Original Paper

International Student Policy in Canada: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

This study is a critical analysis of Canadian policies on international students and these students' experiences in Canada. The author has carefully reviewed the relevant literature and has reached a conclusion based on the literature that Canadian international education has developed significantly in the last half century with the annual arriving international students increasing substantially. This increase has served the interests of Canada well and most international students find their experiences of receiving Canadian education positive. They have become an important source of new immigrants. For good reasons Canada is considered one of the favourite destinations for international students. But when they attempt to integrate into the society and when they attempt to join the labour force, particularly in their studied field, there have been challenges. The author also discusses the implications of the Canadian policies on international students. In addition, the author offers a few recommendations on how to improve the policies and the experiences of international students in Canada, particularly for those who decide to remain here after the completion of their study.

Keywords

international students, policies, Canada, students' experiences

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study, descriptive, exploratory, and critical, is to examine current trends and identify possible future directions in international student policy with a Canadian view. While there have been studies analyzing Canadian international student policy, this study is the most comprehensive and most recent one as far as the author is aware. Based on the literature reviewed, I argue that the increasing number of international students has served the interests of Canada and most international students find their experiences of receiving Canadian education positive. While their overall education experiences have been positive, when they attempt to integrate into the society and attempt to join the labour force, particularly in their studied field, there have been challenges.

Knight (2012) defined internationalization of higher education at the national/sector/institutional levels

as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education. Crăciun and de Gayardon (2021) referred to internationalization as an umbrella term that covers all processes of incorporating an international dimension into the purpose, functions, and activities of higher education in the hope of achieving educational, societal, economic, and political goals. The global knowledge economy contributed to the dramatic increases in student mobility and internationalization in multiple forms (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). For Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (FATDC) (2014, p. 9), international education included foreign students studying in Canada for any length of time, Canadians studying outside of Canada, collaboration between educational and research institutes in Canada and abroad, and sharing of Canada's education models with foreign countries and the online delivery of Canadian education around the world. While international education refers to both international students coming to Canada and Canadian students going abroad, this article only describes, discusses, and analyzes international students coming to Canada to make the research more focused, as proportionately far more international students come to Canada than Canadian students go abroad. Since most international students are in higher education (Crossman et al., 2021), the focus of this study is on international students in higher education, particularly in universities, as more of them are in universities than colleges. A panorama of international student policies in Canada and students' experiences is helpful for Canadians to have a better understanding of Canada's situation in international education and the tasks they have in making progress.

2. Research Methods

The author has conducted an extensive review of the literature on Canadian international student policies and the experiences of international students with a critical policy analysis approach. The data sources of this study are recent publications of Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Global Affairs Canada, and Government of Canada. In 1988, CBIE (2020a) conducted the first national survey of international student satisfaction, which led to improvements in international student employment opportunities. The author has also reviewed all the issues available from the website of the Canadian journal, *Comparative and International Education*, since 1992. The author has reviewed *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* in the last 10 years and *International Higher Education,* an American journal, in the last 3 years.

3. Results

3.1 International Students in Canada

In 2019, there were 829,405 international students in Canada studying from primary to post-secondary levels (IRCC, 2021). In 2020, due to the travel restrictions in the pandemic, the number of international students dropped to 530,540. However, the increase of international students in Canada from 2010 to

2020 was 135 % (CBIE, 2020b). Along with the increase of international students, there were more efforts to attract them as a potential pool of candidates for permanent immigration and the Canadian labour force (Crossman et al., 2021). Proportionately Canada did not have as many international students as Australia, still international students in Canada suffered similarly as their counterparts in Australia, who went through travel restrictions, lockdowns, a shift to online teaching, and collapse of part-time work (Leask & Ziguras, 2020).

The federal government had a constitutional responsibility for the well-being of the country, allowing it to have a direct influence on the policy processes related to higher education (Tamtik, 2017, p. 12). Fostering sustainable growth in Canada's international education sector and distributing benefits across the country, international students were an important future source of skilled labour (Statistics Canada, 2021), as 60 % of them planned to apply for Canadian permanent residence (CBIE, 2020c).

