

**A CASE OF HOW ADAPTATION AFFECTS  
THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF EAST ASIAN  
STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND**

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	i
Attestation of Authorship.....	iii
Acknowledgement .....	iv
Abstract.....	1
Chapter One: Introduction .....	2
Background .....	2
Research design.....	4
Overview of the dissertation .....	5
Chapter Two: Literature review .....	6
2.1 Definition of work- life balance.....	6
2.1.1 Defining time balance .....	8
2.1.2 Defining involvement in work-life balance .....	9
2.1.3 Work-life balance satisfaction.....	9
2.1.4 Non-Western work- life balance perspectives .....	10
2.1.5 Students and work-life balance.....	12
2.2 Adaptation .....	12
2.2.1 Defining adaptation.....	13
2.2.2 Culture and Culture shock.....	14
2.3 The relationship between adaptation and work-life balance .....	18
Summary.....	19
Chapter Three: Research design .....	20
3.1 Research paradigm .....	20
3.2 Data collection technique .....	21
3.3 Sample size.....	22
3.4 Interview process: recruitment and procedure.....	23
3.5 Data analysis.....	25
3.6 Ethical considerations.....	26
Summary.....	27
Chapter Four: Findings.....	28
First step in New Zealand: feelings of excitement and nervousness.....	28
Perception of cultural differences.....	29

Perceived adaptation issues: language barrier and homesickness .....	31
Cultural differences influence self- adjustment .....	33
Defining work-life balance .....	34
Adaptation to get a better work-life balance .....	35
Students' time balance and involvement balance .....	37
Summary.....	38
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion.....</b>	<b>39</b>
Arrival in New Zealand .....	39
Perceived cultural differences in the adaptation process .....	40
Issues affecting the adaptation process .....	41
Defining work–life balance.....	44
Students and work-life balance.....	45
The relationship between adaptation and work-life balance .....	46
Summary.....	48
<b>Chapter Six: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>49</b>
Significance of the study .....	50
Limitations.....	51
Future research .....	53
Reference list .....	54
Appendix.....	62
Appendix 1: Interview questions .....	62
Appendix 2: Participant information sheet .....	63

## List of figures

<a href="#">Figure 1: Relationship between adaptation and work-life balance components.....</a>	18
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## List of tables

<a href="#">Table 1: Steps of thematic analysis.....</a>	26
<a href="#">Table 2: Sample characteristics.....</a>	28

## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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## **Abstract**

Despite a large amount of research into work-life balance, there are few studies of non-Western perspectives of work-life balance. Most research in work-life balance is dominated by Western perspectives. Furthermore, there is also little research examining the work-life balance of students, particularly students who are studying and living overseas. This dissertation investigates how adaptation may affect the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand. It uses structured interviews with nine people from China and Korea who are both working and studying. The findings illustrate the adaptation process of the participants and how it interacts with their work-life balance. The study uses the theory of culture shock to analyse the participants' experience of adaptation. Key issues for the students were the language barrier and homesickness. The results also show that the participants got used to their new environment before starting paid work in New Zealand. This meant that difficulties in adaptation did not affect their work-life balance. The findings indicate that the adaptation process was positively associated with how international students maintain their work-life balance in terms of managing their time, satisfaction balance and involvement.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Work life balance has become a significant issue for research in recent years due to changes in work patterns, such as work intensification and long working hours. Most of the work- life balance research is dominated by Western perspectives and conducted in developed Western countries such as Canada, the USA and the UK (Hassan, Dollard & Winefield, 2010). The research generally overlooks non-Western perspectives, and also the impact of adaptation on the work-life balance of migrants. This study will look at how adaptation affects the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand.

### **Background**

Studying overseas has become a global trend in recent years. Western countries such as Britain, America, Australia and New Zealand have become the most popular targets for people from other countries going to those countries to study. In New Zealand, the number of international students increases annually by six percent and international education contributes two billion dollars to the New Zealand economy every year (Tolley & Joyce, 2010).

The Asian population in New Zealand, with 500,000 people, is the third largest group after European and Maori groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). Two thirds (66%) of these Asian people live in Auckland (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). In addition, there are a high number of East Asian people working in New Zealand. For example, 52,665 Chinese work full time and part time, more than 10,000 Koreans are working and approximately 10,000 people from other Asian ethnic groups work in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). It is predicted that the Asian population will have the fastest growth, through migration and birth, of the measured ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

As well as a significant number of East Asian people working in New Zealand, Asian people also comprise a significant proportion of students studying in tertiary education. People of East Asian backgrounds in particular are increasingly important to tertiary education in New Zealand. According to Statistics New Zealand (2006) there are 60,522 Asian students who are not New Zealand born studying full time in New Zealand. Moreover, students from East Asia make up a major proportion of Asian students. For example, in 2011, there were about 23,000 Chinese students and approximately 12,000

Korean students enrolled in the New Zealand institutions (Education New Zealand, 2011).

Despite the significant proportion of Asian people working and studying in New Zealand, there is little research on work-life balance of Asian people and in New Zealand (Wei, 2007). For example, Asian people were not mentioned in the work-life balance project launched in 2004 (Department of Labour, 2004), and not many Asian people were recruited to answer the survey of work life balance (Department of Labour, 2006). Further, there is little research on the work-life balance of students, and of the impact of adaptation on migrants. Thus, more research in the work life balance of East Asian people, and of students is needed. As students (and increasingly East Asian students) will, hopefully, supply the future workforce of New Zealand, it is important to understand what issues they might face related to work-life balance.

In addition, this dissertation looks at another side of work-life balance in terms of that how adaptation might affect work-life balance. In terms of students both working and studying in a new country, balancing work and life may be more difficult. Work-life balance can be simply understood as the balance between work activities and non-work activities. Previous studies usually look at how each component of work-life balance interferes each other or focuses on work-life conflicts (Naithani, 2010; Basuil & Casper, 2012; Kalliath, Brough, & Poelmans, 2008). There is no unique definition for work-life balance, with definitions varying from one study to another. This research uses a definition of work-life balance based on Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw's (2003) concept. They suggest that in order to achieve work-life balance, it is essential to gain time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. The definitions of each component in the term "work-life balance" and the definition of work-life balance will be clearly discussed in the Chapter Two.

Life in a new country seems to have more challenges for foreign students as they not only deal with adaptation but also work-life balance. Both processes of adaptation and work-life balance have a linkage with each other. According to Earley (2002) adaptation is a person's capability to acquire or adapt behaviours suitable for a new culture. To successfully adapt to a new culture, it means the students need to not only adapt but also to thrive in the new culture. Adaptation is not easy to achieve, but it enables people to flourish in the host country. Adaptation is a process comprising different stages, depending on which stage the students are in, they will have different



attitudes and behaviours to the host country. In this research, the stages of adaptation process will be based on the various levels of culture shock experience. The level of culture shock is high when students first come to a new country and it is reduced once the students adapt more to the new country (Kim, 2001).

## **Research design**

The study aims to investigate the journey of East Asian students in New Zealand, to see how adaptation affects their work-life balance. There are two main parts of the research: the adaptation process and perceptions of work-life balance. Each aspect will be explored and then the relationship between adaptation and work-life balance will be discussed.

There are three overarching issues in work life balance that this dissertation addressed:

- The lack of studies of non-Western culture work-life balance;
- The work-life balance issues of students;
- How adaptation impacts on work-life balance.

In order to clarify the impact of adaptation on work-life balance, these research questions were used:

1. How do East Asian students define work-life balance?
2. What is students' experience of work-life balance?
3. How have students experienced the adaptation process?
4. Has adaptation impacted on work-life balance?

Structured interviews, asking predetermined questions, were used to collect data for this dissertation. Nine participants were recruited from the researcher's personal contact network and supplemented through snowball recruiting. Nine participants from China and Korea were selected for the interviews. They had to be fluent in English and meet criteria for selection in terms of both working and studying. Data was analysed by using thematic analysis identifying and developing themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Chapter Three discusses the research methodology and method in more depth.

## **Overview of the dissertation**

The structure of the dissertation includes six chapters comprising introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion. This chapter outlines the background and rationale of the research. It then provides an overview of the method and the chapters included in this dissertation.

The second chapter is the literature review. Chapter Two defines work-life balance and provides the theoretical background for the adaptation process, cultural differences and culture shock. The different perspectives between Western and non-Western cultures are mentioned in Chapter Two. The Greenhaus et al. (2003) concept of work-life balance will be discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes by proposing a model of a link between adaptation and work-life balance. The researcher will use the term “work-life balance” instead of work-family-balance in order cover a wider range of work and non-work activities including family activities. The terms “foreign students” and “international students” are used interchangeably.

The third chapter outlines the methodology and method as discussed above. Chapter Four presents the findings. Seven key themes about adaptation and work-life balance are discussed in detail in the chapter. The following chapter is the discussion section which explains the findings using the theoretical frameworks provided in chapter Two, the literature review. The final chapter concludes with a summary of the whole study and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

Chapter Two provides the theoretical background for this dissertation. It defines work-life balance in general, and also what work-life balance might mean for students. Furthermore, because this dissertation investigates the work-life balance of East Asian students, non-Western perspectives of work-life balance are also discussed. Adaptation is then outlined, and a framework proposed for how adaptation to New Zealand might impact on the work-life balance of East Asian students.

### **2.1 Definition of work- life balance**

Work-life balance has become a critical issue in the last two decades owing to the rising demands of work and family (Mesut, 2006). Due to more work intensification and longer hours (Burke, 2009), the importance of wellbeing in terms of work-life balance has been emphasized in research. It is a key issue that the government and employers need to pay attention to. In this dissertation, the term work-life balance will be used in order to cover a broader aspect of balancing work and non-work activities rather than using other related terms such as work-family conflict (Haar, Spell, O'Driscoll, & Dyer, 2003; Noor, 2004) and work-family balance (Beham & Drobnic, 2010; Lambert, Kass, Piotrowski, & Vodanovich, 2006). In order to understand what work-life balance is, the literature review will look at each part of the term “work-life balance” first and then define work-life balance for the purpose of this research.

Work refers to paid work activity while life means non paid work activities relating to family and personal time (Eikhof, Warhurst, & Haunschild, 2007; Kalliath & Brough, 2008). “Life” means any activities outside of paid employment which play an important role in people’s life (McPherson & Reed, 2007). For example, in the case of students, “life” would include extracurricular activities outside employment and study is a part of life. Moreover, work and life influence each other. For example, work issues may either negatively or positively affect an individual’s personal life and vice versa (Eikhof et al., 2007). The relationship between work and life is reciprocal, so that if one dominates the other, it leads to negative consequences (Clark, 2000). Work-life balance relies upon the ideal of a balance between work and life. According to Kalliath et al. (2008), balance means two elements are in equilibrium, and the balance is lost when both elements are not equal. Gurvis and Patterson (2005), however, suggest that balance is not about timing alone but about choice of where and how you spend your time, energy and

passion in terms of aligning behaviours, actions and choice. The ideal picture of balancing work and life is associated with the level of control an individual has over when, where and how they work and having their life outside of work (Smith, Buckingham, Wainwright & Marandet, 2011).

Work-life balance is generally considered to be about the relationship between work and personal life, however, it has been defined in different ways. Work-life balance is to successfully manage a juggling act between paid employment and other activities which are important to people in terms of study, family, entertainment and personal development (Noor, 2011). According to Carlson and Grzywacz (2007) essentially, work-life balance is defined as the absence of work life conflict or interference between work and life. Work-life interference is a type of inter role conflict as the role demands of one sphere conflict with the role demands of another sphere (Cannilla & Jones, 2011).

