US".





## FROM THE DECCAN TO IOWA: IN SEARCH OF DISTINCTIVE EXCELLENCE

Vevek may be as young as a 12 year old, but when he starts talking, you will put everything on hold to hear him out! 'It was pure fun in Iowa, being a part of the Student Enrichment Program. When we got back, I was a different person altogether', says Vevek who dreams to be a doctor one day. He is not alone in this. His friends Aryan, Navyaa and Pragnya too echo this opinion about the very program which took them to United States.



Aswani Dravid  
Research Team

It is not atypical for Indians to hit a foreign land on holidays. But here is a bunch of enthusiastic youngsters from the Deccan who decided to spend their holidays in Iowa, not as a tourist, but as

one among the American students. For this, they decided to join the Student Enrichment Program designed by Cedar Rapids Community School District Board, Iowa in United States, where in they got to interact with the American students and teachers, and had a chance to experience American High School life. Thus guidance, mentoring and supervision were given to those high school students who were preparing to join American Universities.

Student Enrichment Program could easily be misunderstood as a summer class, training or an internship. But it is a unique program envisaged to enhance





surprised to see that he became responsible and reported to the airport on time, packed his bags on his own, chose the right food, woke up on time and learnt how to live within a budget.”

The President of Times group of Education, M.V. Reddy says, ‘Top rated schools in Iowa is participating in this program. The program is designed for 10-15 days with a balanced schedule for academics, sports, theatre and co-curricular activities’. Mr.Reddy is also the father to vivacious twins Vevek and Navyaa. They are 7th graders in India and attended 10th grade in Washington High School at Iowa.

The most interesting factor for the Indian students in US education system is the ability to choose their subjects and teachers. Navyaa says, ‘Under the SEP program we could choose which class to go. Being able to choose is better. Here teachers

the cultural, social and academic experience of students. Learning is made fun with programs for building friendships, exploring physical activities and celebrating cultures.

‘United States is a dream destination for students in India, especially those who hail from the Telugu land. Every family has at least one member residing in US for work or study’, says Usha Thyagarajan, a leading consultant for Universities in US. From childhood the students are acquainted about the American culture through movies and books. ‘But what we saw there as a participant of SEP was totally different from what we perceived through books and films’, says Pragnya who is currently in her junior college and an aspiring doctor.

One might wonder how a group of youngsters could suddenly attend an American high school without any formal knowledge about the US schools or classes. Hence to bridge the cultural and academic gap that might arise when the Indian and American students attend the same classes, SEP assigned each student an American shadow friend weeks before they joined the program. They got in touch through Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat. The Program Director Alphonce O’Bannon’s son Collin was Aryan’s, a 9th grader from Hyderabad, shadow friend. ‘I got very close with him even before reaching US and he turned out to be a sweeter person in real. He took me to meet his other school friends and we always had lunch together. It was a great bonding for

life”, says Aryan. His mother Padmaja, who is a super mom managing her family business and home at the same time, is highly vocal about the friendship Aryan is cherishing. She says, ‘Aryan still talks to his shadow friend and through this program he learnt how to adjust with a different environment, society and culture all by himself. I was







come to our class, but over there we go to classes we like and thus learning becomes a fun experience altogether.'

Surya Kiran, Research Assistant at NIFT, Hyderabad and Saritha, parents of Pragnya express with confidence, 'Generally kids go for picnics with teachers or classmates. But when a child travels abroad with a new group of peers, it is a challenging experience

both for them and their parents. When Pragnya reached back after the program, we found a new confidence in her. The child within her inner self has been enriched." Both of them were very apprehensive about the program as it demanded Pragnya staying away from them. 'Syam Chandra, key leader of SEP program and senior counselor, put great efforts in talking to us and clarifying our

qualms. He personally came to Hyderabad and took the kids from us. He was always on phone at airports talking to us – be it early morning or late evenings. He put all efforts to bring out the best in every child', says Mr.Surya. Handling one's own child itself is difficult in a journey, but handling 4-5 kids from different backgrounds is nothing less than challenging. At that point Syam has won over the confidence of parents and became a mother to every child.

Anyone who talks to these students would understand that they are distinct from other students of similar age groups. They attribute all credits to the enrichment SEP provided them. In one voice they say, 'In India, we are taught everything through text books. But in US the students are shown everything. Learning is an experience for them, not something that is imposed. The American students feel and experience everything while we merely read.' Thus this bunch of students stands out in their experience and confidence and it would clearly give them an edge over the thousands of applications the American Universities receive for graduation courses.

*Don't just read the articles. Read the commentaries to know more about issues faced by global education. What are various discourses in this regard? What are your thoughts? Participate and broaden your perspective and understanding.*



Stacey Walker

# CHASING THE GHOST OF ROHITH VEMULA - FINDING RACIAL EQUALITY ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES WORLDWIDE

I've long been fascinated by the caste system in India. It is an awful thing I imagine; the dividing of people based not on matters of character, but rather on a person's lineage, birthplace, skin color, or other social markers that are totally outside of their control.

