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Original Article

Canada's International Education Strategy: Implications of a New Policy Landscape for Synergy Between Government Policy and Institutional Strategy

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In 2014, the Canadian federal government announced its first-ever international education strategy. Referencing Cerna's (2014) typology of interactions between national policies and university strategies, this paper examines the implications of this changed national policy context on institutional level internationalization strategies, particularly on international students' recruitment and retention. We specifically examine how university strategies acknowledge governmental policies; what organizational changes they make in response to government policy and what opportunities and challenges university staff identify in meeting policy objectives. The paper presents results from a scan of universities' websites and a survey administered to university staff from a representative sample of Ontario's universities. It concludes that the government-institutional policies' synergies are far more complex than Cerna's (2014) typology suggests, reinforcing the need for newer models examining multi-level and multi-actor contexts within which both higher education and governments operate and develop international policies.
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Introduction

In 2009, Shubert *et al*. observed that "Canadian universities have made independent decisions related to their internationalization agenda, with surprisingly little involvement or interest from the federal government" and that "Canada is unlike many other nations in that no predominant impetus has driven the country's internationalization agenda" (Shubert *et al*., 2009, pp. 9–10). In just 5 years, the policy landscape for Canadian internationalization of higher education (HE) changed dramatically. In January 2014, the Canadian federal government took an unprecedented step, announcing its first-ever international education (IE) strategy,

Harnessing Our Knowledge Advantage to Drive Innovation and Prosperity. This paper examines the implications of this changed national policy context on institutional level internationalization strategies. In particular, given the central policy focus on international students (IS), this paper examines the interface of government and institutional policy in context of the federal government's goal of attracting and retaining "top talent[ed]" IS and encouraging them to become permanent residents to address the skilled labour shortage "to keep up in a global, knowledge-based economy" (Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada—DFATD, 2014, p. 9). Based on findings from a research study[1] on internationalization policy and practices of Ontario universities, this paper specifically examines how university strategies acknowledge governmental (federal and provincial) policies; what organizational (structural, funding and programmatic) changes are made in response to government policy and what opportunities and challenges university staff identify in meeting government's policy objectives.

Review of Literature

Internationalization is identified as "one of the most significant drivers facing the modern university" (Taylor, 2004, p. 168) with Knight (2008, p. ix) asserting it is "one of the major forces impacting and shaping HE in the 21st century". The 2014 Universities Canada (previously AUCC[2]) report on *Internationalization at Canadian Universities* states that 96% of Canadian universities include internationalization in their strategic planning and more than 80% identify it as one of their top five planning priorities, up 5% from 2006. Further, 89% of universities say the pace of internationalization on their campuses has accelerated since 2006 (AUCC, 2014). This growing importance of internationalization at both the governmental and institutional levels is widely recognized by scholars; however, research is inconclusive about the impact of these policy changes at the national and institutional levels.

The role of the nation state in internationalization

Literature suggests that governments around the world are strengthening their role in internationalization (Enders, 2004; Marginson and Sawir, 2005; van der Wende, 2001). Simultaneously, there is much debate if internationalization as a policy trend challenges the predominance of the nation state as the main policy actor or policy determinant of universities' policies within a larger global and supranational context (Marginson, 2002; Rizvi, 2006; Viczko, 2012) or highlights its critical role even in contexts such as the European Union, with a supranational governance level (Enders, 2004; Horta, 2010; Mosneaga and Agergaard, 2012). While this debate has no uniform consensus, scholars do allude to the state's continued role as a key agent, albeit altered in form, in internationalization policy and governance (Enders, 2004; Marginson, 2002; Suter and Jandl, 2008). Discussions on the nation state's role also

inevitably lead to debates about policy convergence. Some scholars view the convergence in policy making on the economic dimensions or the neoliberal agendas of internationalization (Beck, 2012; Foskett, 2010; Maringe, 2010; Stromquist, 2007; Viczko, 2012). Others argue against uniformity in rationales, process and outcomes reminding us of the critical relevance of context (Stensaker *et al.*, 2008). They highlight the role of a nation's economic and political power, history, size, geographic location, dominant culture, quality and typical features of its HE system, language, and previous internationalization policies in determining the rationales, approaches, substance, process and outcomes of internationalization (Enders, 2004; Stensaker *et al.*, 2008; Tamtik and Kirss, 2016). They also suggest these individual national dynamics influence the potential "for realizing the objectives national governments have in the field of internationalization" (Stensaker *et al.*, 2008, p. 3).

A literature review of the state's role in internationalization may lack consensus on the relative role of the state vis-à-vis other policy actors, but it indicates a general agreement across scholars that internationalization policy "is contributing to, if not leading, a process of rethinking the social, cultural and economic roles of higher education and their configuration in national systems of higher education" (Enders and Fulton, 2002, p. 1). Thus, internationalization policy at the state or supranational level is associated with substantial changes in the actual substance and structures of HE institutions.