The concept of work-life interference refers to a similar definition that looks at satisfaction with an individual's multiple roles. Work-life balance can ensure an individual's satisfaction between work and life since there is no work-life interference. Satisfaction, in this case, is the determinant of the balance between work and life. For example, work-life balance can be defined as satisfaction between multiple roles in working time and in life time (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Kalliath and Brough (2008) acknowledge that people can experience balance in different ways, nevertheless a hard working manager can have the same feeling of balance as a part time student, as long as they meet their satisfaction for all responsibilities and demands. In other words, work-life balance means to accomplish a satisfied life inside and outside paid work (Bruin & Dupuis, 2004; Pocock, 2005) .

The previous definitions provide broad concepts of work-life balance. Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) on the other hand, define work life balance more specifically. According to Greenhaus et al. (2003), work-life balance consists of three components: time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction in work and life. The interaction of work and life in terms of time, involvement and satisfaction needs to be kept in balance. Time balance ensures enough time spent for work and personal life. Involvement balance means an equivalent level of engagement in work and personal life such as family roles. Finally, satisfaction balance is defined as the same level of satisfaction with both work and life.

Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) model of time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction in work and life will form the basis of this study. These three features will provide the core to define the work life balance of East Asian students in this study. It will look at work-life balance in terms of perceived time balance, involvement and satisfaction. Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) concept emphasises multiple roles in an individual's life with respect to roles at work, family and other non-work activities. The concept generates an explicit picture of determining factors that are important to work-life balance. The satisfaction could provide an indicator of success in work-life balance as well as a measure of personal adaptation to a new environment. The following section further develops the components of time balance, involvement and work-life balance satisfaction.

### **2.1.1 Defining time balance**

This section will look at the role of time balance or effective time management in work-life balance. Time balance is made up of several components. For example, it does not refer only to adequate amounts of time, but having sufficient time for each role.

Time allocation is likely to affect work-life balance. Time allocation denotes the link between non-work life and work activities (Thompson & Bunderson, 2001). The time balance between work and non-work life means an adequate distribution of time between the demands of family, work, study, community, entertainment and religion (Thompson & Bunderson, 2001). Time demands for work cannot be dominated by the time demand for personal life and vice versa. The balance of time allocated to these activities will enable people to carry out their tasks in effective and efficient ways. The "right" time management is associated with ensuring the quality of an individual's multiple roles in terms of management and achievement of their work tasks and life goals. In other words, time balance contributes to the achievement of work-life balance. An adequate amount of time distributed to work and non-work activities leads to work-life balance, which in turn increases wellbeing and quality of life and reduces stress (Ode-Dusseau, Britt, & Bobko, 2012). Furthermore, extra time demands from work and non-work life negatively affects the achievement of work-life balance, increases stress and decreases wellbeing and quality of life. Time spent for work and non-work life should be managed in order to ensure an appropriate work-life balance. According to Thompson and Bunderson (2001) and Ferguson (2007), time management is associated

with effective management of different roles such as roles at work and at home. The maintenance of time balance of multiple roles leads to reduction of work-life conflict. Moreover, work-life balance is able to be enhanced due to the absence of work-life conflict.

### **2.1.2 Defining involvement in work-life balance**

This section discusses the role of involvement in work-life balance. Involvement in multiple roles is important to maintain work-life balance. Rothbard (2001) finds that involvement in only one role tends to lead to role conflicts which affect the maintenance of work-life balance. Students not only engage with their paid work but also engage with their study, family and other non-work activities. They need to pay attention to these activities as well as enjoy them in order to maintain work-life balance.

Since the dissertation aims to investigate single East Asian students in New Zealand separated from their family of origin, the aspect of family involvement is not discussed. The dissertation mainly focuses on exploring how East Asian students get involved in paid-work, study and their personal life.

### **2.1.3 Work-life balance satisfaction**

Work-life balance satisfaction is defined as an individual's task of allocating a sufficient amount of resources to respond to demands of work and personal life (Valcour, 2007). Contentment with work and life activities is the measure of level of satisfaction. Contentment with demands of multiple roles equates to work-life balance satisfaction (Beham & Drobnic, 2010). Moreover, work-life balance and job satisfaction have an integral relationship. Work-life balance is directly associated with job satisfaction (Sakthivel, Kamalanabhan, & Selvarani, 2011). Sakthivel et al. (2011) also found that support from employers and work load were considered to be contributing aspects creating work-life balance which in turn leads to employee satisfaction. In contrast, increased level of stress, and overload at work could lead to the decreased performance of other nonworking activities or at home, and a low level of life satisfaction (Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003; Chaudhry, Malik, & Ahmad, 2011; Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). This may increase a higher level of work-life conflict which reduces the chance for achieving work-life balance.

On the other hand, job satisfaction is a determinant of work-life balance. Job satisfaction can lead to the work-life balance. Reduction of job satisfaction may result in a lack of appropriate allocation of time between work and non-work activities (Russo, 2012). Low job satisfaction therefore negatively impacts on people's work-life balance.

In addition, job satisfaction also has an important role in influencing life satisfaction (Russo, 2012). Life satisfaction is considered to be satisfaction with non-work activities such as study and family activities. Russo (2012) also identified that job satisfaction could affect life satisfaction in a positive or negative way depended on the level of job satisfaction. Thus, in order to balance work and life, it is essential to achieve satisfaction with both work and non-work activities. In terms of students, they need to get satisfaction in their personal life, study and their job to keep their work-life balance.

#### **2.1.4 Non-Western work- life balance perspectives**

This section discusses the perspective of work-life balance of East Asian students in a Western context like New Zealand. Recent research indicates that the perspective of work life balance of Asian people is different from a Western perspective (Chandra, 2012). Work-life balance has been written from a Western perspective that looks at small, nuclear families with lower familial obligations (Haar, Roche & Taylor, 2012). It is suggested that there is a greater impact on the work of work-life balance for people from cultures with stronger and broader family ties than current Western tradition (Haar et al., 2012). Asian people's view of work and family integration is different from Western views due to differences between cultural traditions (Hassan, Dollard & Winefield, 2010). Non-Western people appear to have a high experience of family-work interference (Hassan et al., 2010)

This difference can be explained by using the concept of collectivism and individualism. Asian cultures generally are more collectivist in nature while Western cultures are more individualistic (Yang, 2005). According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) collectivism emphasises the power of the group while the importance of individuals is considered in individualism. For example, the term "We" is greatly mentioned in the collective society, in contrast "I" is preferred to be emphasized in the individualist societies.

According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) the criterion used to distinguish the differences between cultures is to look at “the role of the individual versus the role of the group”. The dimensions of individualism and collectivism are used to differentiate cultures. New Zealand’s score of individualism is higher than East Asian countries such as Japan, China and Korea. For example, New Zealand is ranked 79 on scores of individualism, while China is 20 and Korea is 18 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) study, they suggested that a collectivist society concentrates on the power of the group where an individual is identified as a part of “we” group, firstly from their extended family and then from their society. In contrast, an individualist society emphasises personal identity which is “distinct from other people’s” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 75). According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) children from an extended family learn to think themselves as part of “we” group with aunties, grandparents, cousins and uncles, while children from nuclear family (individualist society) learn to focus on personal identity. The difference between collectivism and individualism is that individualists describe themselves based on traits or characteristics making them different and unique from the others while collectivists see themselves through affiliating with other people in the society (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). For example, in the classroom environment, students from an individualist society feel free to speak up while students from a collectivist society prefer to work in a group rather than voice their own ideas individually (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). According to Parker, Haytko and Hermans (2009) collectivism causes individuals to concentrate on interdependence and cooperation between group’s members. On the other hand, in individualist societies, individuals are likely to be independent and highlight self-worth as well as personal success. Due to the differences between characteristics of these two dimensions, individuals in collectivist and in individualist societies have different perceptions and behaviours. Hence, it could be very challenging for East Asian people to live and succeed in New Zealand. The first obstacle for East Asian people in New Zealand could be the cultural differences.

The collectivism–individualism dimension has been commonly used to explain differences in work attitudes between in Asian and Western countries (Noordin & Kamaruzaman, 2010). The difference in the collectivism and individualism dimension leads to different level of job satisfaction. Individualists seem to have a lower dependency at work than collectivists as people from collective nations seem to be dependent at work. Thus the work-life balance of East Asian compared to Westerners



may be affected not only by different traditions such as family influence, but also because of different ways of working.

### **2.1.5 Students and work-life balance**

There are many studies on work-life balance, however, the particular topic of work-life balance of students has not been emphasized. The following section discusses some relevant research on student's work-life balance. Ineffective time management and stress are common issues for students causing lack of work-life balance. These problems appear to challenge students' ability to balance their work and life. Students may have more pressure to balance their work and life as they need to align work, life and study. They want to establish themselves in a career as well as enjoy their personal life at the same time (Thompson, 2002).

Balancing work and life seems to be difficult for students when many tasks need to be done at once. The pressure of time management is the most critical issue that a student has to face (Pocock & Skinner, 2012; Jogaratnam & Buchanan, 2004; Doble & Supriya, 2011). Students who are both working and studying may be unable to manage their time effectively as they face demands from work, study and personal life such as family. Jogaratnam and Buchanan (2004) point out that time pressure of students is a consequence of issues such as multiple responsibilities and lack of time for meeting academic obligations. Due to problems with time management, it may be hard for students to achieve work-life balance without any work, life and study interference.

Furthermore, according to Ong and Ramia (2009), personal problems such as stress can cause work-life imbalance for students. For example, students who are not successful in their studies tend to have increased personal problems such as increased stress. Moreover, for students studying in a new country, adapting to cultural differences may contribute to a high level of stress. Stress negatively affects the achievement of work-life balance of students (Ong & Ramia, 2009).

## **2.2 Adaptation**

This section defines adaptation and explores the adaptation issues. There are abundant challenges for foreign students when living and studying in a different cultural environment. The most significant issue is how to adapt to a new culture so that they

can live and thrive in the host country. However, it is not easy to adapt to a new culture as these students get used to their own culture and behaviours.

### **2.2.1 Defining adaptation**

Adaptation is a person's capability to acquire or adapt behaviours suitable for a new culture (Earley, 2002). It is important to gain specific skills needed for not only survival but also for flourishing in a new culture of the host country (McIntyre, 2008). The ability to adapt to a new culture and lifestyle is based on the skills, abilities and traits which an individual possesses (Montagliani & Giacalone, 1998). Thus, people may experience the adaptation process in the different ways, for example, some may adapt to a new culture very quickly. It is believed that communication is one way for immigrants and foreign students to achieve adaptation (McIntyre, 2008). Interaction with local people in the host country enables the foreign students and immigrants to adapt to the new environment in a smoother way. For example, having local friends provides integration with "natives" which can lead to easier adaptation (Bodycott, 2012). Changes in behaviours and thoughts can enable the foreign students to easily adapt to the host country environment. For example, in order to assimilate with a new culture, several changes in terms of behaviours, attitudes, even values and beliefs have to be undertaken (McIntyre, 2008). The experience of adjusting to a new culture can lead to difficulties such as stress, and the experience of adjustment can lead to more challenges for students (Li & Gasser, 2005). Moreover, during the adaptation process, problems of adaptation may occur in terms of issues of ethnic discrimination, or of cultural change (Eriksen, 2002). These cross-cultural issues could affect Asian international students' adjustment to a new culture and subsequent work-life balance (Li & Gasser, 2005).

As a new immigrant or a foreign student to the host country, there are many new things to cope with, arising from differences in language and culture. East Asian students face critical difficulties adjusting to Western cultures such as New Zealand (Durkin, 2008). According to Ward and Kennedy (2001), foreign students need to fit in and adjust sociologically and psychologically to the host country environment. New Zealand has a significant number of international students, and for them adaptation to the new culture is pivotal for the success of their study, work and well-being. For foreign students, adaptation practices have to be regarded as cultural adaptation that requires a long-term acculturation in the host culture (Icbay & Kocayoruk, 2011). Adjustment or change is a

key factor in adapting to a new environment. During the adaptation process, people could change their thoughts and behaviours without being conscious of doing so. This is part of the process of understanding the new culture practices together with adjusting their actions and thoughts.