While the Indian government has implemented sweeping measures to rid the country of these old social mores, it has become clear that the centuries-old system of discrimination is not fully gone and its dark legacy lingers within many institutions in India, including its esteemed education

system.

The University of Hyderabad is considered one of the premiere institutes of higher education in all of India; similar to an Ivy League school here in the States. It has come under fire in recent weeks and months after it effectively suspended one its graduate students, stopping his fellowship pay and forcing him out of his living quarters. The student was called Rohith. He was 26 years old, held a Masters degree in Science, and was pursuing his PhD. On January 17th of this year, while students were protesting the university due to its







treatment of Dalits and low status caste classes, he wandered away from the crowd into an empty dorm room and committed suicide.

Rohith's story is one of enormous tragedy. Not only did we lose an advocate for equality, but gone too is the promise of a young mind. We can only surmise that Rohith was the victim of the enduring psychological pain that comes with institutionalized discrimination. Rohith's death marks a turning point in the consciousness of Indians and other observers of systematic oppression around the world.

Growing up as a Black man in America, it is easy to see the parallels of the caste system in India and the racial discrimination and oppression that occurred over centuries here in the Land of the Free. Even after Emancipation, a series of constitutional amendments, and the passage of several civil rights laws, the remnants of America's most shameful behavior still haunts many Americans, particularly those with darker skin.

Like India, America's colleges and universities are currently undergoing a very public examination as charges of racial bias, inequities, and hostile learning environments are coming to the fore, brought about by very brave

students.

It's hard enough being a minority in America. When you're a black student in an American college – most of which are predominately white – campuses can quickly become breeding grounds for subtle and overt racial aggression's, especially given your super minority status. If you're a first generation college student, the challenges are amplified. You not only feel the pressure to perform from your friends and family, but you also struggle to find your place amongst a population of people where college is just another step in a life that has been privileged enough to have a blueprint for climbing the socioeconomic ladder to success.

When students at a fraternity at the University of Oklahoma chant racist epithets, proclaiming there will never be a Nigger in their organization; when the framed photographs of black law professors at Harvard University are vandalized with black tape being strewn over the faces; when there are "whites only," parties at Yale; and when the football team at the University of Missouri has to stage a protest in order to receive proper redress for several racial incidents including a swastika being drawn in human feces in a campus bathroom; when all of these

things and more can occur, it is safe to say that we have a problem in America's higher education system; one not all that different from what India's caste issue presents to their colleges and universities.

College is supposed to be hard. We are supposed to be challenged to find a balance between academic performance and growing into responsible human beings who can navigate all sorts of social pressures. The college experience is not supposed to subject anyone to undue hardship because they happen to be a minority. To do so would violate our deepest held values and beliefs, chief among them is the idea that all women and men are created equal, and deserve to be treated as such.

We must own this is problem if we ever wish to solve it; that is the first step. Secondly, we must make a greater effort to increase diversity at our colleges and universities, not only amongst the student population, but also amongst faculty and staff. To do so requires a national effort to increase college enrollment numbers by eliminating financial and social barriers that exist for underrepresented populations. Lastly, faculty and staff on college campuses must do more to encourage healthy learning environments for every student. When problems arise, faculty and staff must commit themselves to finding equitable solutions, instead of pursuing watered down compromise, or worse, ignoring the situation altogether.

If college is supposed to be the great training ground for adulthood, we should do everything we can to ensure that the young minds that are being molded in the great halls of academia are not simply closed off from conversations about race and inequity, but are encouraged to seek understanding through dialogue. It has been said that healing comes with careful, brutal revelation of your truest self. We are in the midst of sweeping reflection. In many ways, on college campuses across the country, we are trying to find our soul again. We owe it to Rohith to take this process seriously as the future of progress depends on it.

# ROHIT VEMULA- A SAD PICTURE OF HOW IDENTITY STILL DEFINES A PERSON IN INDIA!

**T**he entire country is talking about Rohit now. All political parties are rushing to the city of Hyderabad to show solidarity with the protesting students of Hyderabad Central University (HCU) (UoH). The country is facing a huge discourse where different political identities are trying to put blame on each other. In this complicated situation, let's take a look at the real facts.

On July 30, 7 pm, a few students at the University of Hyderabad joined together and offered a funeral prayer as a form of protest for the hanging of Yakub Memon, who was convicted over his involvement in the 1993 Bombay bombings. Within a week, another protest was organized and the controversial documentary 'Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai' was screened in the campus. Even in a liberal campus like JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) this documentary could not be screened after two unsuccessful attempts.

