

Canadian Higher Education Internationalization: Experiences of Chinese Students

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of international students in a master's program. We collected data from students through a questionnaire, which asked the following and other questions: Why did they leave their own country? Were they interested in becoming permanent residents of Canada upon graduation? The questionnaire also asked students to indicate whether they agreed with 26 positive statements about the program. In addition, students were invited to make comments about the program's strengths and weaknesses. Most students believed that they had a positive experience of undertaking graduate studies in Canada, but they also made suggestions for improvement. Based on the data, we make recommendations on how to improve the program. We also discuss the process, extent, and benefits of Canadian higher education internationalization and challenges it faces.

Keywords: international education, Chinese students, higher education, master's study, Canada

RESUMÉ: Comprendre le vécu des étudiants internationaux qui suivent le cursus d'un Master, est le tenant de cette analyse. A partir d'un questionnaire, nous avons recueilli les données des étudiants. Les questions du sondage posées étant par exemple : « Quelles sont les raisons qui les ont poussés à quitter leur pays ? Avaient-ils l'intention de devenir résidents canadiens permanents après avoir réussi leurs études ? Dans le questionnaire, on leurs demandait aussi d'indiquer s'ils étaient d'accord sur vingt-six points positifs du cursus. Les étudiants avaient, en plus, la possibilité de faire des remarques sur les points forts et les points faibles du cursus. La plupart des étudiants pensaient avoir vécu une bonne expérience en faisant des études supérieures au Canada mais ils ont aussi proposé des idées pour en améliorer les conditions. A partir des données recueillies, nous apportons des conseils pour améliorer le cursus et abordons aussi les démarches à suivre, l'ampleur, les avantages de la mondialisation et des

difficultés auxquelles il faut faire face pour entreprendre des études supérieures au Canada.

Mots-clés: études à l'étranger, étudiants chinois, études supérieures, le cursus d'un Master, Canada

Introduction

A study conducted by International Association of Universities indicates that 69 % of their institutional respondents state that internationalisation is of higher importance for these institutions (Egron-Polak, 2014). In 2014, the number of international students worldwide surpassed 5 million (Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 2015). Possible factors influencing students to go overseas can be considered as push and pull factors (Gonzalez, Mesanza, & Mariel, 2011). Canada has strong pull factors, such as being a developed English speaking country with a possibility of immigration, considered safer than the United States and less expensive than the United Kingdom.

The purpose of this study was to understand what international students' experiences were in a Master of Education (MEd) program in a Canadian university. International student enrolments in Canadian public postsecondary institutions have been steadily increasing for almost two decades (Statistics Canada, 30 November 2015). Internationalization has become a core strategy of many Canadian institutions, and for the 2013-2014 school year international students accounted for almost 10 % of all postsecondary students in Canada (Statistics Canada, 30 November 2015). Canada accepted 336,497 international students in 2014 (CBIE, 2015). The top benefit of welcoming international students is the infusion of global and diverse perspectives into Canadian education (CBIE, 2015). International students also make a significant contribution to Canadian economy. Across Canada as a whole, international students spend \$8.4 billion a year (Marcus, 2015).

The Canadian federal government decided that universities could bolster their finances by admitting more international students paying higher fees and these students could be a valuable source of well-qualified young workers upon graduation (Economist, 2016). Allocating \$10 million in 2012 to promote international education, the government recommended that Canada double the number of full-time international students by 2022 (CBIE, 2015). In addition, the government seeks to retain a substantial number of international students graduating from Canadian postsecondary programs (CBIE, 2015). For international

students interested in immigrating to Canada, the government seeks to ensure that they receive accurate advice (CBIE, 2015). Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) made it easier for international students to study, work, and become permanent residents in Canada, especially for graduate students (Gopal, 2014). At the 2014 International Education Exhibition in China, for the first time Canada had its own section (Zhao, 2014). In addition to the federal government, provincial governments in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan also have their strategies to attract more international students (CBIE, 2015). In 2014, Association of Canadian Deans of Education announced its *Accord on the Internationalization of Education*, within which the conceptualization of internationalization processes in education is explicitly framed along five inter-related areas of educational practice. The first one is experiences of international mobility (e.g., receiving and sending students, faculty, and staff, among others).