3.2 Canadian International Student Policies

The following two paragraphs provide a summary of Canadian international student policies in the last 50 years as described by McCartney (2021). Half a century ago, international students were seen as targets for charity, grateful sojourners who Canada should fund so that they returned to their country of citizenship as agents for Canadian Cold War foreign policy (McCartney, 2021). Attitudes toward international students might best be described as a somewhat patronizing neglect, with little concern about them in the Canadian post-secondary system at the start of the 1970s. In 1977, the CBIE believed that Canada's self-interest could be served by international students if one or more of three conditions were satisfied: if the presence of international students improved the quality of the educational experiences offered by the institution, if receiving them served Canada's long or short-range economic or political interests, or if there was an immediate financial return. The 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of a national consensus around international students, and the beginnings of most of the key elements of contemporary international student policy. Three key developments served as the foundation for the internationalization era in Canadian policy regarding international students: the classification of international students as migrants, undeserving tax-payer support; the adoption of differential tuition fees; and the notion of international students as relatively wealthy foreigners (McCartney, 2021).

The early 2000s were characterized by a broadening and deepening of campaigns to recruit international students and the recruitment was increasingly a part of advancing Canada's national interests (McCartney, 2021). In 2001, the federal government revised Canadian immigration policy to make studying in Canada the first step on a path to citizenship with an economic justification, because it would aid institutions to recruit international students and the government increasingly saw international students as ideal immigrants and a vital part of Canada's economic future. The government launched a national brand for its international education efforts in 2008 to support institutional efforts to increase international student numbers, called *EduCanada*, which used an online presence and advertisements. The first national strategy document in 2014 signalled the incorporation

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of post-secondary education into Canada's economic policy regime as a major export, which was a milestone in the commodification of education in Canada. The Canadian state remained the primary policy agent, as the catalyst for most significant shifts in international student policy was the changing perspective of Canada's governments, both provincial and federal. International students were valued only to the extent that they could develop Canada's economy, whether during their studies or afterwards as immigrants (McCartney, 2021).

The rationales for internationalization of higher education were culturally, politically, academically, and economically based (Weber, 2007). The process of internationalization was historically linked to governmental development agendas that drastically changed in the realm of economic competitiveness (Tamtik, 2017). The federal government had greater influence than was usually recognized, especially through immigration policy (McCartney, 2021). Internationalization was framed as a core societal challenge linked to economic growth, the shortage of skilled workers and the aging demographics (Tamtik, 2017). There were changes in international student policy over the past half-century, but there were also continuities, most notably a sustained emphasis on serving Canada's perceived national interests (McCartney, 2021). McCartney' study (2021) showed the deep roots and complex motivations of contemporary international student policy and the ways in which it was enmeshed in nation-building efforts in Canada. Important policy shifts occurred at roughly the same time across the nation because institutions and provincial governments shared a set of priorities that reflected a Canada-first perspective that remained in force throughout the history of international students (McCartney, 2021). They were seen as wealthy cosmopolitans, and most Canadian post-secondary institutions depended on the billions of dollars they brought to Canada every year (McCartney, 2021).

The 2014 international education strategy from the federal government was developed by FATDC, which articulated a national-level strategic vision for international education and came with a clear financial commitment associated with internationalization initiatives (Tamkit, 2017). It indicated that internationalization was viewed as a market-driven process whereby global challenges were seen as opportunities to enhance Canada's economic competitiveness (Tamtik, 2017). As Canadians had fewer children, without immigrants, employers would have trouble finding enough qualified workers to fill available jobs (Government of Canada, March 18, 2022). International students were ideal immigrants, because they were well positioned to immigrate to Canada as they had typically obtained Canadian credentials, were proficient in at least one official language, and often had relevant Canadian work experience (FATDC, 2014, p. 12). The federal government took steps to work across other policy sectors to ease the immigration process for international students. The capacity of the Temporary Resident Visa program was increased and a permanent residency program, Canadian Experience Class, was implemented to help with the settlement of international students (Tamtik, 2017).

Setting ambitious targets to attract international students was an important element of the international education strategy (FATDC, 2014). The government allocated $13 million over two years to the Mitacs Globalink Program to attract promising international students to Canadian universities and enabled

Canadian students to train abroad. FATDC offered over 700 scholarships to international students. Canada would use enhanced marketing and branding efforts to promote a more comprehensive and coordinated picture of scholarship opportunities. The strategy would create thousands of new jobs and add billions of dollars to Canadian economy over the long term. It would increase the number of international students choosing to remain in Canada as permanent residents after graduation, allocate resources to priority markets and to key embassies within those markets, and develop innovative programs for both mature and developing markets (FATDC, 2014). Later the international education strategy 2019–2024 described international students, particularly those who chose to remain in Canada, as contributing significantly to Canada's long-term economic success and competitiveness (Statistics Canada, 2021, November 24). There were a number of programs at both the federal and provincial or territorial levels designed to attract international students to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2021, November 24).