### **2.2.2 Culture and Culture shock**

#### ***Culture***

In order to understand the most common issue of adaptation which is culture shock, the culture needs to be defined. The term culture was first used in the eighteenth century (Naji, 2010). There is no one single definition of culture and numerous definitions of culture have been identified over the years. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) defined culture as consisting “of the unwritten rules of social game. It is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (p. 4). It appears therefore that culture is the place where people share the same rules. Individuals who come from the same community will have the same cultural rules and have different culture from the other groups of people. Moreover, culture is the process of learning day by day, not innately, and is transmitted from generation to generation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; McLaren, 1998). Culture needs to be learnt, and individuals from the same community will learn the same values of culture through the socialisation process.

An alternative definition of culture is suggested by Naji (2010) and Schwartz (2003) who define culture as the set of beliefs, values, and behaviours of groups of people. Culture with belief, norms, values, and behaviours is transmitted from generation to generation through communication (Jandt, 2004). People learn their culture through communication and they teach their children through communication as well. Most early learning is through observation. Moreover, culture includes all the products of a social environment which are made and shared over time, such as foods, arts, design, politics, and religion (Naji, 2010; Navas, Rojasb, Gariciac, & Pumaresd, 2007). Culture is not only about sharing values and norms but also about sharing every product in a social environment. Naji (2010) also suggests that things such as values and norms created and shared in a society are retained and renewed all the time in order to develop culture. Culture develops and changes over time in accordance with its social environment.

Culture plays a significant role in influencing human behaviours and beliefs. According to Wilhelms, Shaki, and Hsiao (2009), human behaviours and beliefs are affected by culture through the way people make decisions, communicate and perceive the world. People with the same culture have quite similar ways of behaving and holding beliefs. In other words, culture influences who or how people become (Moore & Barker, 2012).

Living in another country with different backgrounds, people tend to adapt to the new culture by blending their own culture with the host one. As immigrants and foreign students, they are likely to experience a blended culture, which is a combination of cultures (Moore & Barker, 2012). This “blended” culture can be defined as a third culture which enables individuals to adapt more easily to new environment.

### ***Culture shock***

East Asian students come to New Zealand for better education and they encounter a lot of challenges, especially challenges in adaptation. Culture shock is considered as one of the most common problems of adaptation. Culture shock is a part of cultural adjustment which is a long term process of adapting and finally feeling comfortable in the host country environment (Kim, 2001). Culture shock is defined as negative aspects of reactions to a different culture (Zhou, Divya, Topping & Todman, 2008). Individuals are likely to experience culture shock as they cannot use their own values, behaviours, customs and norms in the host country because of cultural differences (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; McLachlan & Justice, 2009). They experience “shock” as accepted behaviours and everyday life in the host country are different from both their expectation and their home country.

People who experience culture shock usually have tension, negative feelings of helplessness and depression (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005; Lin, 2006). The negative characteristics resulting from culture shock make it more challenging for newcomers such as international students to adapt to the host country. Furthermore, these negative feelings can contribute to low levels of self-esteem and confidence (McIntyre, 2008). As individuals cannot make adjustment to fit into the new environment; they are likely to get more depressed. This may suggest that people can become trapped in a negative cycle.

Early in the adaptation process people do not know how to behave acceptably and appropriately to the new environment (Chen, Lin & Sawangapattanakul, 2011). Thus it takes time to recognise which behaviours are accepted in the host country and which are

not. Negative emotions and behaviours may result from the uncertainties. All these changes are recognised as the signs of culture shock (Chen et al., 2011)

In addition, as international students live in a new cultural environment, they will experience numerous problems relating to their competence in communication as well as psychological well-being (Lewthwaite, 1996; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). Long-term problems of psychological well-being may lead to both mental health problems and physical health issues. Furthermore, culture shock is associated with poor quality performance at work and other fields such as study (Chen et al., 2011). These problems will affect the adaptation process of these students.

As noted, homesickness/ separation from family (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007), language barriers and discrimination are linked to the causes for culture shock (Lin, 2006). Homesickness negatively impacts students' behaviours, especially international students as they have to deal with various new things in the host country (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Homesickness can cause negative and serious effects such as stress. Furthermore, it is associated with critical problems in terms of difficulties in adaptation, feeling lonely and sad (Constantines, Kindachi, Okazaki, Gainor, & Baden, 2005). Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) point out that those students who are homesick tend to get more complaints, experience negative psychological well-being and have a lower ability to adapt. Furthermore, Messina (2007) suggested that homesick students were likely to show poor study skills as well as poor decision making, and display negative emotions such as anxiety in the social environment. As a result they choose to avoid social situations rather enjoy them.

Homesickness seriously affects the ability of students to adapt to the host country. This is important to consider in terms of the relationship between adaptation and life satisfaction. For example, social activities are one of the factors contributing to life satisfaction (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011), and homesickness is negatively associated with enjoying social activities. In other words, homesickness reduces the level of life satisfaction of students (Hendrickson et al., 2011). Due to the low level of life satisfaction, it is hard to maintain satisfaction in relation to the other components of work-life balance such as work, and study (Greenhaus et al., 2003). One aspect of the impact of adaptation on work-life balance maybe that homesickness seems to affect the balance between work and life satisfaction.

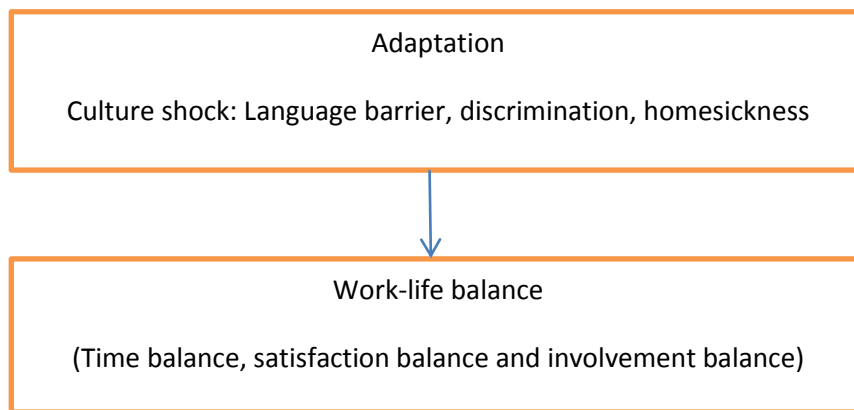
Another component affecting adaptation to new environment is ethnic discrimination. Nowadays, most Western countries are becoming more multicultural and one of the most critical issues of multiculturalism is the discrimination between individuals of various backgrounds and cultures (Guillen & Ji, 2011). As foreign students, perceiving or experiencing discrimination can lead to lower self-esteem (Schmitt, Spear & Branscombe, 2003). Schmitt et al. (2003) also claim that foreign students tend to make friends with other foreign students in order to feel comfortable. They feel safer and less stressed when they are involved with students who have the same background. In addition, women are likely to have lower self-esteem than men when experiencing discrimination (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Perceived discrimination increases difficulties in adjustment to the host country. Experiencing discrimination also has similar negative emotions to that of culture shock such as stress, anxiety and depression (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). According to Lee and Rice (2007) non-white foreign students are very likely to experience discrimination in the new environment where they are currently living and studying. Lee and Rice (2007) also suggest that feelings of discomfort and disrespect are common issues. Due to culture differences in terms of the dimension of discrimination, those students usually feel isolated in the host country and then it is harder for them to adapt and thrive in the new environment.

The language barrier is considered to be an additional cause of culture shock which can affect the adaptation of foreign students. According to Lee (2008) language has an essential relationship with social adaptation and language competence is considered to be a key to reducing adaptation problems. Furthermore, a language barrier is reckoned as a critical source of stress among foreign students (Carr, Koyama, & Thiagarajan, 2003). Students with poor language skills have less communication with native people (Lin, 2006). Conversely, foreign students who have language proficiency find it easier to adapt to the host country than those with a language deficit (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Foreign students with language proficiency will also experience less stress in the adaptation process.

Psychological distress is one of the major problems that language barrier causes (Lee, 2008). Lee (2008) also points out that language deficit reduces confidence in communication. Due to psychological distress, foreign students feel frustrated, depressed, and even rejected in a new environment. Moreover, foreign students with language barriers will likely have negative self-concepts, low levels of confidence and

even be afraid of using the local language in the host country (Lee, 2008). In addition, they may also face difficulties in study due to poor language skills. These aspects undoubtedly reduce the foreign student's ability to adapt to the new environment. As they cannot adapt to the new culture, it is not easy to survive and succeed. In addition, consequences of language barriers in terms of stress and negative emotions will reduce the level of satisfaction in study, life and working environment.

### 2.3 The relationship between adaptation and work-life balance



**Figure 1: Relationship between adaptation and work-life balance components**

Source: author

As discussed above, living and thriving are the measurements for how successfully individuals adapt to a new environment. During the process of adaptation, culture shock with its dimensions of language barrier, homesickness, and discrimination are the common issues that a foreign student faces. A new life in a new country seems to become harder for foreign students as they need to adapt to the host country and maintain their work-life balance. Individual ability to adapt affects the balance of work and life (Bulgan, 2011). For example, the more successfully individuals can adapt, the more balanced work and life become.

Figure 1 indicates how adaptation may affect work-life balance. Satisfaction, involvement and time balance are factors that lead to work-life balance. Issues of adaptation such as language barriers, homesickness and discrimination may negatively affect these three components. For example, language barrier may reduce the level of life satisfaction because foreign students are not confident to socialise with local people. Moreover, homesickness and discrimination have significant impacts on life satisfaction

(Hendrickson et al., 2010). The impact means that the possibility of balancing work and life becomes harder. Life satisfaction plays an important role in the meaning of work-life balance. An ideal work-life balance needs to have satisfaction in workplace and personal life.

When living in a new cultural environment, foreign students need to try hard to adapt to the new environment. Successful adaptation would enhance their study and life in the new environment. In addition, the more successfully the students adapt to a new culture, the easier and more effectively they can deal with work-life balance.

## **Summary**

The work-life balance concept of Greenhaus et al. (2003) has been chosen to be the foundation of this study. Greenhaus et al. (2003) describe work-life balance in detail with three main components: time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. The three components were discussed in detail to highlight the work-life balance concept. The chapter also suggested that the different aspects between non-Western and Western culture such as individualism and collectivism could lead to different views of work-life balance.

A range of students' work-life balance literature was mentioned in the chapter. Issues relating to work, study and life such as stress and time pressure were highlighted. They were common challenges for students to maintain work-life balance.

The second important aspect of this literature review section was adaptation. A range of theories about adaptation were reviewed in the section. Adaptation was defined as a person's capability to acquire or adapt behaviours suitable for a new culture (Earley, 2002). Communication and adjustment were the factors that facilitate the adaptation process. The chapter introduced the common issue of adaptation process was culture shock. Homesickness, language barrier and discrimination were described as the causes of culture shock that negatively impacted adaptation process.

Drawing on the literature of adaptation and work-life balance, a model of adaptation and work-life balance was suggested in this chapter. The model highlighted the relationship between adaptation and work-life balance.



## **Chapter Three: Research design**

Chapter Three describes and explains the methodology used in the dissertation. The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate how adaptation might affect the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand. In particular, the dissertation aims to explore the experiences of East Asian students of both adaptation and work-life balance. Thus, an interpretive paradigm was chosen as the most appropriate method to conduct the study. In addition, interviewing was chosen as the method for data collection. More details of methodology are explained below.