Rationale and Context of the Study

International student enrolments in Canadian public colleges and universities rose 11.4% in 2014/2015 and accounted for over 10% of total enrolments (Statistics Canada, 23 November 2016). However, little research has been undertaken that focuses on international students' experiences. While students are the predominant focus of international education research (Proctor, 2016), their experience remains to be heard (Abdullah, Aziz, & Ibrahim, 2014). International student enrolment often increases without adequate consideration of how the growth will affect capacity to serve and assist these students (Wongtrirat, Ammigan, & Perez-Encinas, 2015).

We continue to learn about international students' experiences in Canada (CBIE, 2009), and there is a need for more research on supporting international students (Jones, 2011). It is important to understand their experiences, so that instructors may gain insights into how to meet their needs. Studies sharing insights, practices, and challenges in internationalization are highly relevant (AUCC, 2007). These studies contribute to building a knowledge base on internationalization of Canadian higher education.

At the Canadian university where this study was conducted, approximately 10 % of the total student population are international students, who are an important and growing component. The vast majority of international students study together with Canadian students, but some study in programs established particularly for them. There was a Master of Education

International Student Program (ISP) in the faculty of education, which recruits students from outside Canada and provides them with knowledge of Canadian and Western education with a focus on educational administration. Students in the International Program take courses arranged specifically for them, but they have the option of auditing courses with Canadian students. Of the 57 students in the 2013-2014 MEd International Student Program there was only one student from Nigeria, and the rest was from mainland China.

The International Student Program (ISP) is 14 months in duration. ISP students start courses in early July and complete their study in the following year at the end of August. Students take two courses in summer, four courses in fall, three courses in winter, and two more courses in spring and summer. Some of them, often those interested in pursuing a doctoral degree, prefer to write a major research paper (MRP) with faculty advisement instead of taking courses only. Out of the 57 ISP students 2 decided to write an MRP, working on their own research projects after taking seven courses. The department hosting the ISP hires language assistants to help ISP students when they write their assignments. It is required that all ISP students work with a language assistant. The department also arranges to have conversation colleagues, who are Canadian MEd students, to have conversations with ISP students regularly to help them improve their oral English and have more interaction with Canadian students. Having a conversation colleague is voluntary. International students in the regular (domestic) MEd program taking courses together with Canadian students do not enjoy the services of language assistants and conversation colleagues, because there is no funding for these services. The department puts a cap, usually six, on the number of international students it admits into the regular (domestic) MEd program every year due to limited capacity to provide extra support to international students.

Methodology

“Surveys can provide us accurate, reliable, and valid data” (Neuman, 2011, p. 309). To collect data from ISP students we designed a survey with three sections. The first section sought personal information such as gender, age, and originating country. It also asked students the following questions: Why did you leave your own country for education? Why did you select Canada? Why did you decide to study in the ISP instead of the regular program? Do you plan to stay in Canada upon graduation? Are you interested in becoming a Canadian permanent resident? What career and

educational goals do you have? The second section asked students to summarize their overall experience in the program by indicating whether they agreed with 26 positive statements about the program. Each statement was accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The higher the total score was, the more positive the student felt about the program. Space was provided following each statement for comment. The third section asked the students to comment on the focus of the program and what they liked and did not like about the program.