The alignment of goals and policy objectives among Canadian stakeholder groups confirmed the dominance of economic agenda related to internationalization (Tamtik, 2017). Canada formulated an aggressive-marketization approach to benefit from the intensified global competition (Tamkit, 2017). International students were objectified as tradable units in the market-driven discourse of economic development with student support literature providing a buffer that limited the critique of the economic discourse (Karram, 2013). Canada and its universities widely embraced the ongoing internationalization of higher education in the country for a variety of well documented social, cultural, educational, and economic purposes (Anderson, 2020, p. 2). If gauged in terms of cohesive policies regarding higher education, the four major English-language study destinations appeared at various ends of the spectrum, with Canada having the most coordinated policies (Esaki-Smith, 2020). National policies played a central role in steering the internationalization activities of universities (Crăciun & de Gayardon, 2021).

Although Canada was a federal country, there was no federal ministry of education, as education was under the jurisdiction of provincial governments. The work of internationalization of higher education was performed through the connections between many actors at different policy levels and the network of actors engaged in internationalizing higher education institutions expanded (Viczkco & Tascón, 2016). Federal government departments and national non-governmental organizations produced policies that connected a multiplicity of actors from education, international trade, immigration, and corporate communities (Viczkco & Tascón, 2016). There was growing recognition that effective international education policies and programs were keys to Canada's future prosperity (CBIE, 2020d). There was a shift in higher education from a traditional notion of knowledge as a public good to capital that could be marketed and traded (Viczkco & Tascón, 2016). Through the 2014 international education strategy, supported through the position of CBIE, this neoliberal discourse was enforced by aligning Canadian economic growth with the diplomacy of knowledge in order to pursue Canada's prosperity (Viczkco & Tascón, 2016). The representation of higher educational institutions at the national level

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linked them with industry stakeholders, reinforcing an instrumentalist view of education (Viczkco & Tascón, 2016, p. 14). Canadian policies presented an attempt to connect universities in the knowledge economy by enhancing internationalization of higher education as a force for prosperity (Viczkco & Tascón, 2016). Internationalizing education became a strategic mission of many universities under intensified processes and imaginaries of globalization (Tarc et al., 2012). Universities were increasingly pressured to support and align with a globalized neoliberal agenda through internationalization (Viczkco & Tascón, 2016). They were interested in benefiting from federal funds and were more likely to align their institutional strategies accordingly (Tamtik, 2017).

Similar to the German federal government which placed emphasis on internationalizing higher education and progressively adopted new policies to strengthen it with the support of a range of actors (Pekşen & Leišytė, 2021), through the 2014 international education strategy the Canadian government announced its plan of internationalization, aiming to double international students to 450,000 by 2022. To attract international students, the government would implement policies to make it easier for international students attending designated educational institutions to work during their studies (FATDC, 2014). International students could improve their rank in the Express Entry pool for immigration purposes by getting points for a certificate, diploma or degree from a Canadian secondary or post-secondary institution (Government of Canada, 2021). The goal was achieved five years ahead of schedule.

Canadian institutions increasingly competed aggressively against each other to attract full fee-paying international students (Andreotti et al., 2018). Similar to what happened in German universities facing shrinking domestic enrollments (Morris-Lange & Schu, 2020), from 2018/2019 to 2019/2020, Canadian student enrolments declined by 0.9%, but there was a 13.7% increase in enrolments of international students in colleges and universities, a trend ongoing for the last decade (Statistics Canada, November 24, 2021). International students represented 17.1% of total university enrolments at the national level (Statistics Canada, November 24, 2021). Among university graduates in 2019, the proportion of international student graduates increased 7.9% over the previous year (Statistics Canada, November 24, 2021). International education generated $21.6 billion annually in economic activity and accounted for 170,000 jobs (CBIE, 2020d). In 2021/2022, international students paid higher tuition fees, roughly three times more than those paid by Canadians students (Statistics Canada, September 8, 2021). Increasingly, postsecondary institutions relied on income from international students as part of their revenue stream (Statistics Canada, September 8, 2021).