Following these two events, the ASA (Ambedkar Students Association) and ABVP (Akhila Bharatiya Vidyarthi



Parishad) of the campus had a tussle and the ABVP leader was admitted to the Archana hospital. Thus a medical certificate was procured from the doctor and ABVP registered a complaint with the university noting the names of 5 Dalit students including Rohit. Much later, after Rohit's demise, the doctor at Archana Hospital in Madinaguda came out publicly and said that the ABVP leader was admitted due to acute appendicitis and had no bruises of an attack on his body. Dr. Anupama Rao, Senior Medical Officer of the University of Hyderabad also said that the



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Research Team





appendicitis was not developed due to the assault and the hospital report does not mention that he had any external or visible injury.

Regardless, a proctorial committee was set up by the University for Inquiry and the students were found not guilty.

However, later the Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Bandaru Dattatreya, who is BJP's sitting MP of the constituency, wrote a letter to Smriti Irani, the Union Minister for Human Resource Management allegedly stating that anti-national sentiments are being triggered by these students. Smriti Irani wrote back to the Vice Chancellor P. Appa Rao demanding serious inquiry into the matter. Thus the VC extended the Proctorial Committee and got a report completely against what the earlier Committee had said, and suspended these five research scholars. They were socially boycotted as the 'suspension' order allowed them to continue their studies in the university but denied them entry to the hostels, administration

building and other common places in groups. Rohit had joined the University in merit and not availing any reservation.

These five Dalit students, who were thrown out of their hostel rooms, had been on a sleep-in strike in the open on the campus ever since their expulsion.

Many students from University campus and others from English and Foreign Language University (EFLU) and Osmania University also came to support the protesting students.

On Sunday morning, 17th January, 2016, Rohit Vemula strayed away from the protesters camp and hanged himself in the room of a friend in New Researchers Hostel, using the blue banner of ASA. Read the Suicide Note of Rohit.

From morning on, the students had joined together along with Rohit's mother and brother, singing songs of resistance and by 2 pm, Sunday afternoon, Police came and beat up the silently protesting students and took away his body. Without the permission of his family, who were ready to take his body to Uppal, Rohit's hometown, the police had taken his body to Amberpet and silently cremated it. This enraged everyone in the University.

The five-page suicide note he left behind for friends and the world is full of serious lessons for India's caste-ridden society. This handwritten letter had a paragraph of striked out text

#### 18 December 2015, while on the sleep-in strike, Rohit wrote a letter to the VC of UoH stating,

*"To,  
The Vice Chancellor  
Subject: Solution for Dalit problem*

*Sir,*

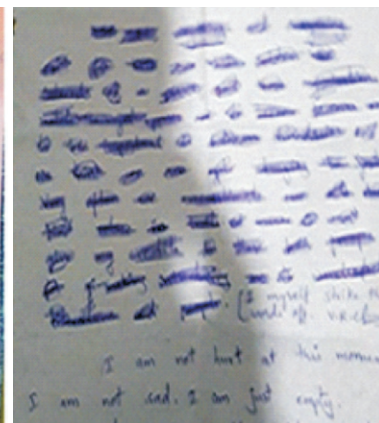
*First, let me praise your dedicated take on the Self-Respect movements of Dalits in HCU campus. When an ABVP president got questioned about his derogatory remarks on Dalits, your kind personal interference into the issue is historic and exemplary. 5 Dalit students are "socially boycotted" from campus spaces. Donald Trump will be a lilliput in front of you. By seeing your commitment, I am tempted to give two suggestions as a token of banality.*

- 1. Please serve 10mg Sodium Azide to all the Dalit students at the time of admission. With direction to use when they feel like reading Ambedkar.*
- 2. Supply a nice rope to the rooms of all Dalit students from your companion, the great Chief Warden.*

*As we, the scholars, PhD students have already passed that stage and already members of Dalit Self-Respect movement unfortunately, we here are left with no easy exit, it seems. Hence, I request your highness to make preparations for the facility "EUTHANASIA" for students like me. And I wish you and the campus rest in peace forever.*

*Thanking You,  
Yours sincerely  
Vemula R Chakravarti, 14SKPK01"*





which was signed by Rohit on the side stating that he himself had struck it out. But it is taken to Forensic laboratory by the University as they think it contains some crucial information regarding his dismay at the functioning of student unions in the country, even though Rohit himself struck it out.

In September of 2006, the Prof. Thorat committee was set up by Government of India, to enquire into the allegations of differential treatment of SC and ST students in the campuses of India. He made his first study on AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences),

New Delhi.

On 5th May, 2007, the committee came up with a report that brought out the horrors of caste-discrimination suffered at every level by both the students and also a handful of SC and ST faculties in the Institute that is considered to be one of the country's premier educational institutions. It is probably the first effort in Independent India to look into the kind of caste discrimination suffered by students in any institution of higher learning. This report is very significant in understanding the nature of caste-

discrimination and its impact, not only in AIIMS but also in other institutions of higher learning.

Even after these many years the Prof. Thorat Committee recommendations stand un-implemented. In less than a decade, 23 Dalit students in India have committed suicide in premier educational institutions like AIIMS and IIT.