After approval was received from the ethics review board at the university, the questionnaire was distributed together with an informed consent form in late April 2014 to students in three ISP classes taking the same course. Two students writing an MRP, not in the classes, also received a copy of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was anonymous because no name was required. A research assistant, who did not know the students, distributed and collected the questionnaire. Students had the right not to complete the questionnaire and not to answer any questions. Out of the 57 ISP students at the faculty, 43 completed the questionnaire, constituting a response rate of 75 %. All the completed questionnaires were usable for the study. Once the questionnaires were collected, we input both the quantitative and qualitative data into an SPSS dataset. We carefully went through all the data several times to analyze them. We calculated the means and standard deviations of students' responses to the 26 statements about the program in the second section to have a general sense of their experiences. We also examined their responses and comments to the questions in the first and third sections to understand their perspectives and opinions about the program's strengths and weaknesses. This is a small-scale descriptive survey study. Since we used a convenience sample (Creswell, 2015), no attempt is made to generalize the results. The results of the data analysis follow.

Results

Of the 43 students that submitted the questionnaire, all were from mainland China. Nine (21%) were male and 34 (79%) were female. The average age of the respondents was about 25 with the youngest being 22 and the oldest being 35. It seemed that the majority of them were young females who recently graduated from their Chinese undergraduate programs.

To the first question: Why did you leave your own country for education? 12 students (28%) responded that they wanted to

experience different education, 9 students (21%) indicated that they left China for a master's degree, 5 (12%) claimed that they wanted to experience new things, 4 (9%) said they did it to improve themselves, 3 (7%) gave a better quality of education as the reason, 2 (5%) did it for future education, 2 (5%) said it was their parents' decision, and the remaining 6 (14%) listed each of these 6 reasons: immigration to Canada, for a better job, for overseas experience, not liking the Chinese education system, for interest, and spend money.

When asked: Why did you select Canada? 14 students (33%) gave high quality of education as the reason, 7 (16%) described Canada as a safe country, 6 (14%) listed possibility of immigration, 6 (14%) cited a good environment, 5 (12%) mentioned friends here, 5 (12%) stated that Canada was not as expensive as other countries, 2 (5%) indicated that the Graduate Record Examination is not required, 2 (5%) referred to parents' suggestion, 2 (5%) commented on a free country, and the remaining 7 (16%) listed each of these reasons: bilingual, near USA, good resources, Niagara Falls, quiet, friendly, and multicultural similar to China. The total percentage is greater than 100 because a few students gave more than one reason.

To the question: Why did you decide to study for an MEd degree in educational administration? 14 (33%) students listed interest, 13 (30%) referred to their undergraduate major, 4 (9%) described the application process as easy, 2 (5%) needed a master's degree, 2 (5%) desired to be a teacher, 2 (5%) thought it would be helpful for future career, 1 (2%) said father was a teacher and principal, and 1 (2%) claimed studying educational administration could do more for society. Again, the total percentage is greater than 100 because a few of them gave more than one reason.

To the question: Why did you decide to study in the ISP, not the regular program? 8 students (19%) said there were not many choices, 8 (19%) indicated that the agent who helped them during application decided they should apply to the ISP, 8 (19%) stated that their English proficiency did not meet the requirement of the regular program, 4 (9%) said the application for the ISP was easy, 3 (7%) also applied to the regular program but was not admitted, 3 (7%) thought the regular program might be difficult for them, 3 (7%) believed the ISP would be more appropriate, 1 (2%) stated that the ISP was faster, and 1 (2%) did not know the regular program was available.

When asked whether they intended to stay in Canada upon graduation, 18 students (42%) would stay, 9 (21%) were not sure,

8 (19%) would return to China, 5 (12%) would stay for a couple of years but eventually return, and 3 (7%) would stay if finding a job. When asked whether they were interested in becoming permanent residents of Canada, 34 (79%) responded, yes, 3 (7%) were a little interested, 1 (2%) would consider if finding a life partner, but 4 (9%) responded, no.

When asked about goals upon graduation, 15 (35%) students intended to have an education related job, 10 (23%) wanted to be a teacher, 4 (9%) were not sure, 3 (7%) wanted to work in early childhood education, 3 (7%) intended to be an administrator, 3 (7%) just wanted to find a job, 1 (2%) planned to get into a public college, 1 (2%) wanted to be a strong person, 1 (2%) wanted to be a software engineer, and 1 (2%) intended to pursue a career of interest.