The global educational credentials industry was an extremely profitable investment in terms of Canadian national goals (Andreotti et al., 2018). Canadian universities almost uniformly identified the internationalization of their student bodies as top priorities in their planning, marketing, and recruitment strategies (Anderson, 2020). Canada was the number four destination of international students in the world (IRCC, 2021). The top three reasons they chose Canada were: the quality of the education system, its reputation as a tolerant and non-discriminatory society, and its reputation as a safe

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country, according to an international student survey conducted in 2018 (CBIE, 2020b).

International students were complex, diverse, and had unique needs, experiences, and life histories (Anderson, 2020). The post-2015 increase in numbers of international students was characterized by growing shares of students from India; those intending to study at the college level; those intending to study in Ontario; and those studying in business, management, and public administration (Crossman et al., 2021). Canada was different from the US, where the most important source country in 2021-2022 was still China (Statista, 2023). For a long time, China was also the most important source country for international students in Canada, but the international student recruitment in a post-China world (Esaki-Smith, 2020) already arrived in Canada, with India replacing China as the most important source country. India was a market of great interest to all four English-language host destinations due to its size—in fact, the country's population was forecast by the United Nations to exceed China's by 2027 (Esaki-Smith, 2020). However, universities interested in recruiting Indian students needed to develop tailored strategies for different regions in that country, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach (Esaki-Smith, 2020). Without the steer of a united national strategy, turning deliberately away from one country and approaching the many others that might have largely been ignored, in terms of a university's resources and attention, was a daunting task for individual institutions (Esaki-Smith, 2020). Trends in the characteristics of students had the potential to influence the sustainable growth of Canada's international education, and increased concentration of students by source country, level of education, province, and field of study might have a downstream impact on the potential pool of candidates for permanent immigration and the Canadian labour force (Crossman et al., 2021).

International mobility privileged developed economies (Crăciun & de Gayardon, 2021). The focus on mobility as the core component of internationalization created, and continued to perpetuate, an unequal, elitist system that followed economic rationales and bypassed the majority of students (Crăciun & de Gayardon, 2021). Universities contributed to social divisions and inequalities, and the cost of study greatly increased in most places (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). Internationalization was articulated in different ways within the context of a relatively new Global Educational Credentials Industry (GECI), which emerged largely as a response to decreased public funding of higher education in specific education export countries (Andreotti et al., 2018). The marketization of internationalization in higher education was reproduced and contested in Canada (Andreotti et al., 2018). Of concern was the economic focus of much international activity, clearly evident in Canada, especially the recruitment of international students (Andreotti et al., 2018). Among the most commonly mentioned strategic benefits were revenue, reputation, and rankings (Buckner et al., 2020).

Canadian internationalization remained within a global imaginary premised on a single, Western-led story of progress, development, and human evolution (Andreotti et al., 2018). It was likely to reproduce unequal relationships with individuals and communities in the Global South, despite its stated intention of ensuring greater equity and avoiding overly-economist rationales (Andreotti et al., 2018). Most institutional internationalization efforts operated from within a dominant global imaginary that tended

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to naturalize existing racial hierarchies and economic inequities in the realm of education and beyond (Stein et al., 2016). This imaginary acted as a structuring frame that legitimized certain perspectives and delegitimized others (Stein et al., 2016). If the promises and presumptions that animated the dominant global imaginary and fueled its reproduction were strong in the case of both educational institutions and individuals, this posed important challenges for pluralizing possibilities for internationalization that exceeded what was offered by this imaginary (Stein et al., 2016).

In the logic of the Global Educational Credentials Industry (GECI), international student recruitment was perceived to be the driving force of internationalization efforts and the model of internationalization of higher education within the GECI was geographically unbalanced and highly uneven in nature—revealing the social, political, and economic injustices implicated in such spatial differentiation (Andreotti et al., 2018). Anglophone "credential-exporting" countries invariably used three tools to attract overseas students: international rankings and national league tables, national and international policy institutionalization, and English as the medium of instruction (Andreotti et al., 2018). Asymmetries, ethnocentrism, and universalism were prevalent in the political economy of knowledge production, which were exacerbated in the context of the global educational credentials industry (Andreotti et al., 2018).