Following the death of Rohit, there are wide spread protests happening in campuses across India. The faculty at UoH gave up their administrative positions to mark their protests and all political parties have come together to resist the casteist politics being played out in the University. Seven students went on with hunger strike demanding immediate resignation of VC, Appa Rao. After 5 days they were forcefully hospitalized by the police. But a fresh batch of seven students has taken up the hunger strike. Owing to nationwide protests, the VC took long leave even without addressing the students. But what aggravated the situation is the appointment of an interim VC, Prof Srivastava, who was the chairman of the Proctorial committee which suspended five Dalit students including Rohit.

It is a sad state of affairs that premier educational institutions still run its course by indulging in hierarchical and discriminatory practices and a university like UoH which has a history of accommodating various sorts of student politics has turned out to be hegemonizing on its students forcing state aided suicide of its students.

## Rohith and Me

It is been more than a month since Rohith left us. I knew him for the last 7 years. The tears have not dried yet. With red puffy eyes I browse through his Facebook page where he was literally 'living' for the last few months following his social boycott. His one room kacha house in the colony, the sewing machine which earned them bread for many years, silent sobs of his mother and more over, his words- last words! The pain is inexplicable. The pain of losing a fellow researcher. The pain of losing a bright human being.

I have read many a philosopher in my life. But the way Rohith viewed his life has touched my very soul and kept me thinking for days together. Had he blamed someone out-right in his suicide note, I really don't think such a mass protest would have happened. But the subtlety through which he questioned caste, politics and humanity has moved the hearts of every human being in this country.

The pangs have still not left my mind. Rohith, this is for you.

And a promise to keep fighting caste discrimination in every walk of my life until the value of a man is not left to his immediate identity.





# ONCE UPON A TIME, ON A PLANE

I departed for Austin, Texas on May 26, only a day after enduring the cruel heat of the north Indian summer. As I watched the lights of the cultural capital twinkle beneath the window of my descending plane, I reminisced of the last I had seen of that particular view.

When I last stepped foot in Texas, the Middle East was a sparking powder keg of Sunni and Shi'ite jihadists, America was ripe with racial tensions, and mother nature was punishing unlucky souls around the world with brutal and heartbreaking displays of her power.



**N N S Chandra**  
Lead Editor

Many years later, I yet again step into Texas having received an invitation to present a paper and speak at the NACAC conference on 'Mastering college admission counselling' in Austin. My co-researchers and I were involved in collecting data on counselling practices in the USA, Europe and India for over four years.

On my way out of Austin, I happened

to sit beside an elderly couple, who I soon learned had been attending the 50th Peace Corps reunion at the University of Texas. It was (and continues to be) the official volunteer program of the United States, designed to help build relations between America and less-fortunate countries by sending out volunteers that commit to a season of general assistance in a given nation.

This particular couple had met and fallen in love during their training, and then requested being stationed to the same place, which ended up being pre-Ayatollah Iran. For many years, they taught and worked with people of an entirely different culture, going so far as to become fluent in the Persian language.

Though their story was fascinating and their passion infectious on its own right, what impressed me the most was how, despite the length of that 50-year period between their training and their reunion, it was obvious how heavy an influence those two short years of youthful energy had been.

For those of you who are looking to be admitted to international post-secondary institutions and complete your degree program something you must understand about the counsellors and professionals and professors you will interact with is that many of them have had a similar experience of genuine youthful energy that has shaped them; not to pad their resume or to build a portfolio, but rather for the sake of the thing in itself.

Meanwhile, I would encourage all of you to bring that same level of sincere intensity to your extra-curricular work, no matter what context that work may take place in.

Not only because it will help you stand out in a sea of disingenuous college applicants, but also so that in 50 years' time, if someone was to sit beside you on a plane, you can describe all your experiences with the same level of love, contentment and lack of regret that I heard from the elderly couple who entertained me with their story.



# US – EDUCATION THE RIGHT OF SPRING

**T**he education system in the USA is a very exciting place to be working right now. First of all, it is a broken system. Dropout rates are at an all-time high and U.S. global rankings continue to decline. It's depressing to write this, yet also exciting, especially because I am so passionate about education and consider my time in the classroom as a teacher to be a privilege.

Being a teacher is my favorite occupation; and I am very lucky to have many other favorites: I am a storyteller, writer, speech-coach, and communications consultant. These additional occupations have afforded me with many more enjoyable pursuits. For example, I wrote and performed a play that was produced Off-Broadway and my work has been featured in both *The New Yorker* and at The White House. I have also taught classes at many universities including programs that I've directed at both Yale and Barnard College. My thirty-year career is a diverse career and spans a broad range of industries and disciplines. I entirely credit my unique education background for this great fortune.

I posit the current educational demise in the U.S. as exciting because I am attracted to systems that are about to be disrupted. I have a similar attitude toward the low completion rates observed among international students

at U.S. undergraduate universities.

Let me explain.

