

SHOULD I STAY IN CANADA? CAREER INFLUENCES ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' DECISION-MAKING

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International students in Canada



- 79,459 new international students entered Canada in 2008
- 178,181 international students living in Canada
- 17,829 post-grad work permits issued
- Targets for recruitment = 5-25%
- In 2000, an estimated 1.8 million international students were enrolled in educational institutions around the world, and those numbers are expected to quadruple by 2025.

Why international education?

- ❑ To build international relations
- ❑ To diffuse knowledge among cultures
- ❑ To develop foreign-based skill sets
- ❑ To foster independence, open-mindedness, and self-reflection
- ❑ **Enhance career opportunities**
- ❑ International education enhances career opportunities and the acquisition of specific marketable skills.



Influences on international education



- International students' career decisions are influenced by:
 - ◇ familial pressures
 - ◇ sponsorship
 - ◇ immigration status
 - ◇ background preparation
 - ◇ personal expectations.

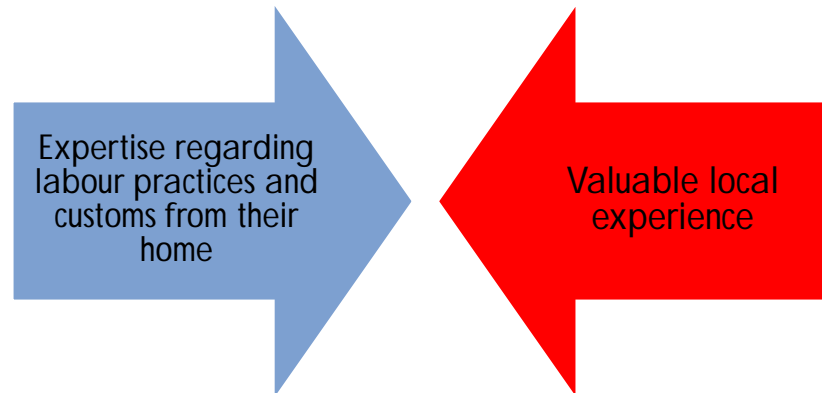
Research program

- The career planning and decision-making needs of international students constitute 4 phases of the transition process



Why is this of interest?

- International students (IS) are now viewed as desirable permanent skilled immigrants.
- IS bring:



- Research on IS has typically emphasized the initial phase of cross-cultural adjustment.
- Minimal research is available about the experiences of international students in the final stage of their educational programs.

Current Research Study

Purpose:

- ▶ To determine key influences on international students' career decisions.
- ▶ Identify the types of formal and informal support systems that enhance their success in securing employment and implementing plans for permanent immigration to Canada.



What students told us...



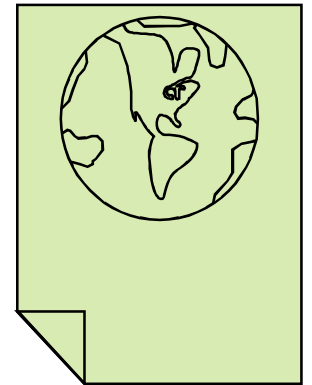
- 19 students in their final semester
- Intent to secure employment and pursue full-time immigration
- 80% graduate students
- China (8), India (3), Mexico (2), Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Peru, Iran, Columbia, and Taiwan
- 11 males, 8 females
- Age ranges 21-38
- Semi-structured interview and critical incidents

The decision to stay

- Better job opportunities
 - ▣ Individual responsibility
 - ▣ Context of family considerations

Critical Incidents

- Enhanced quality of life
- Career-related incentives
- Enhanced work environments
- Safety and political stability



Enhanced Quality of Life



- Cleaner environment, slower pace of life, more freedom, other immigrants like it here, friendly people).

“And during my volunteer work a lot of immigrants, because I worked with a lot of immigrants. And they’ve already been here for a few years and I think the most thing I hear from them is that they really love this country. Because they said that here, the environment is very good and the social welfare is very good. And people here are very friendly.” -J. (age 21)

Career related incentives



- Degree valued, better financial situation here, others got jobs, monetary gains.

“So when I went back- I just came back from my country. I went to my country over the Christmas, so when I went there, I spent a lot of money though I don't earn a lot of money here. But I could spend a lot of money, because the currency is- yeah, there is lots of difference between these two currencies. It was really big and also, like I was feeling myself as a rich man. Yeah, it's kind of a different feeling. It's I feel guilty to feel bad, but it's nice” -M. (age 23).

Enhanced Work Environment

- Paid for over-time, employee protection, negative work experiences back home).

“I feel most of people, after they immigrate, when you work here, it’s worth your effort because it pays better than China. Sometimes if you work in China, you work so hard and then why I even can’t support myself. But in Canada, I feel like as long as you go to work, no matter you go to some labor work or some professional work, at least you can support yourself and then you can keep yourself a very standard life” -H. (age 26)

Safety and Political Stability



- Low crime rate, non-corrupt government.

“I find the people are much more helping. And the environment is very safe. Like I feel safe if I go for a walk or if I’m just going around here. I feel more comfortable just being by myself, because I live here myself” -J. (age 25).

Perceived Barriers

- ❑ Cultural barriers
- ❑ Language
- ❑ Fear of unemployment
- ❑ Missing family
- ❑ Integration into society
- ❑ Integration into employment setting
- ❑ Ambiguity of job search process
- ❑ Discrimination, or not?



What they wanted...

- ❑ Services specific to international student needs
- ❑ Services specific to needs at graduation
- ❑ Information on immigration process
- ❑ Help with job search process
- ❑ Concrete help to access local labour market
- ❑ Better understanding of cultural nuances



Summary of preliminary results



- Better job opportunities and the high quality of life prompted IS to consider staying in Canada.
- Most IS have not made employment plans for staying in Canada.
- Those who have made plans have had (generally) negative experiences (i.e., cultural barriers, confusion about application process, racism, etc).

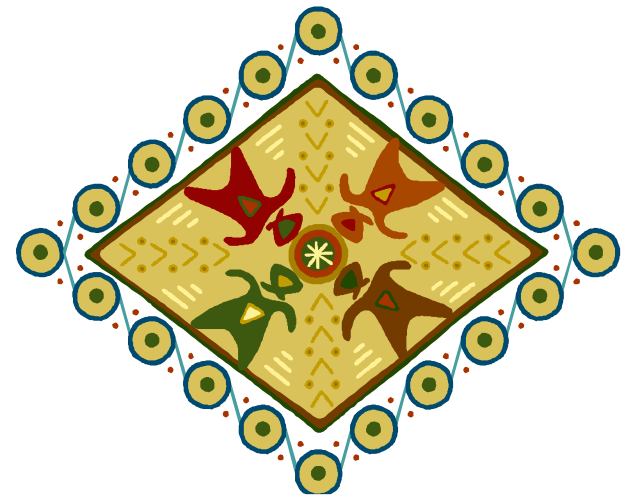
Implications



- ❑ Students should be preparing for future career options, 2.5 months and little preparation
- ❑ Develop career planning and decision-making skills
- ❑ Programs and services are required to help international students plan for their current and future career choices
- ❑ Personnel need to be informed about appropriate resources and methods for career planning and decision-making.

Next Steps

- ❑ On-line collection of data, different data collection format
- ❑ Follow-up interviews with participants
- ❑ What is the post-graduation experience of career transition to pursuing employment and permanent immigration?



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