### **3.1 Research paradigm**

A paradigm is known as a system of beliefs dealing with key principles to define the nature of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The process of defining the research world is based on the assumptions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. There are four major paradigms namely positivist, post-positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The interpretive paradigm is the basis of this study. According to Grant and Giddings (2002) interpretive research includes the study of the relationship and interaction between the researcher and the participant. In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher tries to listen to and understand the experiences and stories of the participant and then they interpret the data given by the participant (Grant & Giddings, 2002). The researcher not only interprets information provided by the participants but also explores significant aspects that are not seen by the participants (Grant & Giddings, 2002). The objective of this dissertation is to investigate experiences of adaptation affecting work-life balance. An interpretive paradigm is the most appropriate approach to conduct this topic, because the interpretive paradigm enables the researcher to understand and experience the worlds of the participants through the participants' experiences and perspectives (McIntyre, 2008).

*Ontological assumption:* The ontology of the interpretive paradigm assumes that the social world contains many realities which are created by people's perception of social situations (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This assumption is important in this research as "the researcher aims to understand the context of a phenomenon, since the context is what defines the situation and makes it what it is" (Myers, 2009, p. 39). It is impossible to say the findings of this dissertation are generalisable, however, in the interpretive paradigm, findings are based on the researchers' understanding of the information gathered.

*Epistemological assumption:* The epistemology refers to the relationship between the object and the researcher and the researchers' view of what constitutes knowledge. It is assumed that the object and the researcher need to be interactively linked in order to create findings as the research proceeds (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Grant and Giddings (2002) the interpretive researcher does not stand there and observe the phenomenon of the world, the researcher minimises the distance between her/himself and participants by getting involved in interaction with the participants. It means that the close relationship between the researcher and participants can produce valuable information for the investigation. Through interacting with the participants, the researcher is able to more clearly and easily understand the information provided (Grant & Giddings, 2002).

*Axiological assumption:* Axiology refers to the values of the researcher conducting the investigation: "Values reflect either the personal beliefs or the feelings of a researcher" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 29). In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher's values play an important role in the research as they influence the interpretations drawn from data/information (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this dissertation, the researcher chose the topic of adaptation and work-life balance based on the researcher's own experiences. As an international student in New Zealand, what the researcher has experienced may be similar to the experiences of the participants. These experiences will help the researcher to understand the viewpoints of information provided by the participants.

### **3.2 Data collection technique**

Interviewing is the most common data collection technique used in qualitative research (Myers, 2009). With modern technology, interviews can be conducted through the telephone, or the internet, however face-to-face interviews were used to collect information for this dissertation. One of main advantages of the face-to-face interview is that participants can have opportunities to seek clarification of questions, the topic or any other concerns. An interview is defined as a conversation with the main purpose of gathering information (Bryman & Bell, 2011). An interview method was chosen to collect data because of numerous benefits. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) by using interviews, the researcher is able to discover the zones of reality, for example subjective experiences and attitudes of an individual. One of the significant benefits of interviewing is the rich data gained, and complex issues can be understood and explored

(Sekaran, 2003). Interviews are also considered as a form of interpretive practice between respondents and the interviewers (Silverman, 2004). Thus, using interviews was completely suitable to the purpose of interpretive approach. In addition, interviewing is a good way to explore a person's thoughts, experiences and feelings (Silverman, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Participants play a significant role in the interview process as interviews transform the views and information provided by the participants to a form of knowledge (Silverman, 2004).

There are three main forms of interviews: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Myers, 2009). Structured interviews were the main method for information collection in this dissertation. According to Myers (2009) structured interviews involve the use of some pre-formulated questions, usually asked in specific order. The use of structured interviews is to ensure consistency across multiple interviews. Time efficiency is an advantage of structured interview as the questions are prepared in advance (Myers, 2009). In addition, structured interviews can ensure the accuracy of information (Allen, 1999). By preparing the list of questions in advance, the possibility of interviews getting off the topic is reduced, and then the amount of useful information is enhanced. When using a structured interview, it is easier to get useful information related to the topic, because the researcher prepared questions in advance based on their knowledge and experience. Moreover, structured interviews are very good for the less experienced interviewers. Interview questions are detailed in Appendix 1.

### **3.3 Sample size**

Nine people from East Asia (China and Korea) in the Auckland region were selected to take part in interviews. They were either part time or full time students currently working in either part time or full time job. These students have to adapt to New Zealand culture as well as maintain their work life balance. The interviews explored the whole process of their adaptation and the maintenance of work life balance.

According to Durkin (2008) the identification of which countries belonging to East Asia is complex as the East Asia region contains different cultures, religious and economic environments, but for the purpose of this dissertation, China and Korea will be included. The identification of East Asia used in this dissertation was based specifically on the cultural dimensions of collectivism and individualism. Although

East Asia encompasses many countries, one commonality is a strong sense of collectivism and family ties and obligations (Parker et al., 2009). Students from China and Korea were chosen to be the subjects of the interviews as they make up a major proportion of the population of East Asian students living in New Zealand. To ensure sufficient similarities among the participants, interviewees had to have come from a country with significantly lower score of individualism than New Zealand's score. The criterion selected was that it should be at least 50 points' difference according to Hofstede's criteria (Hofstede, nd). China (20 points) and Korea (18 points) scores are more than 50 points lower than New Zealand (79 points) in individualism (Hofstede, n.d). This relates to some key differences between Western and non-Western perspectives of work-life balance identified in recent research (Haar et al., 2012; Hassan et al., 2010). The difference in the individualism score was determined as the culture difference would possibly affect adaptation in New Zealand.

Although East Asia includes many countries, China and Korea were chosen as they met the above criterion. Furthermore, only two countries were chosen because of time constraints and the scale of the dissertation. A supplementary criterion was that English is the bridge language for Asian people to communicate in New Zealand. The participants must be fluent in English. The length of time spent in New Zealand was included in interview questions so that the researcher could see whether time in New Zealand affected adaptation and work-life balance.

### **3.4 Interview process: recruitment and procedure**

One of the most important steps before conducting the interviews is to recruit participants. There are various recruiting methods such as convenience sampling, random sampling and typical case sampling (Harsh, 2011). Every method has its own advantages and disadvantages. The chosen method should be based on the objectives of the study and the purpose of the researcher. In this dissertation, convenience sampling was used to recruit interviewees. A convenience sample is identified as a situation where interviewees are chosen at the convenience of researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, convenience sampling is the applicable method that is "easy to access and inexpensive to study" (Harsh, 2011, p. 71). Due to the limitation of time, convenience sampling can be recognised as an ideal method to recruit people. Moreover, the snowball method was used in order to expand the pool of interviewees. The snowball

method is the situation where the interviewees introduce other potential interviewees to the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The introduction of participants may save time in recruitment and this technique is also convenient and inexpensive to carry out. The combination of convenience sampling and snowball effect definitely facilitated the process of recruitment. In this case, the researcher interviewed the appropriate candidates from her personal network and then asked the candidates to introduce other candidates to her (snowball method). All participants from the researcher's network and from the snowball method had to meet the selection criteria: from East Asian countries (China or Korea), both studying and working at the same time, being fluent in English.

In practice, the researcher approached people whom she knew including friends and acquaintances. Then seven participants who met all the requirements were chosen from the researcher's personal network. Because there were not enough participants who met the requirements from the research network, the two last participants were introduced through a participant. Firstly, the researcher contacted these participants by both telephone and emails to give brief introduction about the project and invite them to take part in the interviews. The researcher advised the participants that the interviews were completely voluntary. Once the participants verbally agreed to join the interviews, the researcher emailed them more details about the interviews along with the Participant Information Sheet, and arranged the time to conduct the interviews. All participants read the Information Sheet, had the opportunity to ask any further questions and then indicated that agreement to participate by signing the Consent form. Participants were advised that they could withdraw or stop the interview if they felt uncomfortable or had negative emotion during the interviews. Volunteering was the priority to collect the data

The interview started with general and welcome questions such as "how are you today?, are you ready to start? , how long have you been in New Zealand? , are you full time or part time student?". These questions helped the participants feel relaxed before core questions about the topic were asked. Open-ended questions were used to collect the data. Using open-ended questions maximized full and meaningful answers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Open-ended questions usually begin with how, why or what in order to encourage people to tell their stories. With these questions, it was easier to gain valuable information from the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20

minutes. Nine interviews were carried out within two weeks. After data collection, the next important step was to analyse the data.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The interviews were transcribed by the researcher, which improves familiarity with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, there were some answers that were not clear. The researcher had to email some participants to clarify their answers. This step was to make sure the researcher could get accurate information before data analysis.

Qualitative research can generate large amounts of information. The researcher decided to analyse data collected using the thematic analysis approach. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis approach is a method used to identify, analyse and report themes within data. Reading and re-reading the information is used to recognise the themes which become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen because it can deal with a large amount of information, and provide a systematic way of organizing and ensuring the data's description in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Describing data in detail played an important role in finding significant themes which contributed to the outcome of this study. Developing themes has a significant role in data analysis as a theme captures key information which is related to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are six steps in thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006), shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Steps of thematic analysis**

<p><b>Step 1:</b> Getting familiar with data by keep reading and rereading data to create general ideas on what the data is about.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Initial coding: Data was broken down to different code. “A code can be a word that is used to describe or summarize a sentence, a paragraph, or even a whole piece of text such as an interview” (Myers, 2009, p. 167). This step was done manually.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Forming themes. Codes are analysed by comparing the similarities and differences in order to sort similar codes into a group which is known as a theme.</p> <p><b>Step 4:</b> Reviewing themes ensures the accuracy of themes. New themes may be created in this step. In this step, it is also important to ensure that all ideal themes relating to the topic.</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> Identifying final themes. Defining and refining themes are essential in order to identify the most appropriate themes for the final report. Those themes need to be named clearly.</p> <p><b>Step 6:</b> Reporting. The most important step in thematic analysis as the outcomes are presented in this step. The analysis needs to provide a coherent, logical and concise explanation of data analysis process relating themes found. The data analysis must be linked to the research question.</p>
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Source : Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethics approval was required in order to collect data through interviews. The ethics application form was submitted and approved to ensure that there is no harm to any party involved in this study and that confidentiality would be maintained for the participants. The research (application 12/224) was approved by the AUT Ethics Committee in July 2012. There are particular strategies to deal with Ethical considerations discussed below. Importantly, it was necessary to be mindful of maintaining an independent relationship between the researcher and the participants, so that there was no power imbalance between the researcher and the participants. Participants were not financially or in any other way dependent upon the researcher, which minimised the potential for a power imbalance in the research. It was voluntary to participate in the interview and the participants could withdraw from the interviews at any time they preferred as long as it was before the completion of data collection.

Furthermore, during the interviews, the role of the participants was to provide information according to the questions.

The researcher is also from an East Asian country with a low individualism score compared to New Zealand. The similar culture enabled the researcher to build rapport quickly and to minimize sensitive questions.

All information collected has been presented in a way that tries to guarantee the participants cannot be identified. For example, their place of study and place of work has not been revealed. Pseudonyms have been used to refer to each participant in the results and discussion sections.

The data is being stored on AUT premises. Electronic data will be downloaded to an external hard drive that will be securely kept in AUT premises. The hard copy of data will not be on publicly accessible folders. All Consent forms will be stored and locked in the supervisor's office. Once the dissertation is completed, a softcopy of all data collected will be completely destroyed, and the hard copies will be destroyed in six years later.

## **Summary**

The interpretive paradigm was used to guide the methodology in this dissertation. An interview method was chosen as the most appropriate method for this research as it facilitates the data interpretation. Interviews were considered to represent the interaction between the researcher and participants which fit with the purpose of interpretive approach. Nine structured interviews were conducted for this research. Structured interviews were used because of time efficiency and consistency of information. Participants came from either Korea or China. Only two cultures were picked in order to ensure the small scale of the study.