I believe that some systems, processes, and traditions must break—violently or gently—so that they can be re-imagined, reinvigorated, and reborn. In 1913, when Igor Stravinsky first debuted his symphony, 'The Rite of Spring,' there were riots in the streets of Paris—it was such a radical departure from traditional classical music that it set people screaming to the streets.

When I look at the astounding education statistics regarding not only the U.S. but those of many countries, I chose not to despair but to look at what is working and get ready to innovate the changes to come.

This could very well be *The Rite of Spring*.

As I look back at my career and at the education that helped to forge my success, two very different events come to mind.

One, the cutting of arts programming—during my middle school years—to public schools in Rhode Island; a trend that extended throughout the U.S. The day that these cuts were announced, at the very beginning of the school year, teachers went on strike to protest and made the evening news. I remember watching



Michaela Murphy



my beloved art teacher so angry and upset, screaming at passive school officials who countered that these classes and programs were frivolous and that their elimination (and the loss of many jobs) was necessary.

Once the strike ended and school began, students would walk past the empty art, music, and theater rooms confused by what was lost—and why these classes were deemed dispensable. While I loved my math, English, and science classes, it was the music, art, and theater classes that helped me to see how it all connected. I have always been a storyteller, and my ability to map connective patterns was how I made sense of the world. My classmates and I were not fully aware of the implications or of how the changes would impact our lives moving forward, yet there was a pernicious sense that we had been robbed of a fundamental part of our education.

My career as an educator has reinforced my belief in the importance of arts in the classroom. When significant cuts are made to programming that provides an exploration of the soul, that system is likely to produce a society that is unaware of who they are and are often lost as to their sense of purpose.

The creative curriculum funding that was cut nationwide in the 1970s occurred at the beginning of a 40-year decline in graduation rates and achievement scores in the U.S. There is compelling, yet not conclusive, data to support the theory that the cutting of arts programming played a factor—the lack of data is because the arts were so disregarded that no one thought to track the metrics from this purview. Yet if we think about the multitude of ways in which individuals learn and then consider the possible impact of extracting a part of a system that nurtures the imagination and cultivates curiosity—not based on getting the ‘right’ answer but focused on personal exploration and creative expression—it is difficult to discount the current decline in global U.S. ranking as a possible consequence.

The second event that shaped the quality of my education—positively this time—was when my parents enrolled me in a Catholic all-girls high school in Providence Rhode Island, a school with a non-traditional approach to education, offering an independent study curriculum designed for one

course of study for eight weeks. Students were encouraged to go at their own pace and, in some cases, were able to complete a given course within six or seven weeks.

Classes were small, and because each student was on their own track, were comprised of freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. Each student would work off of a ‘Learning Activity Packet (LAP),’ one for each week of the course; and they would sign up for one-on-one tutorials with their teacher. Once they had completed the LAP (including group projects in addition to independent study), students were tested. Based on their scores, they would either commence the next lesson or repeat a section of that LAP. At the end of the course, students were given a detailed, written evaluation of their progress (not a letter grade) before moving on to the next course of study. I am extremely fortunate to have been educated within this system as it allowed me to experience how I learned and primed me for a lifetime of curiosity and self-directed education.

My high school was considered to be radical, for the time, in their approach, and ultimately was unable to sustain the costs of doing business given the small student body and the competition from more traditional private schools. It consequently closed a few years after I graduated.

While at Boston University, and as a young adult beginning a career, I came to appreciate the value of my high school education. I was aware that I possessed a sense of purpose, confidence, and self-direction that my peers lacked, qualities that have given me the grit to fail and not give up, and that has made all of the difference.

That’s why, thirty years later, it is fascinating to look at the education system in Finland. In the 1970s Finland ranked poorly in education while the U.S. was the unquestioned world leader. Today, these two countries have changed places. More than 99% of Finnish students complete compulsory basic education: U.S. rankings are at an all-time low. How did this happen? The processes of change to educational policies in Finland are almost a complete reverse of the policies in the U.S.

Since the 1970s, the U.S. has cut arts programs in schools and has imposed

more external testing meanwhile tolerating inequitable conditions in local schools. Students and teachers lack resources, adequate funding, and training, ultimately undermining the desired outcomes sought through testing.

Finland has taken a very different approach. Until the age of 16, students are required to study music, visual arts, and crafts education. Most strikingly, Finnish teachers encourage students to work at their own pace, establish weekly goals for themselves, and seek out the information that they need in an environment that nurtures their imagination cultivates curiosity, and permits evaluation of their own progress and understanding of how it is that they learn.

Earlier on, I explained why the educational demise in the U.S. and low graduation rates among international students at U.S. undergraduate universities could be considered exciting. I find it to be the opportunity to look at what is working and get ready to innovate the changes to come.

What if the elimination of the arts and explosion of testing not only had a detrimental effect on U.S. education but also on international students, particularly those from educational systems of high testing and little to no arts programming? How interesting it would be to analyze the completion rates of Finnish students at U.S. undergraduate institutions.