Most international students sought higher education in the developed world, which included Canada. Canadian educators were embedded in a higher education system that was Eurocentric and colonial in its culture and structure, and Canadians needed to interrogate the histories, roots and very foundations of our disciplines to understand what the field excluded and included (Dei, 2012, cited in Lemaire & Beck, 2021). Some Canadian school curricula might reinforce ignorance and stereotypes about other nations and peoples and about the causes and effects of global problems such as war (Bickmore, 2014, pp. 266-267, cited in Guo, 2019, p. 5).

3.3 Students' Experiences

For international students, going abroad for further education is a life-changing opportunity. With the consideration that international students pay higher fees, a Canadian study has to add unique value to international students' experiences. One obvious benefit of studying in Canada is becoming a Canadian permanent resident and then a citizen, but for some of them this pathway may not be smooth.

International students held their university experience in high regard and spoke positively about the caliber of education available from their respective universities (Scott, 2015). Their overall social connections were positive, but several areas of their university experiences were problematic, including increasing tuition, lack of financial aid, and lack of internship and co-op positions (Klodt, 2019). Many universities fully supported internationalization in strategic plans yet had less developed plans of how to implement internationalization into the teaching, support, and service dimensions (Weber, 2007). Accommodations did not keep pace with the increasing influx of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Anderson, 2015). International students encountered persistent problems, including finding suitable housing, financial difficulty stemming from their ability to work or find employment, currency

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fluctuations, integration into a new university and an unfamiliar society (Calder et al., 2016), limited internationalization of the curriculum and gaps between the internationalization policy and their experiences (Guo & Guo, 2017). Some of them even experienced food insecurity (Hanbazaza et al., 2021). Most of them accessed employment opportunities on-campus as opposed to in the wider community, and universities had an important role to play in preparing them for the labour force (Scott, 2015). Many used on campus opportunities as stepping-stones toward future employment (Scott, 2015). Those with on-campus work experience noted that the university community was highly supportive, worked around their schedules, and were generally perceived as being flexible and understanding their workloads (Scott, 2015).

International students claimed that they had difficulty making Canadian friends (Beck, 2017). Ethnicity-based on-campus organizations played a key role in helping international students build bonding capital on campus, however, international and domestic student groups took part in different on-campus organizations, and differences in participation and discriminatory attitudes held by domestic White students had the potential to inhibit bridging capital, limiting integration between student groups (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Social integration patterns posed a worrisome picture (Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Factors such as language ability, the degree of international students' identification with their hosts' culture, or whether they felt discriminated against influenced the extent of intercultural contact they sought, which was an important domain affecting their integration and success (Scott et al., 2015). One international student recognized the benefits of his study in Canada but stated that his university needed to build its capacities, especially teachers' capacities, to teach international students (Beck, 2017). We could not continue supporting the universalism where the world was captured and forced to conform to the categories of western knowledge and experience (Shultz, 2015). There were educational, social, cultural, and linguistic barriers impacting the outcomes of international students in Canada (Anderson, 2020).

What they wanted from their experiences became more tangible and practical in nature, with expanded employment opportunities as number one consideration (Esaki-Smith, 2022). Scott et al. (2015) suggested that there was disconnect between policy makers' assumptions and the lived experiences of international students in Canada. Specifically, their integration into the domestic labour market was hindered by adjustment difficulties pertaining to language abilities, poor connectedness to host communities, and perceived employer discrimination against them (Scott et al., 2015). There needed to be a more balanced approach to address issues related to culture and language (Tamtik, 2017). Most of them expressed a strong desire to transition into the Canadian labour force after graduation, however many cited unexpectedly high costs of living or poor prospects of finding work in their field as factors that would induce them to leave (Scott et al., 2015). They believed that a lack of ways to connect with industry professionals contributed to their relative under-preparedness for working in Canada (Scott et al., 2015). Unable to find meaningful off-campus employment in their field, they cited the perception of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours of employers as the primary obstacle (Scott et al.,

2015). In addition, for new Canadians there was a lack of social capital (Steinbach, 2007).