After data collection stage, thematic analysis approach was used to analyse data. Using thematic analysis ensured a description of the data in detail and theme development occurred in a systematic way. It also was a good way to deal with a large amount of information. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to produce useful findings for the research which are discussed in the next section.



## Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of the study is to investigate how adaptation affects the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand. Chapter Four presents the findings from interviews with nine students from Korea and China. Seven key themes were discovered as the result of using thematic analysis. The themes fall into broad categories of how the participants have realised cultural differences, adaptation issues, the relationship between adaptation and work-life balance, and time management for their work, study and personal life.

**Table 2: Sample characteristics**

Names	Ethnicity	Working time	Part time or full time study	Part time or full time working	Years in New Zealand
Sophia	Chinese	6 months	Full time	Part time	5 years
Olivia	Chinese	6 months	Full time	Part time	2 year
Katy	Chinese	1 year	Full time	Part time	5 years
Kim	Korean	1 year	Full time	Part time	2 years
Mary	Chinese	3months	Full time	Part time	1 year
Lily	Chinese	3 years	Full time	Part time	5 years
John	Korean	1 year	Part time	Full time	6 years
Amy	Chinese	2 years	Full time	Part time	10 years
Peter	Korean	3 years	Full time	Part time	7 years

### **First step in New Zealand: feelings of excitement and nervousness**

When the participants first came to New Zealand, they all experienced different feelings. However, an overwhelming majority of them were very excited because this was the first time they had been overseas. For example, Amy: “I feel really excited because this is my first time to go overseas. I would like to see a lot of places I have never been before”. Kim also expressed similar experiences: “excited because I had never been to the overseas before”.

Being in a new country, everything was new for them, and they felt very excited experiencing the new life. Lily shared her experiences when she first came to New Zealand:

*I think New Zealand is a nice country. I think I'm quite excited, you come to a new country and quite enjoy the life here and study, and people here are very kind and I think I'm quite used to life in here. I didn't feel nervous because I came here and I studied the language first. I have a lot of classmates and sometimes we go out together, I have relatives here as well. I don't think I feel nervous, I just feel so excited and everything is new for me. I like here very much (Lily).*

For some participants the excitement and sense of freedom was directly linked to the thought of living away from their parents for the first time. Peter recalled when he first came to New Zealand: *"I was really excited because this was the first time I lived far away from my parents so I felt like I have a lot of freedom. I can sleep, I can play I can do whatever I want anytime"*.

However, feelings of nervousness, and being terrified also occurred because of the new and strange environment. Participants felt terrified when they realised that this was not an overseas holiday. They realised that they were living away from their family and this could actually be challenging. Olivia said that: *"That excitement feeling disappeared after about one month or so when real life kicked in: communication problem, school load, and homestay problems"*.

Not all participants felt excited, some were really nervous. They were not ready to live in New Zealand on their own. Mary shared her feeling: *"I'm feeling nervous because you are separate from you friends, your family members"*. John was not happy at the beginning of his life in New Zealand: *"I was sad when I was arrived because I really have not been away from home before. When I first arrived, I really missed home. I was not really excited when I was here"*.

### **Perception of cultural differences**

All the participants experienced cultural differences through perceived differences in study attitudes, in day to day life, and how people interact in social situations. For example, participants noticed that New Zealanders have different ways of expressing ideas and making jokes compared to East Asian countries such as China and Korea. Sophia shared her thoughts: *"because China culture and New Zealand culture are very different. Western people are more go straight. They express themselves very directly."*

*Because of different ways of thinking, it's not easy to enter the local society or make friends”*

Amy also gave an example of cultural differences:

*When I have local friends, just really hard to socialise with them because different culture and you may not understand their jokes. It does stop me or slow me to socialise with local people fast. We are from completely different culture background. A lot of solutions, issues, or the way of dealing things is different. I see the difference there and it stops me or slows me down to socialise with local people. (Amy)*

The participants have noticed cultural differences in simple and everyday things such as communication, eating style and habits. Katy shared her experiences when she lived in a homestay: *“When I lived in homestay, I saw their eating style was different, and the study was different and hard, I felt very stress. I could not follow their steps”*.

Cultural differences leading to behaviours and habits were also mentioned by some participants. Kim shared her thoughts of the different habits caused by cultural difference: *“In my country, my culture is quite traditional. It's not like here, I think. People in here they like to go out at the weekend”*.

Moreover, despite cultural differences, the participants chose to show respect and tried to learn new things that they had not experienced in their countries before. For example, Lily said: *“Yes I think I can accept what they are doing and thinking. Their culture is different from mine but I think I need to show respect. People here they are to enjoy the life and I think that's the thing that people in my country have to learn”*.

The main reason the participants came to New Zealand was to study. The participants highlighted key cultural differences in study attitudes between China, Korea and New Zealand. Participants suggested these two East Asian countries appear to have a high study load and a passive way of teaching and study, compared to New Zealand which has a more active educational approach.

Sophia shared her story of studying in China and New Zealand:

*Yes, very different from New Zealand to China. I was in University in China. I completed two years of University in China. It's a Chinese university [Not speaking English]. I started our lecture from very early*

*morning. I think from eight o'clock until night-time. I still have elective papers at night. It was difficult to pass the papers. In New Zealand, they emphasise on self- study. We just have few lecture times, maybe six hours a week for my Postgraduate study. The rest of time I need to study by myself (Sophia).*

Amy shared her thoughts about the educational approach in New Zealand and Korea: *“Yes very different. Back at home what the teacher said is always correct, the students don't have the right to say their own opinion, but in New Zealand I find that the students are encouraged to say their own ideas. They really give you the creative thinking. They try to encourage your creative thinking, and I think this is very good”*

Many participants said that experience of education in their home country was very hard. They had to learn extra skills such as dancing and painting at a very young age.

*In China it's quite stress like we have to study fulltime every day. And I don't have time to have a job. In China, we have to keep improve our self from very little. Everyone is learning at least one extra skill, so you can be more competitive. For example, I have learned painting, English, dancing and flute. Normally, we learn this during weekend or after school class. But in New Zealand, people relax during the weekend; they don't have that much pressure as we do. (Katy)*

Peter and Olivia also shared their study experiences in their own countries. They mentioned that the education approach in their country was quite passive as students were not encouraged to either express their ideas or choose their majors based on interest. The focus of learning and study was on rote-learning of material rather than critical thinking and self-directed study.

### **Perceived adaptation issues: language barrier and homesickness**

Most participants found that it took some time to adapt to the New Zealand environment. All of the participants had to cope with language barriers as all spoke English as a second language. They commented that it was hard for them to communicate and adapt to their job, study and social life. The participants appeared to struggle with English a lot in the first period of time in New Zealand. The language

barrier was the main obstacle in class for them as they did not understand what the teacher said.

Sophia commented: *“I’ve been here for more than five years. The most difficult thing is study because English is not my mother language. At the beginning it was very difficult to understand what lecturer said. It links to local culture, sometimes I can’t really understand what they say. I need to do a lot of research”*.

Amy shared similar experiences in class: *“The language to start with is difficult. I went to class I didn’t fully understand what the teacher said. When I have local friends, just really hard to socialise with them because of different culture and you may not understand their jokes”*.

The same language barrier caused problems for some participants at work. Lily recalled: *“When I work in a coffee shop. At first I’m quite shy and I don’t know how to communicate with the customers when they talk to me. I feel nervous and I don’t know how to say anything”*. Katy also commented: *“Communication is hard. I don’t know how to communicate with my customer in English to show politeness”*.

Many participants faced difficulties in everyday matters because they could not communicate effectively. Olivia said: *“It was very difficult for me because I could not speak any English when I came to New Zealand first time. For example, I needed to find a way home myself by looking at the map when I get lost or got into the wrong bus because I could not ask anyone and I could not understand even if I did”*.

The language barrier contributed to a negative experience of culture shock and adaptation. They experienced negative emotions such as feelings of stress and hopelessness:

*When I first came here I could not speak English properly, and also I can’t understand when people talk to me I feel like I was a disable person, that made me feel very stressful and you also feel like unsecured, and you just didn’t want to go out. Before that you may be an open person. Since you could not speak, could not understand, you just become very shy. You change your personality. (Peter)*

Many participants experienced homesickness. It seemed that the greater culture shock that they experienced, the more homesick participants became. Homesickness appeared

to affect the participants' emotions. Peter also talked about his experience of homesickness: *"I got a lot of homesick, I miss my parents I miss my home. Also I found that I have a lot of culture shock because in New Zealand they have a mixed culture, I didn't know how to deal with people who come from different cultural backgrounds with me"*

John was not happy because he missed his family a lot: *"I was sad when I arrived because I really have not been away from home before. When I first arrived, I really missed home. I was not really excited when I was here"*. Some participants had been homesick for a long time before getting used to New Zealand's environment. Amy commented: *"I've got homesick miss my family and my parents. I felt so bad. I have been homesick for a long time before getting used to New Zealand"*.

### **Cultural differences influence self- adjustment**

Many participants tried to adapt to New Zealand's culture by observing and following local people's behaviours and thoughts. For some participants this meant that although they thought they were quiet and shy, in order to fit in they became more open because this seemed to be more appropriate to the New Zealand culture.

Sophia commented on how she had adjusted herself to fit into New Zealand culture: *"Western people are more go straight. They express themselves very directly. Because of different ways of thinking I become more open minded, become straighter. I just express myself directly. For myself, I'm easy to express and communicate. From my friend's side; they think I'm friendlier than before"*.

For some participants, however adjustment did not mean changing their personality so much. They preferred to be themselves and had a suitable adjustment to local environment. Peter recalled:

*I adjust myself and get used to New Zealand mix culture I don't think that I need to change myself to be like New Zealanders or anything like that because I think it's always better to be who we are, when you adapt to new environment. Sometimes it doesn't mean that you have to change completely to a different person. You need to get used to it you need to deal with people having different cultures with you. It doesn't mean that you need to change to be someone else to have same culture with them. (Peter)*

Amy tried to adjust herself to adapt to New Zealand culture by observing the local people's behaviours and thoughts:

*I try to understand a bit more about Kiwi culture by observing how they behave into the certain things, and learning the new slangs and try to understand their sport, the food. New Zealand food is different to our food. I try to learn that and then I can have a talk with people. So my local friends have taught me to drink New Zealand wine for example. It's a good way to connect with people. I'm very used to the way people are straight forward, back home people are really polite, indirect they don't get to the point, so I think I adapt to New Zealand culture a lot more now. (Amy)*

### **Defining work-life balance**

Another theme that developed from the interviews is the definition of work-life balance. The majority of participants defined work-life balance in the sense that work and life components should not interfere with each other. They thought that it is essential to enjoy a personal life which means doing hobbies, and relaxing after work. The participants thought that work and life should be kept quite separate. For example, when you are working you should focus only on work and not on your personal life.

*In my opinion work life balance is when you go to work and [then] when you go back home [after] the time you do basic stuff like eat, sleep, resting you still have some free time to do your hobbies. For example you like sports, beside the time you work for your company and beside the time you do basic stuff, you still have time to play sport. For example in my country the work life balance is not as good as New Zealand. Most of people have to work. They need to sacrifice all their free time, they don't have time to enjoy their hobbies. In New Zealand they work but they still have time for the hobbies for example they can go skiing with their friend .(Peter)*

Amy shared similar thoughts: *“You have your work. Work doesn't mean the whole thing as your life, its only part of your life. It's very important to keep your life balance, you need to work and you need to enjoy yourself, do other things you like at the same time”*.

John gave examples of work-life balance: *“In my own opinion, the work life balance is, even though you are working you need to find something to do apart from your work, hang out with your friends, and take your friend, my wife, my family go out for dinner, or travelling, or that kind of thing. You can’t work 24 seven. You need some time to relax and enjoy the life”*.