The 43 students indicated on a Likert scale whether they agreed with 26 positive statements about the program. The scale had five choices from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The higher the mean on each scale, the more respondents agreed. The mean of the responses is 3.51 for the first statement, "the whole program is well structured", indicating very weak agreement. Three students made comments: the program is intensely structured, thus time for deep learning is limited; it can be more practical; and they can have more courses and more opportunities to take courses with Canadian students.

For the statement "the MEd (ISP) offers sufficient English language support" the mean is 3.49, indicating the majority of them were not sure. Five students made comments: their language assistant was not with them all the time, too many students for one language assistant, language assistants were always busy handling too many students, yes there was language support but there was inadequate English environment, and "my language assistant did an excellent job to help me with my English".

The mean is 3.6 for the statement "the conversation colleague opportunity is very helpful", indicating rather weak agreement. Only one student commented that they spoke Chinese among themselves. For the statement "the program has increased my understanding of Canadian education" the mean is 4.26, indicating robust agreement. Five students commented: totally; only superficial things; different teaching style and different attitude to learning; not really increased my understanding because almost all of us are Chinese; it helped my understanding of Canadian education to some extent, especially the field trip, but apart from case studies not much has been explained about Canadian education in a theoretical way.

For the statement “it has broadened my understanding of different approaches to education” the mean is 4.23, indicating agreement. There was only one comment: critical thinking. The mean is 3.37 for the statement “the courses are well organized and are connected in a meaningful way”, indicating the majority were not sure. Six students commented: partially agreed with the statement, the course of 5P71 was not necessary, the course of policy and organization was not useful, the courses were theoretical and increased their knowledge but not skill or practice, the courses were not well organized, and they learned not only about education but also about organization and policy.

The mean is 3.86 for the statement “the amount of group work required in the program is valuable”, indicating weak agreement. Two students made comments. One said they learned to work collaboratively, but the other said there was too much group work in one course. For the statement “feedback is prompt” the mean is 3.88, indicating weak agreement. Two students made comments: overall it was, and within 24 hours. The mean is 3.49 for the statement “the support necessary to succeed in the program is sufficient”, indicating the majority were not sure. There were two comments: One wondered what support there was and the other hoped they could have career guidance support. The mean is 3.77 for the statement “the duration of the program is adequate in length”, indicating weak agreement. One student commented that it was too short to develop an insight into Canadian education.

For the statement “the objectives of the program are clearly specified” the mean is 3.47, indicating the majority were not sure. Three students commented: one talked about not becoming a principal, the other had no idea, and the last one asked, “A leader? An educator?” The mean is 3.49 for the statement “the program includes adequate culturally enriching experiences”, indicating again the majority were not sure. Two students made comments: one hoped that they could have it once a month, but the other claimed that it seemed to be less cultural experience but still good to learn knowledge. The mean is 3.74 for the statement “the program offers sufficient academic supervision”, indicating rather weak agreement.

For the statement “the opportunity to meet Canadian students is adequate” the mean is 2.21, the lowest among the 26 items, indicating disagreement. Four students made comments. One said almost no, one was not sure Canadian students meant students on campus or in schools, one said school visit was an effective way, and the last one stated that if they wanted to register for a domestic course with Canadian students, they needed to drop a useful course

and they had no choice to drop. Meanwhile, auditing regular courses was not encouraged. The mean is 2.37 for the statement, “the program offers enough social activities”, indicating disagreement again. Three students commented: almost, needed more, and not enough.

The mean is 3.19 for the statement “I would recommend the program to other international students”, indicating the majority were not sure. There was only one comment: It depended on the need of everyone. The mean is 4.6 for the statement, “my homestay experience is positive”, indicating strong agreement. The mean is 3.23 for the statement “the program has met my expectations”, indicating the majority were not sure. Two students commented: did learn new knowledge, and some courses met expectations.

