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Cultural diversity and the international student at Australian universities: the role of assessment and learning approaches

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Objectives

This study explores international students' perceptions of and attitudes toward learning approaches and assessment practices from the perspective of power distance and uncertainty avoidance cultures and provides insight into the difficulties they encounter.

Rationale

A critical challenge for today's tertiary education sector is to develop and implement assessment and learning practices that foster and nurture student competencies that are reflective of the complexities and tasks relevant to industries operating in a global environment.

Methodology

Focus groups containing a cross-section of students from Asian countries were conducted within the context of a second-year undergraduate marketing research class.

Implications

The study provides evidence that tertiary institutions need to continue to utilise less formal and more flexible learning approaches in terms of student engagement and student–educator relationships. A conceptual framework is presented exploring the relationship between cultural diversity, perceptions of assessment alternatives and assessment effectiveness. The results of the study are currently being used in a review of the learning and assessment approaches used in our undergraduate marketing units and extend existing research in the cultural inclusions arena.