I will leave this charge to you, my reader—but I digress.

One of the great features of my high school’s Learning Activity Packets was that they were designed for educators and students to be able to pinpoint exactly where a connection was lost. Rather than take the whole course over, students could go back to where they last had a solid grasp of the lesson. Perhaps, it would be a good idea for educators in the U.S. and abroad to do likewise—go back to the last time education was functional and identify where the connection was lost; and most importantly, be willing to disrupt the status quo.

Cited in this essay:

Sahlberg, 2007, Education policies for raising student learning: The Finnish approach, *Journal of Education Policy*

## ROUNDUPS

*Read weekly round ups on higher education here – on global media stories (on print, online and visual media) and an ongoing literature review (peer reviewed and published works and academic thesis). This dispatch is from our young researchers based in research room in Institute of Journalism, India.*



# Chalk and Duster – A much discussed modern day education



Radhika Retnam  
Research Team

**C**halk and Duster makes an emotional plea to concur more reverence and dignity to our teachers. The amateur and obsolete script and the TV-soap like treatment make it look un-appealing. The subject deserves great attention but it was not to be treated this way. The main question posed by the movie is whether

teachers with experience but less progressive outlook survive with the changing educational system.

Shabana Azmi plays the role of a middle-aged and Juhi Chawla of that of a young and chirping science teacher. The movie revolves around the crisis between the school management and the dedicative





ambitious lady, the whole scenario changes. This role is gracefully adapted by Arya Babber who ventures out to make the school rich and renowned in a fortnight's time. Thus a direct war upsurges between the teachers and management. The question is how to place our conscience on the right side of the fence, because in most of the situations teachers turn out to be nothing more than clerks who follow orders from the management. Also, when such schools harangue that they are not bound to bother about the students who don't pay enough, the teachers themselves become helpless. Speaking about pushing the role of the teacher, other factors also needs to be taken into consideration. In the present system, the emphasis is on bookish learning and the excellence of a student is calibrated by conducting written tests and interviews. It is high time that the schools give core importance to the students rather than any other factors. Chalk and duster subtly touches upon these issues and steps forward with an attempt to make it entertaining at the same time. As a

# theme of ion

teachers. Zarina Wahab plays the role of the principal who sees education beyond business. The movie in some ways remind the audience about Shahid Kapoor's 'Paathshaala', nevertheless, Chalk and dusters venture to speak out loud about many different issues unlike the former. No sooner, the management decides to pass on the chairman's wand to an







consequence of this, dramatization of characters ensued. Also, Jayant Gilatar (the Director) has been very careful to make the movie an emotional watch.

Conventionally, teachers are perceived as the ones who control the fate of a student, and the society. Recently, things have started to change in the Indian context. Parents look forward for more scientifically-proven teaching methods for their children and they are willing to pay hefty amounts as tuition fee. But the school managements lack a proper vision and they do not opt to strike equilibrium between the expectation of parents and the reality. Of all, the government-run municipal schools are the most pathetic. It is crucial to bridge the stark difference between government and public schools. Chalk and duster can be viewed as an underdog story which stays in the mind of the audience as a reminder



of the childhood days where teachers did not seek much in return for their services. In the face of inflation, even the teachers have changed over the time. The fiery and determined Shabana Azmi portrays the pride of being a teacher with the benevolent

Juhi Chawla being the perfect companion for her. The two ladies have given a heart-warming performance. Also, Rishi Kapoor's stage presence and cameo has lifted up the climax by quite a few notches. The film is crafted with the theme of greed over ethics and the characters are in



perfect sync with the narrative. The film talks about the value of good education and the significant role of teachers. The movie is dramatic and meaningful at the same time. There is nothing wrong with the director's heart bleeding for the ill-treated teachers but that's not good enough to make the movie worth-while. The movie might get a five star for its intention but the execution failed terribly and it has hopelessly ham-fisted the movie so much so that it can be explained as nothing but an absolute botch-up. Gilatar's approach to film making has ended up in yielding pathetically slender pickings. The audience is made to walk nine yards to explain how appalling our education system is but the movie has not done justice to the noble teaching profession it had attempted to celebrate. Sharp and censorious, the movie is all about a few teachers who are subjected to a great

deal of torture and harassment and finally they turn against an insensitive management. Despite flaunting about India's glorious Gurukul system and the guru-shishya tradition, the teachers are given a very low status in the society. Silted dialogues and utterly vacant scenes completely take up the two hours while the movie is played. The idea to bring up some drama is completely misdirected with so many clichés. It is unlikely that the veteran actor Girish Karnad had been a part of a less worthy film. He plays the role of a chess-loving, wheel chair bound husband of a math teacher. Shabana Azmi and Juhi Chawla were seasoned to do their best to achieve a façade of believability but the unimaginative direction and the clumsy scripting has spoiled the movie to a great extent. Mostly, there is no attempt to bring in a sense into the plot. There are caricatures in the movie, not