### **Adaptation to get a better work-life balance**

Many participants suggested that it was important to understand a country’s culture, in order to adapt to the culture. The more individuals can understand about the new culture, the better they are able to get used to the new environment. Lily shared her opinion of the role of language advantage and understanding the local culture in the adaptation process: *“Yes. Like if you want to live in New Zealand you have to understand their language, their culture, their way of thinking. If you don’t speak English very well and it’s hard to get a job, doing interview, dealing with customer. There’s something you need to understand, otherwise it will cause difficulties”*.

Based on the participants’ information, the definition of work–life balance in their home countries was very vague because people did not focus on how to balance work and their personal life. People in their countries devote most of their time for working. Since being in New Zealand, the participants had become aware of the important role of work-life balance. Many participants suggested that people should have time for personal life, to do what they like instead of only focusing on work all the time

Peter shared his thoughts about the important role of work-life balance:

*Yes I think there’s a link; in New Zealand work life balance is very important. I come from a country where people only know how to work they don’t know how to enjoy their life. If I was in my country I would do the same thing as most people do, but since I move to New Zealand I adapt to New Zealand life, I understand that there’s a limit between work, study and the time spent for hobbies because if you don’t have work life balance when you back to work you can’t recharge enough energy. People in here have good work life balance so when they go to work they work more effective than people in my country. (Peter)*



The majority of participants also suggested there was a link between adapting to New Zealand and the maintenance of work-life balance. Their adaptation to New Zealand affects their work-life balance because the more they get used to New Zealand's culture, the better work-life balance they can achieve.

*I think that's a link between that you learn the new way to deal with things. You're taught by the local people and you living in the different environment and their behaviour does affect what you think. Sometimes you start to change to how they behave, and try to, for example the kiwi they try to enjoy their life, every moment. I learn that. That teaches me to see life is more important, not just work is important. My adaptation to New Zealand makes me better in balancing work and life. (Amy)*

Mary also shared her experience of adaptation and work-life balance:

*I take example from my part time job, because you work in any company in New Zealand and you bump into your colleagues in the morning you want to start conversation with them. You can just start any conversation with them as long as it's related to New Zealand. What I'm trying to say is roughly every day in your life you must know something what's going on in New Zealand. So it's much easier for you to mingle with them. They can see that you put efforts try to understand their culture. And then it comes to work life balance it just makes it easier, the same level of understanding. If you put efforts to understand their culture they even put effort or attention to understand you as well. It's a link when you adapt to New Zealand culture or even life and dealing with work-life balance it has to be manageable and suitable lifestyle. (Mary)*

When being asked about their satisfaction with work, life and study, many participants responded that they were satisfied with all these three aspects. They seemed to struggle with how to manage their new life at the beginning, but they gradually got used to the new life and learned how to manage it. This led to satisfaction with their life, study and their job in New Zealand.

Mary shared her experiences of work, study and life in New Zealand. In terms of work, she said

*At the beginning I wasn't satisfied I wasn't doing very well. This is something I've never done it, teaching before. So it is something new. I do find it challenge. I wasn't satisfied with the work. It just I wasn't satisfied with myself. Sometime I felt that I didn't try hard enough to make it work. But right now, after three months I feel more satisfied. I know that I have put in effort and make it work.*

She also shared her experience of life and study:

*Here in New Zealand I would pretty satisfy because education and the way they teach you are different from back home. I felt that in here its more time for self-study so it's up to you to put in efforts to improve your study whereas, back home people are feeding with information and you won't put much effort to study. I would say I'm pretty satisfied. For my life, it is not too satisfied not too unsatisfied but I can pinpoint exactly how satisfied I am with my life.*

### **Students' time balance and involvement balance**

The majority of participants suggested time management was a critical issue for students both studying and working at the same time because they needed to manage their time to make sure they have enough time for work, study goals and enjoying their leisure time as well. Responding to the question of time management, the majority of participants appeared to manage their time for work, study and other activities quite well. They suggested they had enough time for those activities.

Lily commented on how she managed her time: *"I think I manage quite very well. I have to work and I have to study so normally in the morning I will have lecture and work in the afternoon. I will go to library to study at weekend and in the evening I will have my own time to watch movies or TV to relax, so I think I balance quite well"*.

Mary suggested that it took some time to manage her time for work, study and life effectively: *"When I'm only studying time management was alright because I just need focus on study. When I have a job especially part time job, my time management is not too bad. But it is still manageable. I can manage to adjust the time management for work, life and study. It takes a while to manage three things"*.

Based on many participants' information, they commented when they worked, studied, and had personal life activities, they were really involved in any activity they were doing. They tried their best to achieve goals for each activity. Sophia said that "*When I work, I concentrated on work. When I am studying, I focus on study, and I need to have my personal life as well to do what I like*".

## **Summary**

The chapter presented seven key themes discovered from data analysis. Themes were organised according to the process of adaptation of the participants. Themes followed the journey of the participants in New Zealand, from the very first time they came to New Zealand and how they adapted to the new environment.

When the participants first came to New Zealand, they experienced different feelings such as excitement and nervousness. They were excited because this was the first time they went to another country and they could enjoy more freedom. However, many participants also experienced fright as everything was new for them. The participants experienced cultural differences in study attitudes, socialisation and even everyday matters.

The majority of participants were also faced with many difficulties in their lives, and study because English was not their first language. It was hard for some participants to communicate with their customers, for example. Many participants experienced homesickness which created negative emotions. They learnt new things and cultural differences by observing local people's behaviours and thoughts, so they could adjust their behaviours to fit into the environment.

Many participants saw the link between adaptation and work-life balance. They found out that adaptation affected their work-life balance in a positive way. Since they came to New Zealand, they had realised the important role of work-life balance which was not highlighted in their home countries. They suggested that the more they got used to New Zealand, the better work-life balance they could achieve. In addition, they suggested that effective time management also contributed to how they achieved balance for their work, life and study.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

The findings of this dissertation were presented in the previous chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the insights of the findings in relation to theories presented in Chapter Two. This chapter discusses the adaptation process and cultural differences between New Zealand and the participants' home country, their view of work-life balance and the interaction between.

### **Arrival in New Zealand**

Adapting to a new culture is a complex process which requires a lot of personal effort and time to achieve (McIntyre, 2008). For most participants, going to New Zealand was the first time that they went overseas. They were young and naïve when they came to New Zealand. The participants were motivated by the opportunity to learn new things in coming to New Zealand. They expected an exciting life in a new environment with more freedom to do what they wanted than in their home country. All participants had the same purpose for coming to study in New Zealand which was that they wanted to have a better education and gain personal growth.

Overall, the participants' expectations of an exciting new environment were challenged by issues such as homestay problems, study load, and personal issues. The participants also experienced feelings of nervousness and being nervous or scared because of the new environment. Moreover, they also realised that living far away from their family was actually challenging. These negative feelings could be explained by the process of culture shock. According to Zhou et al. (2008) culture shock is the experience of negative reactions to a different culture or environment. Although the participants were very excited to study in New Zealand, they also experienced culture shock. The participants experienced "shock" because they realised everything in the host country was totally different from their own culture's values and norms. Differences included attitudes towards study, lifestyle, and even everyday matters were different as well. Moreover, the participants' lack of life experience, and living away from their family seemed to contribute more to the culture shock. The "shock" caused them negative emotions and reactions.

Chapman and Pyvis (2005) find that people who experience culture shock usually suffer negative consequences such as tension, feelings of helplessness and depression. This

was evident in the findings, for example one participant said that she felt very stressed when she could not understand the everyday habits and lifestyle at her homestay. The participants were, of course, used to only the behaviours, values, and way of thinking of their own country, so they could not immediately accept and follow a New Zealand lifestyle. Cultural differences created considerable stress for all of the participants (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005).

### **Perceived cultural differences in the adaptation process**

Participants experienced culture shock and associated negative consequences such as feelings of stress. The perceived cultural differences may have stemmed from differences between New Zealand and their home country in the national dimensions of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The criterion to distinguish the differences between cultures is to look at “the role of the individual versus the role of the group” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p.72). Both China and Korea are countries which have a much lower score of individualism than New Zealand. New Zealand has a score of 79 in the individualism dimension, while China scores 20 and Korea scores 18 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). According to Parker et al. (2009), collectivist countries concentrate on interdependence and cooperation between group’s members. In contrast, in an individualist society, individuals are likely to be independent, highlight self-worth and personal success. These cultural values are likely to influence people’s behaviours and thoughts.

People from a collectivist society will have different behaviours and thoughts from those who come from an individualist society. For example, the participants suggested that New Zealanders are more open-minded and direct than people from their own countries. New Zealanders tend to express their feelings and thoughts more easily than people from East Asian countries. East Asian people are not used to expressing themselves openly because they are afraid of doing something wrong that affects the image of their ethnic group. Also, they are worried about offending someone. Thus, the different ways of thinking, influenced by differences in individualist and collectivist cultures, meant that the participants encountered communication problems when dealing with New Zealand locals.

Participants discovered that there were differences not only in communication styles, but also in education. New Zealand emphasises self-directed study approach and critical

thinking while Korea and China have a strong rote-learning approach. People from a collectivist society would be less likely to study individually because they are familiar with cooperation between teachers and students in study. In addition, participants suggest that they are more interested in group study than individual study or speak up in front of class. These differences mean that it could be very challenging for East Asian people to live and succeed in New Zealand culture.

Perceived cultural differences were evident in all aspects of the participants' lives: in their studies, social lives and at home. The participants in this study had not worked previously in their home countries, so they were less likely to notice cultural differences at work between their home countries and New Zealand.

### **Issues affecting the adaptation process**

This section discusses issues that can affect the adaptation process. According to Kim (2001), culture shock is a part of cultural adjustment which is a long term process of adapting and finally being comfortable in a new environment. It would be logical to expect the participants would experience culture shock, however, the important question is how they adapt to a new environment. It is highly likely that culture shock, which causes negative emotions weakens the adaptation process of international students.

According to Earley (2002), adaptation is a person's capability to acquire suitable behaviours to a new culture. Due to different personalities and capabilities (Montagliani & Giacalone, 1998), people experience the adaptation process in different ways. For example, some people may adapt to a new environment very quickly but some people do not. For some participants, it took them a few months to feel comfortable in New Zealand. On the other hand, it took years for other participants to feel comfortable in the new culture. This was evident in the different experiences shared by Mary and Peter. Mary has been in New Zealand for a year, but it took her approximately six months to feel comfortable with New Zealand culture. However, although Peter has been here for seven years, he said that he has been comfortable with the host country only for the last three years. The length of time spent in New Zealand is not a good indicator of how well someone has adapted to a new environment. The ability to adapt to a new culture and lifestyle is based on the skills, abilities and traits which an individual possesses (Montagliani & Giacalone, 1998). It is possible that individual capabilities play a more important role than time in adapting to a new environment.

Language barriers and homesickness are directly linked to the causes of culture shock (Lin, 2006; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). An overwhelming majority of participants reported that the language barrier was a key obstacle slowing down their adaptation process. All participants came from countries where English is not the national language, and therefore had to not only adapt to another culture, but learn to speak easily in English. All participants commented that they faced a language barrier at work, in educational classes, and in daily communication. According to Lee (2008), language competence is highly likely to link with social adaptation and the language competence is considered as key in reducing adaptation problems. Moreover, communication is one way for immigrants and foreign students to adapt to a new environment (McIntyre, 2008). Language was central to the participants' adaptation to New Zealand's environment and was a significant barrier.

Lack of language competence can reduce people's self-confidence as well. According to Lee (2008), language deficit and associated lack of confidence in communication can lead to psychological distress such as depression, and rejection of the new environment. Several participants experienced lack of confidence and motivation to interact with people in New Zealand because of their difficulty in communicating in English. This affects their adaptation because if they do not learn about the New Zealand environment they may never be comfortable in it.