For the statement “my graduate studies experience has been a positive one” the mean is 4.02, indicating agreement. Three students commented: enjoyable, enjoyed staying at the university and appreciated everything, and enjoyed classmates and professors but not the structure. The mean is 3.53 for the statement “the program has helped me achieve my academic goals”, indicating very weak agreement. There was only one comment: “I did learn a lot from the program.”

For the statement “the program started at a convenient time of the year” the mean is 3.56, indicating very weak agreement again. Six students commented: summer was a wonderful time, starting in July was earlier than counterpart programs in other universities, students had to follow the schedule, starting in July followed by a month not doing any work was a waste of time, and two students commented that spring and summer bus service was less frequent. The mean is 4.02 for the statement “I have gained a better understanding of academic research in education”, indicating agreement. For the statement “I have learnt a great deal about academic writing” the mean is 4.16, indicating agreement. The mean is 4.02 for the statement “I am better able to inquire, question and reflect”, indicating agreement again.

The mean is 4.33 for the statement “I am better able to do a presentation”, indicating robust agreement. The only comment: yes, that was an achievement. The mean is 4.16 for the statement “I am better able to take part in a discussion”, indicating agreement. Of the 26 statements in the questionnaire, students agreed with 17, were not sure about 7, and disagreed with 2. The grand mean for all the 26 items is 3.68, indicating rather weak overall agreement with the positive statements.

In the third section of the questionnaire there were six items. The first item asked students to comment on the focus of the program being placed on "administration and leadership". Thirty-five students made comments. Over half (19 out of 35) indicated the focus of the program was useful. Six believed the focus needed to be more practical. Four thought the focus was not very useful because most of them had no working experiences. Two said what they learned could not contribute to helping them find a job. Each of four students said the following: there was no real focus, leadership could not be taught, it was a waste of time, and the program was too expensive.

The second item asked students to indicate what key ideas they had taken from the program. Thirty-nine students responded. Some of them listed two, three, or even four things, while others mentioned only one thing. These were the key ideas they took from the program, in the order of frequency from mentioned 10 times to only once: critical thinking, organizational theories, leadership theory, reflective education, creative thinking, policy cycle, leadership approaches, style, and philosophy, transformational leadership, respecting different opinions, making a conclusion based on facts, building capacity, changing capacity needs a long time, students centred classroom, more questions and discussion in class, life-long learning, relating cost to outcome, educational change, organizational change, change is a process not an event, Western educational theories, school culture, teachers' behaviour, administration theories, cultural comparison, teachers' responsibility and function, leverage for immigration, more communication with class, academic writing, APA, conducting presentations, visiting local schools, being leaders in all areas, inclusive education, a leader plays an important role in effective organization change, inspiring students, it is worth to try distributed leadership in China, and the values, beliefs and views of the leader are the cores of an organization.

The third item asked students about which parts of the program they found most valuable. Forty-one students made comments. Again, some students listed two or three things, but others listed only one thing. Fourteen students listed visiting local schools and observing teaching as the most valuable. Nine students listed one experienced professor's courses as the most valuable. Eight mentioned that the way classes were taught was the most valuable. The other things listed as the most valuable, in the order of their frequency from mentioned three times to once, are: organization theories and organizational policies, culture and basic knowledge about administration and leadership, organizational

change, how to conduct presentation, the research course, the exit course, leadership theory, international comparative education, education philosophies, major research paper, and APA. One commented, "All good", but another said, "Nothing".

The fourth item asked students about which parts of the program they found least valuable. Thirty-five students responded. Eleven students said the course of effecting change was least valuable. The other things listed as the least valuable, in the order of their frequency from mentioned three times to once, are: reflective practitioner course, APA, repetition of contents between courses, some instructors did not teach in a valuable way, a lot of theories but no practical exercise, 5N99, writing essays, lack of working experiences, the course about education philosophy, international and comparative education course, invitational leadership course, the two July courses, and some professors valued older students with work experience. Four students indicated that they did not find anything least valuable.