characters. The predictable storyline is another disadvantage of the film. Divya Dutt in her ill-fitting wings enter as the witch principal Kamini who disrupts the lives of other teachers as she takes up charge. She decides to bring in younger teachers and replace the older ones in order to give an 'international look' to the school. The movie is literally littered with such dialogues. Chalk and duster is a good attempt to shed light on the present plight of teachers who are the worst paid and overlooked professionals in our country. By taking the audience into Juhi Chawla's (Jyoti) and Shabana Azmi's (Vidya) homes and introducing us to their families, Gilatar tries to give us a strong sense of what grounds these two women. The melodrama meter is turned up as Vidya gets dismissed and her subsequent heart attack ensues. Richa Chaddha plays the role of a Television Reporter who brings the attention of the media towards the harassment faced by these teachers. The climax is extensively overlong and exhausting in the 20 minute long KBC-style quiz show hosted by Rishi Kapoor. Chalk and Duster turns into a real slog by the end, with its noble intentions notwithstanding. Teachers, without doubt, play an irreplaceable role in every child's life. They do not just impart lessons, but find out the spark in raw and young minds and hone the potential of the child. The primary aim of the movie was to highlight the plight of overworked and underpaid school teachers. The theme and idea is respectable enough which would have made a compelling view if it was treated by better hands. It is sad that the sloppy tribute of Jayant Gilatar could not upraise the film to anything noteworthy. Chalk and duster is a sentence that rambles through miles of meaninglessness before it draws the line. At the end, the audience is left with a bunch of question marks. The greatest drawback of the movie is that it tries to take the high moral ground without corroborating its material and depth.





Radhika Retnam  
Research Team

# Research Round Ups

This is the work of Ms Radhika Ratnem  
For full read please search for our online versionline

## **\$1 billion was sent overseas for students through the Liberalized Remittances Scheme**

The figures released by the RBI shows that outward remittances under the Liberalised Remittances Scheme (LRS) have surged by close to 200 per cent in fiscal 2015-16. Remittances for students studying abroad have hit a record high of \$1 billion in the last nine months. The prime reason for this is being LRS allowing Indian residents to acquire and hold shares, debt instruments or other assets outside India without prior approval of the RBI.

## **Upshot of peer-programs on International Students**

Peer Programs are conducted for improving student experience on academics, careers, and personal development. They offer a great space and opportunity to build their own skills and experience through training and program implementation. International Students who enroll for higher education make valuable educational and economic contributions. For such benefits to continue without fail, it is necessary that the universities initiate peer-programs that will positively influence the adjustment and academic achievement of international students.

## **Impact of community partnership in fostering educational resilience**

### **Dinosaur Questions**

Today, school counselors are equally accountable as educators for the academic achievement especially in the case of the minority and poor. Urban school counselors play a vital role in involving the school's stakeholders to implement partnership programs which foster student achievement and resilience. International students and other students who suffer racial and ethnic minority in urban schools often feel powerless in a majority-dominated culture where language, culture and class are viewed as deficits.

## **Enrichment programs, summer programs and exchange programs as tool for university preparation for high school students**

Until sometime back, students in the U.S. accepted the 9 month school calendar without any question. They considered summer as leisure time and students and teachers equally enjoyed this extended break. Subsequently, the long summer break ended up in students losing grounds academically. This is termed as 'summer slides' or summer learning losses. To overcome this, summer schools and exchange programs or bridging programs started to play a key role in the academic cycle of the students.

## **Root Causes of International Student Attrition**

Attrition or Student withdrawal can be linked with various root causes that has been researched after keeping close track on systematic patterns of attrition over a long period. Academic, psychological, and socio-cultural adjustments to a new environment can be challenging for international students. The process of attrition manifests from various stressors such as communication difficulties, adjustment to a new teaching style, new cultural norms and pressure on academic performance.

## **Attrition Among Students**

Attrition in general refers to the reduction in strength or the number of participants that occurs when people quit or leave. Student attrition denotes the college drop outs who abandon their course half way due to various reasons. Around the world, Student attrition is attaining much implication in the spheres of research as it is an area of extensive discussion. International Students, specifically, are observed to encounter various problems as they start college, and a good majority of them do not complete the course. The reasons and solutions attributed to such cases of attrition among international students especially in USA are discussed in brief.





Kiran Gandhi  
Research Team

# Media Round Ups

This column was handled by Kiran Gandhi.  
You can read his full posting on our online version.

## April 2016 First Week Round Up

The excitement this week was a bit muted as far as higher education news was concerned. The summer enrichment programmes has been a continuing theme from last week. Contrasting challenges and how they are dealt with has been a common thread in education news this week.

## March 2016 Fourth Week Round Up

Michelle Obama championed the cause of cross-cultural exchange when she sported a Kashmiri gown during her visit in Cuba. The higher education scene also witnessed similar attempts at cultural exchange (though not strictly in a fashion sense) this week.