Homesickness is another problem affecting the adaptation process. Homesickness can lead to negative emotions which directly and negatively affect people's adaptation to a new environment (Messina, 2007). It may affect their ability to concentrate and is associated with critical problems in terms of difficulties in adaptation, feeling lonely and sad (Constantines et al., 2005). Many participants experienced the feeling of homesickness. They were very sad and lonely in New Zealand. Some participants experienced homesickness for a long time before becoming comfortable with the new culture and lifestyle. The participants had not lived far away from their parents before, so they were more likely to experience homesickness. The findings suggest that young age and lack of life experience may also contribute to the high level of homesickness. Experiences of homesickness may be greater for the participants in this study because it was their first time away from family who would usually be their main source of support in difficult times. Culture shock and the process of adapting to a new culture can be very challenging especially without family support. Furthermore, homesickness could lead people to be distracted from their study, job and other activities.

Homesickness could probably slow down an individual's ability to fit into a new environment.

Adapting to a new environment may be very challenging for young and inexperienced people. According to Icbay and Kocayoruk (2011) adaptation practices mean cultural adaptation that requires a long-term acculturation in the host culture. Adaptation requires learning behaviours that are suitable and appropriate for a host country's culture. However, when adapting to the host country, it is very probable that they do not know how to behave acceptably and appropriately to fit into the new culture (Chen et al., 2011). One participant said that cultural differences in terms of ways of dealing with things, ways of socialisation meant that she was unsure of how to socialise with local people appropriately. She did not know the acceptable way to behave with local people. The issues of inappropriate behaviours could cause people more problems. For example, if their behaviour appeared strange or inappropriate, this may reduce their confidence further.

It takes time and effort to adapt to a new culture because of numerous challenges. Adjustment or changing plays an important role in adapting to a new environment. People would never adapt to a new culture if they did not change behaviours and thoughts, however this change may happen unconsciously as part of the adaptation process. Changing enables people to gain capability of understanding new culture practices, so they can have behaviours and thoughts fitting in the host country's culture. Many participants have perceived culture differences that would make it more difficult for them to adapt to New Zealand environment. By exploring New Zealand culture, it easier to understand and adapt to it. The participants tried to adapt to New Zealand culture by observing and following local people's behaviours.

As stated in Chapter Two, ethnic discrimination is an additional reason of culture shock affecting adaptation process (Lin, 2006). However, the participants did not mention discrimination as a challenge for their adaptation. It may be because they consider it as a part of cultural differences that they accept, and do not take it as trouble. Another explanation is because they did not experience or recognise that during their adaptation process.



## **Defining work–life balance**

Interestingly, most participants shared similar thoughts on work-life balance. Their definition of work-life balance was different from Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) concept. According to many participants, work-life balance means a balance between work and life activities: it is important to enjoy personal life, not only working all the time. The participants viewed work and life as needing to be separate. For example, when you are working, you should totally focus on work, not on personal life activities and vice versa. The participants have a more simple understanding of work-life balance than the concept described by Greenhaus et al. (2003).

According to participants, concepts of work-life balance in their country are very vague. In their countries, people devote most of their time for working. They do not really concentrate on their personal life activities such as hobbies and relaxation. Long working hours signify commitment to work. It indicates that you are an effective and committed worker. According to Hassan et al. (2010) non-Western people seem to have a high experience of work-life conflict. They cannot balance their work and personal life activities and work and life easily interfere with each other. The long working hours appear to take over their personal time. They seem to accept working hours and therefore they do not focus on achieving work-life balance.

Participants had not thought about work-life balance before coming to New Zealand, however since arrival they recognised the role of work-life balance. Their perception was that you should have leisure time and do what you enjoy rather than focus on working only. Their definition of work-life balance does not agree entirely with Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) concept, but it is possible that the participants do not know much about the work-life balance concept and do not experience high levels of work-life balance issues. They come from countries where work-life balance is not an important issue and therefore they may not fully understand the meaning and role of work-life balance. They suggested a simple understanding of defining work-life balance. However, Greenhaus et al. (2003) investigates a topic which is important in Western countries, so the detail of their concept is a good source for the work-life balance topic in Western-countries. Greenhaus et al. (2003) highlight that an individual can have work-life balance only when he/she succeeds in maintaining time balance, satisfaction and involvement balance.

## **Students and work-life balance**

Although participants' understanding of work-life balance is simpler than Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) concept, their experiences of time management, satisfaction and involvement are similar to the concept. Greenhaus et al. (2003) point out that satisfaction, involvement, and time balance of work and life activities are factors that help people maintain work-life balance. This section describes the important roles of these three factors that affect the work-life balance of participants.

Most of the participants try hard and focus fully on their study and work because they know that they face more challenges than local people, for example language barriers and cultural differences. These challenges mean that they have to be very involved in their jobs. If they do not try hard to achieve their goals for study and work, then they perceive that they will never be successful in these aspects. When people are involved in what they are doing, they will put more effort in to achieving their goals. In other words, involvement has a significant role in achieving successful goals which can lead to satisfaction as the outcome of their study and work.

Satisfaction seems to increase the quality of life because satisfaction is a measure for achievement or success. Satisfaction enables an individual to avoid stress, because the increased level of stress, could lead to the decreased performance of other nonworking activities or at home, and low level of life satisfaction (Rotondo et al., 2003; Chaudhry et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2000). For example, when you are satisfied with something, you experience positive emotions. Moreover, effective time management or time balance for work and life activities is associated with satisfaction. Effective time management can increase quality of work which can lead to satisfaction. For a person's life, especially for international students, satisfaction is a tool to encourage them to achieve goals in their study, work and even personal life activities. When they are in a good mood, it is easier for them to fit in or adapt to a new environment.

According to McPherson and Reed (2007) "life" means any activities outside of paid employment. Based on this definition, study is categorised as "life", however for students, study is an important issue that should be separate from life. Work-life balance seems to be difficult for students to achieve as they are faced with three big components: work, study and personal life. One of the most critical issues that a student has to face with is pressure of time balance (Pocock & Skinner, 2012; Jogaratnam & Buchanan, 2004; Doble & Supriya, 2011). According to Thompson and Bunderson

(2001) time balance between work and non-work life means an adequate distribution of time among the demands of family role, work, study, community and entertainment. Students who are both working and studying may be unable to manage their time effectively as they face demands from work, study and personal life such as family and relationships. Jogaratnam and Buchanan (2004) suggest time pressure increases when several responsibilities need to be met at once. However, the findings of this dissertation are different from what these authors suggest. Most of the participants can manage their time for work, study and personal life very well. They try to allocate time for these activities in the most appropriate way. For example, they prioritise more important activities first, so they still have enough time for the other activities. This way they can avoid time pressure when many tasks need to be done at once.

The ability to prioritise relates to effective time management. Effective time management may be due to the good skills or ability of an individual. Effective time management for work and life activities leads to work-life balance, increasing well-being and quality of life and reducing stress (Ode-Dusseau et al., 2012). Quality of life and stress reduction can enhance life satisfaction. Moreover, some participants report that it was hard for them to manage their time and feel satisfied in their job, study and life, but now they have learnt to manage their time more effectively and feel satisfied with what they have achieved in study, work and personal life. In addition, work-life balance is directly connected to job satisfaction (Sakthivel et al., 2011). Russo (2012) identified that job satisfaction could affect life satisfaction in a negative or positive way depending on the level of job satisfaction. The participants suggest they know how to manage their time effectively and they are satisfied with their current job, their study and their personal life.

Involvement, time balance, and satisfaction balance are significantly linked to the maintenance of work-life balance. The participants allocated their time effectively, got totally involved in what they were doing, and achieved satisfaction in study, work and personal life. It is evident that the participants appear to achieve work-life balance.

### **The relationship between adaptation and work-life balance**

According to Bulgan (2011) the ability to adapt to a host country affects how an individual balances work and life. As discussed above, it is indicated that most of participants succeeded in maintaining work-life balance. Although they did not explain

work-life balance in the same way as Greenhaus et al. (2003), their experience reflects the components of involvement, time balance and satisfaction balance. The main purpose of this study was to investigate how adaptation affects the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand. Participants noted that adaptation affected their work-life balance. Firstly, many did not work until they became more comfortable with New Zealand culture. For example, Olivia said that she has been in New Zealand approximately two years; she has been comfortable with New Zealand for one year. Furthermore, she had been working for just six months. Being comfortable or getting used to a new culture is regarded as successful adaptation. The further along the adaptation process the participants were, the easier it was for them to balance matters of their study, work and personal life. For example, they got used to the ways of thinking of local people; and they learned appropriate and suitable behaviours at work. The more people adapt to a new environment, the better they can maintain their work-life balance. Because they started their job after getting used to New Zealand culture, the adaptation issues such as culture shock and language barriers appeared to not affect their work-life balance.

Adaptation contributes to the success of work-life balance in terms of the maintenance of satisfaction, involvement and time balance. Successful adaptation helps people stay in a positive mood. The failure of adaptation leads to several problems. The issues of adaptation can cause psychological problems relating to culture shock such as stress and depression (Lin, 2006), and rejection of the new environment (Lee, 2008). Before being comfortable with New Zealand culture, the participants faced a lot of adaptation issues which negatively affected their study and personal life. They did not want to go out or socialise with local people due to the language barrier. They preferred to stay at home and did not want to explore the new world. In addition, they could not understand lectures in class. It was very difficult time for them living in New Zealand. Once they got used to the New Zealand environment, they became more confident and began to thrive. They were able to achieve their goals as the difficulties and challenges living in New Zealand reduced. Success in achieving goals leads to satisfaction which is an important part of work-life balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Furthermore, when people get used to a new environment, it becomes easier for them to plan their tasks and goals. They can manage their time more effectively and they can get involved in what they are doing without any interference. Everything seems to be easier to handle once someone adapts to a new environment.

## **Summary**

This chapter has provided a clear picture of the issues for the work-life balance of international students in New Zealand. It followed their journey from the first stage of adaptation, culture shock, to the point at which they feel comfortable as well as the implications for work-life balance at these points was discussed.

The participants first arrived in New Zealand with different emotions; furthermore the most critical obstacle the participants faced was culture shock. Culture shock exists when people perceive cultural differences. All participants experienced difficulties in communication at work, study and their personal lifetime. Moreover, being far away from family was not easy for the participants as they suffered from homesickness. These two reasons caused seriously negative emotions that slowed down the adaptation process.

It took time for the participants to adapt to New Zealand culture. Successful adaptation relies on personal skills, capabilities and abilities (Montagliani & Giacalone, 1998), and it is not necessarily related to the length of time length spent in New Zealand. Adaptation needs suitable adjustment in terms of learning appropriate behaviours to fit into a new culture.

Adaptation is directly connected with the work-life balance. Since being in New Zealand, the participants had become aware of the important role of work-life balance. They also suggested that they recognised a link between adaptation and work-life balance. Adaptation is important to maintain their work-life balance. Once they felt comfortable with the New Zealand environment, everything has seemed to be easier to achieve, especially the maintenance of work-life balance. Successful adaptation enabled them to manage their time more effectively, to get more involved in what they are doing, and to achieve satisfaction.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how adaptation affects the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand. Below are research questions that addressed in the study

1. How do East Asian students define work-life balance?
2. What is students' experience of work-life balance?
3. How have students experienced the adaptation process?
4. Has adaptation impacted on work-life balance?

The structured interviews with nine participants from China and Korea were used. Questions relating to cultural differences, issues of adaptation, work-life balance were asked to investigate the main topic. There were significant findings that answered the main topic question. Seven key themes were identified after thematic analysis. The stories of how the participants adapted to New Zealand and the link between adaptation and work-life balance were explored.