The fifth item asked students whether there were things they would like to see added or deleted. Of the 36 students that responded 22 wanted a variety of things added. In the order of frequency mentioned, from nine times to once, they are: more opportunities to study together with Canadian students, more practical courses, more students from different countries, more school visits, more content on Canadian education, options in selecting courses, volunteer opportunities in schools, teaching skills, and curriculum design. Each of five students wanted one thing deleted: APA course, 5N99, invitational leadership course, reflective practitioner course, and homework.

The last item asked students to include any additional comments. Only 13 students commented, but some of them made two or even three suggestions. Two students wanted the program to be more practical. Two students wanted a co-op component. One student wanted the program to last longer. One wanted the program to help them be clearer about their career goals. One wanted more help when they were ill. One complained that the biggest problem was they could not find any related jobs in Canada. One said she had learned a lot from the program but the July courses could be longer. One indicated that some instructors were not useful. The last comment suggested more options in auditing regular courses and more connection to local schools.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Discussion

Based on the data, we conclude that, generally speaking, students in the ISP participating in the study agreed that their

graduate study experience was a positive one, although their overall agreement to the positive statements was weak. They learned to think critically, most professors provided prompt feedback, and the program broadened their understanding of different approaches to education. However, most of them were not happy that there was inadequate interaction with Canadian students. The most important reason why they selected Canada was the quality of Canadian higher education. This corroborates what CBIE (2015) finds. Another important reason was that they considered Canada safe, which confirms the finding of an earlier study (Bond et al., 2007). Five students mentioned that Canada was not as expensive as other countries, probably Britain and America.

In responding to the question why they decided to study in the ISP, over half of them indicated that they either did not know they could apply to the regular MEd program or they preferred to apply to the ISP, thinking it was more appropriate. It is true that it is easier to get into the ISP than the regular program. The number of Chinese applying to the regular program has been increasing significantly in recent years. The department can only admit a fraction of the applicants, because working with international students means more work (AUCC, 2007). The department does not have the capacity to work with many international students. One challenge of internationalization for Canadian universities is a lack of resources (Weber, 2007). With built-in services such as the language assistants and conversation colleagues the ISP is more manageable. With the same qualifications it is easier to enter the ISP than the regular program, although the admission requirements are actually the same.

Based on the findings of this study, we recommend that the program enhance the functioning of language assistants and conversation colleagues to facilitate students' growth and their interaction with Canadian students and the local community. Difficulties are manifest among international students in listening and oral communication in English, lack of knowledge of local contextual references, inadequate vocabulary, and the struggles to meet the requirements for academic writing (Sawir et al., 2012). In Canada 56 % of international students say they have no Canadian friends (Marcus, 2015). A lack of integration between international students and members of the host society remains a recurrent theme (Wright & Schartner, 2013). We need an agenda for integration and the agenda for integration needs to be applied to the classroom as well as the campus (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2015). We need to create opportunities and conditions to let

international students interact more with Canadian students and the local people.

We recommend that the duration of visiting local schools be extended from one semester to two so that students can have more practical experience in local schools, increasing their understanding of Canadian education. The data indicate clearly that visiting schools was very popular among ISP students and they believed they learned a great deal from these visits. Additionally, we recommend that the department adjust the ISP so that it is more practical, instead of mostly theory oriented. We also recommend that the department make stronger efforts to recruit students from different countries for the ISP to diversify the student population. Bamber (2014) states that female Chinese graduate students in accounting and finance programs in Britain also want to have international students from other countries in their classes so that their programs are more diverse.

More students listed the most valuable things in the program, however, there seemed to be a contradiction between students' general agreement with the statement "my graduate studies experience has been a positive one" and their dissatisfaction with not having adequate interaction with Canadian students and other issues. It seemed that the overall experience was positive but respondents had problems with specific aspects of the program. Individual in-depth interviews could find out what they really thought about the specifics, which can be considered in future research. Future research can also investigate career paths of international students, as there has been no rigorous study to trace the career paths of these students (Kosmützky & Putty, 2016).