International students were pivotal to how internationalization was understood and operationalized (Sabzalieva, 2020). International education was supposed to serve students however, the theme of students and student services hardly received any coverage in the first 99 issues of the American journal, *International Higher Education*, with only 12 articles, which represented less than 1 percent of the total (Schendel et al., 2020). There were only 13 articles out of 276, about 5 percent, available on the website of the Canadian journal of *Comparative and International Education* devoted to the same theme.

4. Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

Based on the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that Canadian international education has developed significantly in the last half century with the annual arriving international students increasing substantially. This increase has served the interests of Canada and most international students find their experiences of receiving Canadian education positive. They have become an important source of new immigrants. For good reasons Canada is considered one of the favourite destinations for international students. However, when they attempt to integrate into the society and when they attempt to join the labour force, particularly in their field, there have been challenges.

Higher education was increasingly marketized around the world (Komljenovic, 2021), particularly with dwindling domestic higher education age population and tightening public budgets in the main destination countries. In considering the international education market, Canadian institutions can utilize the four information tools Komljenovic (2021) examines, however, institutions need to keep in mind that higher education market information tools are not apolitical, as different devices have different consequences, critically scrutinizing their nature and effects enable users to discuss how higher education markets can promote or worsen social equality and social justice more generally (Komljenovic, 2021). While the short-term benefits (including financial ones) from increased international student enrollments are alluring for many universities, the moral and ethical impacts of unbalanced recruitment and admissions cannot be overlooked within the broader context of internationalization and higher education in Canada (Anderson, 2020). There is a risk that internationalization efforts may contribute to the reproduction of harmful historical and ongoing global patterns of educational engagement (Stein et al., 2016). The more a university practises a corporate imaginary of higher education and an instrumental approach to internationalization, the more it distances itself from intercultural propositions oriented towards global mindedness, justice, peace, solidarity, or international collaboration for the common good (Andreotti et al., 2018). There is a need to distance international education from the rationalization of internationalization as income supplementation, the reification of global rankings as international measures of quality education, and the branding of educational credentials solely as exports that functions as passports to social mobility (Andreotti et al., 2018).

New ideas are needed as new global challenges are going to worsen existing colonial, capitalist inequalities across the globe (McCartney, 2021). To develop a more just and equitable version of international education will require activism that can challenge not only the power of Canadian policy, but also the hegemony of ideas of the Canadian nation (McCartney, 2021). Is there a need to consider the relationship between international education and decolonization in Canada, as institutions face calls to decolonize (Buckner et al., 2020)? If we can challenge dominant assumptions about what is possible and consider other viable possibilities, then we can create the potential for something new and different to emerge (Stein et al., 2019).

To make Canada a world leader in international education to ensure Canada's future prosperity and to give expression to Canadians' enduring commitment to global citizenship (CBIE, 2020d), policy-makers and institutions need to make Canadian education more affordable for international students, although international student funding can be a battleground for internationalization versus nationalism (El Masri, 2020). On January 5, 2022, Brock University in Ontario announced that it would introduce a new tuition structure that would see international students pay the same amount as their first-year tuition through their whole undergraduate studies, avoiding annual tuition increases, when domestic student tuitions had been frozen for a few years by a provincial government mandate (Dakin, 2022). This was a small step in the right direction. Policy-makers and institutions also need to provide more support to international students, taking care of their well-being and making their environment more engaging and more conducive to learning. While all Canadian higher education institutions claim to promote equity and inclusiveness, more real actions need to be taken.

In international education, Canada has advantages that need to be sustained and grown. More institutions need to join CBIE so that more comprehensive and timely data can be collected across the country to inform policies, programs, supports, and services. All institutions need to consider the priorities for action put forward by CBIE (2020d) to become more engaged and more active in promoting internationalization, with more concerted efforts. Maybe it is time for universities to take charge of their own futures (Locke, 2021). International mobility only caters to the minority of students that have the means and resources to be mobile (Crǎciun & de Gayardon, 2021). One key objective of Canada's international education strategy (Government of Canada, 2019) is to diversify the countries from which international students come to Canada, as well as their fields, levels, and location of study. Diversification is the key to sustainability, whether it is an individual university's recruitment strategy or the broader policy of a host country (Esaki-Smith, 2020).