## March 2016 Third Week Round Up

Student activities outside the confines of the curriculum and its recognition have been a continuing theme this week. From the 'Earth Shakers' in Oklahoma to Yap HeeHeng and Muhamad SafiuddinRosli in Malaysia

to Matthew Bambach in Baltimore, the range of activities have been myriad.

## March 2016 Second Week Round Up

"I know police tend to view violence on campus as a responsibility they have because they identify and define that as criminal activity. But I think we need to act cautiously"

If you were to guess the context for this quote, the recent JNU row in India would be the guess of most. This is actually by Yvonne Mokgoro, the former Constitutional Court Justice of South Africa about the recent protests in college campuses there.

## March 2016 First Week Round Up 'The World is watching you'

This quote is not from one of those Oscar award acceptance speeches, but from two unassuming teenagers in Boston who have stood up to racism in the Boston Latin School. This week started with the Academy Awards

where the Dolby theatre audience were literally stuck between 'Rock' and a hard place as the show host Chris Rock laid bare the issue of racism in Hollywood, in characteristic humour of course but the message was loud and clear.

## February 2016 Fourth Week Round Up – This week in Education

The Oscar season euphoria was dampened quite a bit this year with accusations of racism towering over the Academy Award nominations. The 106-year old Virginia McLaurin meeting the Obamas was a silver lining moment in the last week of the Black History month. Discrimination continued to be a hot topic in education this week, with the US leading the charge. Somewhat ironic was the protests in India where a so-called high caste wanted to be considered as a so-called low caste (the protest by Jats in Haryana for OBC status).

## February 2016 Third Week Round Up – This week in Education

As the international women's day approaches, it is time once again to address the elephant in the room. The elephant which we have all grown accustomed to, so much that our efforts to dislodge it from its perch have often been lax. Gender inequality is that elephant.



# OUR PROJECTS

Late fall of last year TiGEs leadership (in collaboration with LBA Academy, Center for Research Education and TLUPS) decided to pilot a project to develop skills in investigative journalism among young/upcoming journalists in Asia, Africa and South America.

The idea was to set up a research room (RR) in three locations, around the world, during the calendar year of 2016 and develop, test, measure (outcomes) and stream line process and procedures to achieve the goal. Also to identify the resource requirements.

First RR was set up in Institute of Journalism in Trivandrum, Kerala, India.

We identified (through a selection process which is documented) three candidates as RR Interns (RRI).

We provided them with an orientation

We gave them a definite objective

And provided them with tools.

Three topics of our interest were given as primary target topic to investigate (1. Attrition among international students, 2.Engagement in campus and its impact on education 3. Issues around discrimination in campus)

RRI I will focus on current events related to all the above topics and produce well researched stories

RRI II will focus on academic research on the topics and produce weekly round ups

RRI III will focus on news and media topics on same topics and produce weekly round ups

After training and orientation (during the month Jan 2016) actual work we started in Feb 2016 First output is getting published on Tiges.

We were lucky (!) with chain of events that happened during last few weeks including Rohits suicide, Kanaya'sarerst and questions raised around the same by HRD minister in Parliament, to events in Austin, to Tunisia.... Sadly, we played along.

After first round of publications we intend to stream line the effort. And plan on doing a lessons learned end of March in University of Iowa and decide on next steps. We are hoping to expand the model (with improvements) in Ghana and in Brazil by August.

And by August we would be bringing selected interns to University of Syracuse or Iowa for further training and internship.

This project is currently funded by TLUPS/TWG/LBA. But we have commitment of significant dollars to expand the program.

Suggestions?Opinions? Please email [rr@tiges.ca](mailto:rr@tiges.ca)



## Actual Tour Photographs



## Why Student Enrichment ?

- 1 in 5 Indian students are unable to complete their studies at elite American universities
- 21st Century demands new and different abilities
- Avenues available today didn't exist 5 years ago and avenues which will be available 5 years from now don't exist today
- Understanding different cultures is already very important
- World is becoming smaller each day so today's students must become Global Citizens.
- SEP empowers students with an interesting story to tell on the common application.

Workshops include Research, Reading, Writing, Career Planning, University Admissions, Dining Etiquettes along with opportunities to Reflect.

## Little More About the Trip

**Eligibility.** Students from grades VIII & above

**Chaperone-** One Teacher from School (no cost)

**Batch Sizes-** Minimum 13 & maximum 15 in one batch. Single School Private Batch & Multiple Schools Batches also available

**Local Transport-** Comfortable & Fully Insured

**Handholding Support in India.** From Start to finish including Visa Appointment, Group Visa Interview, Parent Meetings etc.

**Pleasant Stay.** Stay in 3 star branded hotels

**Supervision in USA.** Trained SEP Leader & Local Coordinators to provide a safe & great experience.

**US Visa.** Visa Invitation Letter comes from Cedar Rapids School Board.

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