When first coming to New Zealand, participants experienced different feelings in terms of excitement and being terrified and scared. They expected new things which they could enjoy and learn. In contrast, the excitement did not last long once they realised culture differences negatively affected their adaptation process. Language barriers and homesickness were two common issues of adaptation discussed in Chapter Five. Their consequences such as negative emotions, psychological distress affected aspects of East Asian students' life. The cultural differences between individualism and collectivism brought many challenges for East Asian students: difficulties in different study approach, different behaviours and thoughts. Although the participants faced a lot of challenges, they tried to avoid difficulties by adjusting themselves to fit into New Zealand culture. When they were comfortable with New Zealand environment, they were more confident to enjoy their life and study, and could find a job. For some participants, it was not a perfect job at first as they were still impacted by a language barrier. Moreover, since being in New Zealand, they had learned how to maintain their work-life balance. Importantly, they also saw a link between adaptation and work-life balance. The more people can adapt to New Zealand, the easier they can achieve work-life balance. For example, getting to know local people behaviours helps them to behave appropriately with their local co-workers. This finding answered the key research

question. Adaptation plays an important role in the maintenance of work-life balance of the East Asian students. Adapting to New Zealand is associated with successful achievement of study, work and personal life. In addition, effective time management and full involvement along with satisfaction are associated with the maintenance of work-life balance.

The topic of non-Western people's work-life balance has not been focused on by researchers. Most of studies about work-life balance are emphasized in a Western context. This study pointed out how East Asian students perceived work-life balance. They realised the important role of work-life balance in successful achievement. The maintenance of work-life balance in terms of time balance, satisfaction, involvement balance also leads people to succeed in achieving their goals. People from individualist society such as New Zealand try to have their own time of relaxation, but people from China and Korea (collectivists) devote most of their time for working, to earn money for them and support their families. Family obligation has a higher priority than personal life. The difference creates a gap between the perceptions of work-life balance between two types of culture. It may be the answer why people from collectivist societies do not focus on work-life balance in terms of having their own time for relaxation.

Although the participants suggested definition of work-life balance is simpler than Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) concept, it was interesting that their experiences of time management, satisfaction and involvement are similar to the concept. What the participants experienced is evidence that they experience work-life balance in accordance with Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) concept.

### **Significance of the study**

This current research particularly concentrated on work-life balance affected by adaptation process. The findings of the study are useful for tertiary education administrators. This contributes to two key areas in work-life balance research: students and non-Western perspectives. The findings suggest that the adaptation process significantly impacts work-life balance. The success of adapting to a new culture is positively associated with the maintenance of work-life balance. Although this is a small scale study, the findings suggest that work-life balance is a Western concept that is not expressed in East Asian countries. The findings also show that for students, work-life balance model should separate "study" from the "life" aspect of work-life balance.

By understanding what international students have experienced in a new culture, universities and schools can adopt appropriate counselling programs that help them to easily adapt to New Zealand. The study could be a good reference for researchers who want to explore either adaption or work-life balance. Additionally, the findings are also useful for employers who want to hire international students. They can be more aware of issues for international students that can affect work performance. They can understand why their employees may have different behaviour and thought from local people.

New Zealand has become an attractive place for international students to study. The number of international students has increased recently. The study provides useful information about East Asian students which the government can use to set up programs that assist international students in adaptation and maintaining work-life balance such as wellbeing consultancy programs for international students.

## **Limitations**

This research has contributed more information on experiences of international students. It explores how adaptation affects the work-life balance of East Asian students which has not been studied in detail before. On the other hand, there are still some limitations that may weaken the findings of the study.

The first limitation is lack of family obligations in the work-life balance of participants because the researcher aimed to interview students who were separated from their family, the side of family involvement was not highlighted because students did not have any immediate family present which reduced obligations or commitments.

Another limitation of this study is the number of participants which is small due to the small scale of the dissertation. The researcher was limited by the small scale and chose to focus on participants from two countries: Korea and China. The decision to focus on two rather than one country was in order to explore whether or not there may be significant differences in the experiences of students from these countries. This creates two potential limitations to the research. One, Korea and China do not represent all countries in the East Asia region; and two dividing a small number of participants into two further groups could lessen the possibility of common themes arising in the analysis. However, the countries were chosen in accordance with the criteria set out in



Chapter Three which means that according to Hofstede's (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) criteria, similarities in cultural responses to work-life balance could be expected. For example, the participants from these countries think that people from their countries do not focus on work-life balance, they devote most of their time for working.

During the interview process, a few questions did not get effective answers as the participants responded in short answers which limited the information available. Some of them were too shy to be able answer the questions fully. The relative positions of the interviewer (post graduate study) and interviewees (undergraduate study) may have limited the information provided by the participants. The participants may not have wanted to share experiences of failure of adaptation and maintaining work-life balance because they did not want to show that they had failed in study or working in New Zealand. The interviewer had to encourage them to talk more by giving good feedback about the interviewees and their stories, and emphasising the importance of their experiences and views to the research. This approach helped participants to feel more comfortable and in some cases resulted in more in-depth responses. The interviews were held in a meeting room at AUT which may have made the participants feel uncomfortable. It is possible that a different venue such as public places (café) makes students feel more comfortable and therefore speak more easily. This will be considered in any future research.

It took more time than expected to interpret data collected due to the participants' accents, this was both in the analysis and during the interviews themselves. Data collected also affected the interpretations in terms of irrelevant information. Some participants provided information that was not necessary for the study. Hence, information needed to be sorted which required more time to work with it.

Structured interviews were used to gather data in this research. This was chosen because of time efficiency and consistency across multiple interviews. This method was appropriate given the experience of the researcher, the size of the research and also the participants. As all participants were students from China and Korea studying in New Zealand, English was their second language. As undergraduate students they may also have been less familiar with research. The term 'work-life balance' is a term used in English and in Western based literature. It may not have the same meaning or usage in other countries. The researcher therefore was careful to use open-ended questions and aimed to structure the questions to avoid leading the participants to respond in a

particular manner. It was thought that this may also make the students' more comfortable in the research process because it would ask for their experience rather than their opinion of a concept. One limitation of this approach is that some participants did not fully understand the questions, so they did not answer it in the depth desired. The researcher had to explain the questions more clearly in order to help them understand the questions. Moreover, using structured interviews may also limit information the participants wanted to share. The use of structured interviews should be reconsidered for future research.

### **Future research**

This study has explored how adaptation affects work-life balance. It concludes that it has an important impact on the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand. The more successfully students can adapt to New Zealand, the better work-life balance they can achieve.

The study reveals a further gap in research that could be specifically investigated in the future. There were only two countries (China and Korea) involved in this research. The topic could be developed by recruiting more people from other East Asian countries, hence providing a wider view of issues relating to this topic. Non-Western people appear to have high experience of family-work interference (Hassan et al., 2010). Therefore, the researcher suggests that the family obligations in work-life balance of East Asian students should be explored in future research. The topic may be more deeply investigated by addressing work-life balance of either male or female students. Furthermore, the researcher also suggests investigating the relationship between adaptation and work-life balance in terms of how work-life balance can affect the adaptation process.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Interview questions

1. How long have you been in New Zealand?
2. Do you have a full time or part time job?
3. Are you full time or part time student?
4. How long have you been doing your job?
5. What is difference between your life in here and in your country?
6. Are there any differences in study attitudes between NZ and your country?  
Could you give me an example?
7. What were your reactions to new environment when you first came to New Zealand?
8. Tell me about your experience in NZ. Has it been difficult or easy? Can you give me an example?
9. Do you think cultural differences have influenced how you have adjusted? If so how?
10. Have you changed yourself to be more like New Zealanders? If so how?
11. What do you think about your adaptation to New Zealand?
12. Do you feel comfortable with NZ culture now?
13. How long have you felt that? (If Not do you think you will)
14. In your opinion, what do you think work-life balance is?
15. What do you think about your time management of work/life/study?
16. Do you have enough time for work/ life /study?
17. Do you see any conflicts between your work/life/study? If yes, could give me an example?
18. Which is more important to you? Work/life/study? And why?
19. Are there any links between adapting to New Zealand life and dealing with work-life balance? Could you give me some examples?
20. In general, how satisfied are you with your life?
21. How satisfied are you with your work?
22. How satisfied are you with your study?

## Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

# Participant Information Sheet



### Date Information Sheet Produced:

14<sup>th</sup> August 2012

### Project Title

A case of how adaptation affects the work-life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand.

### An Invitation

Dear participants,

My name is An Khoa Truong Nguyen. I am a Master of Business student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I am currently conducting a research project for my Master degree. This research will investigate how adaptation to life in New Zealand affects the work life balance experience of East Asian students. I plan to collect people's thoughts and experiences through interviews. I am looking for potential participants to join my interviews of this topic. I invite you to be part of this study if you meet these requirements:

1/ you are living in New Zealand but originally from the East Asian region (e.g. China, Japan, and Korea).

2/ you are studying and working at the same time.

3/ Interviews will be conducted in English so you need to be a confident English speaker.

It is voluntary to participate in this research and you may withdraw at any time prior the completion of data collection 31<sup>st</sup> November 2012.

### What is the purpose of this research?

This research aims to investigate how adaptation to the New Zealand environment affects the work life balance of East Asian students in New Zealand. This research will contribute to a Masters' degree in Business. A summary of the results will be available for all participants, and will likely form a conference paper and perhaps a journal article.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Dear participants,

You are chosen for this research as a student from China, Japan, or Korea who is working and studying at the same time. You are either known to me or to someone in my personal networks.

### What will happen in this research?

You will be involved in my research as information sharer. One to one interviews will be conducted which I will ask you a number of predetermined questions about your reflections and

experiences since arriving in New Zealand. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. If you give your consent the interviews will be recorded by an audio recorder.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

The research investigates how adaptation affects the work life balance of participants. Thus, some, slight emotional discomfort may occur as some memories of the process of adapting and some issues work life balance recalled. However, this will be ameliorated by the voluntary nature of participation in the research and also by the fact that participants are free to disclose as much or as little information as they wish. Structured interview questions are less likely to elicit as much personal or sensitive information as in-depth interviews, for example.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you do not want to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable, you have the right not to answer without any consequences. Moreover, you will be able to withdraw at any time before the completion of data collection.

### **What are the benefits?**

You will play an important role in sharing your experience in order to enable me the experience of conducting this research for a postgraduate qualification. It will also highlight work-life experiences of students that are often overlooked. This may result in information and support for East Asian students for a smoother adaptation to New Zealand. As summaries of real cases are made public then support for East Asian students may be enhanced by the University and wider community. It could be a great benefit to you, and also to other incoming East Asian students in the future.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Your real name will not be used in the research. Fake names will be used to refer to your case. Your information provided in the interviews will be absolutely confidential. Your privacy will be first priority. No personal information that may reveal and your identity will be used.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

Time is the only cost participating in this research. It will only take approximately 30 minutes to complete the interviews.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

It is completely voluntary to participate in the research. Please contact me at the email below if you are interested in contributing your experiences to this important topic. The interview will be undertaken early October but please contact me within 2-3 weeks indication your interest or if you have any questions about the research.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this research, please email me via [rqr3848@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rqr3848@aut.ac.nz). Before the interviews, you will be given a Consent Form where you will sign the agreement of participating in this research and if you agree to being recorded.

### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

The research findings are to be included in the Master's dissertation (available in AUT library). A summary of the findings will also be sent to you by email, if you indicate it at the time of the interview.

### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, **Dr Katherine Ravenswood**, [kravensw@aut.ac.nz](mailto:kravensw@aut.ac.nz), 921 999 ext 5064.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Dr Rosemary Godbold, [rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz) , 921 9999 ext 6902.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Researcher: An Khoa Truong Nguyen

Email's address: [rqr3848@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rqr3848@aut.ac.nz)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

**Project Supervisor : Dr Katherine Ravenswood**

**Email's address:** [kravensw@aut.ac.nz](mailto:kravensw@aut.ac.nz)

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEK Reference number *type the reference number*.**