With the number of international students increasing, it is important that support services for them grow similarly (Wongtrirat, Ammigan, & Perez-Encinas, 2015). With the growing number of international students, university administrators and academics need to identify ways to enable international students to be successful. Data from this study indicate that there is much room for improvement in the program to meet students' needs. In addition, enactments of internationalisation must be viewed with an awareness of the power relations in which international and intercultural relations are enmeshed (Ilieva, Beck, & Waterstone, 2014).

Out of the 57 students in the ISP, 56 were Chinese. China was the main source country of international students, accounting for 3 in 10 (30.4%) international postsecondary students in Canada in 2014/2015 (Statistics Canada 23 November 2016). Chinese going overseas for education increased significantly from

approximately 130,000 in 2007 to over 520,000 in 2015 (Chen & Sun, 2010; Sun & Shi, 2016). China is the most important source of international students in the world (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2015).

We believe further internationalizing Canadian higher education is beneficial for both Canadians and international students, but we need to be careful not to follow Australia and Britain, where most universities are public sector at home but operate as commercial ventures abroad (Bashir, 2007). As leading providers of international education (OECD, 2015), with pressure to make money from international students (Robertson, 2010), British universities had 13 % of their revenue from international students (Economist, 2016), from which a significant part is central to the prosperity of these universities (Walker, 2010). However, international education is Australia's second largest export industry, worth 15 billion US dollars in 2015, a quarter of all its students are from abroad (Economist, 2016), and Australia has become a by-word for making money out of international students (Marginson, 2012). In this study one student described the ISP as expensive. International education is perhaps the aspect of higher education most associated with markets and competition (Scott, 2016). As revenue-generating agents, international students' contribution by and large drives the expansion of higher education today (Abdullah, Aziz, & Ibrahim, 2014).

Immigration policy affects the attractiveness of a study destination for international students (CBIE, 2015). CBIE (2015) claimed that 51 % of international students responding to their survey intended to apply for permanent residence in Canada in the future. Of the international students who came to Canada to study during the 1990s and early 2000s, 20 to 27 % obtained permanent resident status in the 10 years after receiving their first study permit (Statistics Canada, 10 December 2015). However, it is still rare for international education to be discussed on the basis of economic migrants (Scott, 2010). In 2015, over 520,000 Chinese went overseas for further education (Sun & Shi, 2016). Among the respondents in this study, one student (2%) indicated that consideration of immigration was the reason for going overseas. Six students (14%) selected Canada for the possibility of immigration. When asked whether they were interested in becoming permanent residents of Canada, 34 (79%) answered, yes, 3 (7%) were a little interested, and 1 (2%) would consider it if a life partner could be found. One student indicated that leverage for immigration was the key idea taken from the program.

The participants in this study did not form a representative sample, and there is potential for selection effects. It is also necessary to note that separate programs as the one in the study are not the norm in Canadian institutions. The vast majority of international students study together with Canadian students. However, there are some segregated programs specifically established for international students. The study provides insight into the experiences of Chinese students in the ISP. The study results will help the department better meet students' needs. The knowledge gained also contributes towards the internationalization of the university. In addition, the knowledge gained partially meets the need for evaluating internationalization efforts and fills a gap in the literature regarding international education from students' perspective. Students' experiences and perspectives revealed in the study contribute to building a knowledge base of internationalization of Canadian higher education.

Global student mobility contributed \$75 US billion to the world economy (Altbach & Reisberg, 2013). In 2014, the number of internationally mobile students worldwide surpassed the 5 million mark (CBIE, 2015). By 2025 the number is expected to reach 7-8 million (Economist, 2016). As a developed English speaking country with a quality higher education system that receives approximately 250,000 immigrants every year in the last decade (CIC, 1 August 2015), Canada is a favorable destination for international students. However, Canada attracts only 3.4 % of all students abroad in tertiary education, much lower than other major destination countries (OECD, 2015). Most participants in the study indicated that they had a positive experience studying in the program, but many of them also made suggestions on how to improve it. While there are challenges, we believe the further internationalization of Canadian universities is a positive development and there is potential for growth.

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