One thing to consider is that applicants from less represented countries are preferred, if other things are equal, which will diversify international students. Another thing to consider is that female applicants are preferred, if other things are equal, as some of the top countries sending students to Canada are still markedly male dominated (Anderson, 2020). A third thing that can be considered is that although international students are different from Canadian students, as young people there are similarities between the two groups. At the end of an intercultural experiential learning initiative for academic

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credit, both Canadian and international students felt that they were more alike than they were different (Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2018). Universities can take intentional measures to solidify the similarities and encourage mutual respect of the differences.

Internationalization has growing importance and enables institutions to develop globally minded citizens, which is particularly relevant to those without any international mobility experience (Ilieva & Tsiligiris, 2021). Initiatives at the university and government levels that facilitate connections between international students and off-campus employers during their study can be an important step toward ensuring they are able to secure adequate employment post-graduation to set them on the path toward permanent residency (Scott et al., 2015). If Canadian policy makers are to achieve their vision of making Canada a world leader in international education, they must work proactively with institutions and employers to offer better language and communication support services, professional training for international students akin to the co-operative education opportunities afforded to domestic students, work toward instilling a more general feeling of belonging between international students and their host communities, and target employers about the benefits of working with international students (Scott et al., 2015). There is a need to reframe internationalization in a way that would acknowledge the economic rationales, yet balance them with the social and academic outcomes necessary for all students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective participation in increasingly multicultural and global contexts (Garson, 2016).

The divide between anti-international and anti-immigration advocates on the one hand, and those in favor of international collaboration to help address key challenges locally and globally, is fiercer than ever, in the United States and in the rest of the world (Altbach & de Wit, 2021). In a June 2020 study of China Institute of College Admission Counseling, 36 percent of Chinese high school students responded saying that they had foregone their plans of studying in the United States completely (Wan, 2021). Eighty-five percent pinpointed their primary concern to the potential health risks of being in the US with the pandemic. Almost half of them also cited uncertain visa policies and anti-Asian racism as their main concerns (Wan, 2021). There would be a delayed impact to the number of Chinese students applying to US institutions. The real decline would manifest itself in two to three years (Wan, 2021). Some of these students may consider Canada as an alternative destination, as China is the second most important source country of international students in Canada.

"As part of their broader mandate to develop and educate responsible citizens, universities play a paramount role in promoting inclusion, access to quality education, and sustainability. Such a role will become more prominent in the face of deepening social and economic inequalities globally" (Ilieva & Tsiligiris, 2021, p. 1). As social enterprises, Canadian universities can make a contribution in this respect if they are committed to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in Canada and beyond. Achieving strong equity results requires a high degree of alignment among leadership, policy goals, policy instruments, and resources (Salmi, 2020). However, resources are tight at the moment.

Internationalism in higher education permitted us to understand the rest of the world, as well as to

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function in the new international economy of the 21st century (de Wit & Altbach, 2020, p. 1). One faculty member in Beck's (2017) study stated that being international was unavoidable for almost anybody in a university because any knowledge produced was produced in the context of other knowledge and knowledge was international. He indicated that having an international student body enriched the experience of studying and the intellectual fabric of what was studied, because of the multiple intellectual perspectives, the multicultural perspectives, and that was just one portion. This enrichment ultimately led to world peace, because people would be better equipped to understand cultural difference (Beck, 2017). Higher education involves the teaching, learning, and generating of knowledge, which is international. The trend seems to suggest that higher education is likely to become more international. As nations are increasingly dependent on each other, particularly when they deal with global challenges such as climate change and world peace, Canadian universities need to deliver an education globally relevant, meeting the needs of a diverse domestic and international student population. As the contraction of the higher education sector as a whole caused by the pandemic (Locke, 2021) is over, more international students have come to Canada, surpassing the number in 2019 (Government of Canada, 2023).

This article focuses on past and contemporary Canadian policies on international students and their experiences, as well as suggestions for improvement. It highlights both the strengths and challenges Canadians have. Being critical, it offers a Canadian perspective of international education and where Canada is possibly to develop in the future. Canadian institutions need to balance the demand to be equitable, diverse, and inclusive, and the consideration of an economic factor in internationalization. With their role continues to be highly significant (Sabzalieva, 2020), international students deserve our attention so that we can understand their special needs (Zhou & Zhang, 2014). As institutional commitments to internationalize higher education continue to grow (Stein et al., 2016), there is more Canadian institutions, as policy implementers, can do to serve all students.

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