Internationalization at the institutional level

Knight (2004) proposes that it is at the institutional level that the real processes of internationalization take place. While this is certainly true, universities do not operate in a vacuum; they are part of a broader national policy framework within which they are embedded (Cerna, 2014; Marginson and Sawir, 2005; Teichler 2004). Marginson and van der Wende (2009) suggest that universities remain nationally embedded given their dependency for resources and legitimation by government. Knight (2004) also recognizes how the national sector has an important influence on the international dimension of HE policy and funding.

The Canadian landscape further complicates our understanding of state impact on institutional policies. In Canada, HE is strictly a provincial responsibility with no federal ministry of education with institutional autonomy held in high regard. On the one hand, IE as a policy arena falls between the jurisdictional divides of the federal (foreign policy) and provincial (education) governments, with institutions caught between their often contentious and contradictory policy orientations[3]. On the other hand, scholars like Viczko (2013) have raised concerns over the tension between university autonomy and state control through processes of internationalization. She argues the (federal) state "works to steer policy direction and strategies without having to legislate to do so" (Viczko, 2013, p. 41). She questions the simultaneous and paradoxical positioning of the university institution as an

autonomous agent while also a driver of national economic policies. Thus, Viczko (2013, p. 38) challenges the notion of autonomy when the federal "strategy sets the priorities and steers universities in the setting of their own priorities".

In examining the impact of international policies on institutions, some scholars report a comprehensive reshaping of university governance processes, curriculum, faculty hiring, and student recruitment practices towards more market driven neo-liberal practices (Stromquist, 2007). Others support the notion that "internationalization is not developing in similar ways …[as] internationalization strategies are filtered and contextualized by the specific internal context of the universities, by the type of university and how they are embedded nationally" (de Wit, 2010, p. 5). Foskett (2010) and Maringe (2010) observe that smaller institutions tend to be more focused on local and regional priorities as compared to larger research intensive globally referenced universities which are more committed to internationalization (Foskett, 2010; Maringe, 2010). Further, scholars such as Marginson (2002) have documented considerable differences in institutional strategies. Others have proposed that institutions are organizations with deeply embedded values, cultures and traditions which may inhibit and/or facilitate organizational change related to internationalization (Stensaker *et al*., 2008). We can thus surmise that states provide a context for institutional policy and aim to steer policy change and direction. Institutions, on the other hand, can interface with state policy in myriad ways and in essence align, resist or change policy direction given their individual characteristics, autonomous organizational values, and culture and tradition. Thus, university strategies and national policies do interact and each can facilitate the internationalization of HE by creating synergies. However, what happens when strategies at the two levels are inconsistent, mismatched or even clash?

We reference Cerna's (2014) typology of interactions between national policies and university strategies (adapted from Hénard *et al*., 2012) to map and analyse the interaction between the federal policy and university strategies. Cerna (2014) argues that university strategies are embedded within a national framework. Whereas states are the main actors in controlling migration, universities' role is increasingly gaining prominence. As universities are responsible for recruitment, admissions, education, and retention of IS, an important pool of future immigrants, they become an integral "non-state actor" in migration (Cerna, 2014, p. 6). Thus, universities' role as international actors is increasingly conditioned by national immigration policies; therefore, Cerna (2014) argues that the success of universities' internationalization strategies is dependent on the level of synergies between the national and institutional strategies. Cerna proposes a typology to capture this interaction and predict the success of internationalization strategies (see Table 1).

Cerna (2014) suggests that "synergies take place when both levels (state and university) facilitate/hinder internationalisation (quadrants I and IV) while clashes are more likely in the case of inconsistencies between the two (quadrants II and III)" (2014, p. 7). Therefore, "when university strategies facilitate internationalisation by

having a clear strategy or sufficient autonomy, funding and capacity, [national policy can hinder this process] through restrictive immigration policies, no clear strategy or limited funding for universities. We would expect successful internationalisation in the case of a (positive) synergy (quadrant I), while the other three cases will rather hinder internationalisation" (2014, p. 7).

Policy Context

Two federal policy documents identify the importance of IS as future immigrants/permanent residents to Canada (Table 2).

Canada is one of the few countries where immigration is expected to account for 100% of net workforce growth (DFATD, 2014). A high priority on economic immigration, foreign policy, and international trade federally has created a unique Canadian policy environment. Canada is one of the only OECD countries without a national ministry of education, resulting in educational policy matters distributed over several federal departments; IE is executed by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) (previously DFATD[4]) and Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), two key policy actors among other departments. In the Canadian context IE, foreign policy, and immigration policies reinforce one another, creating a powerful, convergent, and seemingly normative policy discourse on IS as a central feature of its IE policy. Canada's challenges in integrating new immigrants into its labour force (Anisef *et al*., 2003; Fong and Cao, 2009; Oreopoulos, 2009) serve as another context for supporting the IS-as-new-immigrants policy. IS are viewed as "among the most fertile source of new immigrants for Canada … [and] should be first on our list of people who we court to come to Canada" (Immigration Minister John McCallum quoted in Zilio and Chiose, 2016, para 4).

Table 1 Interactions between national policies and university strategies towards IS

University State	*Facilitates internationalization (e.g. clear strategy, sufficient resources, autonomy)*	*Hinders internationalization (e.g. no adequate funding, no clear strategy, lack of capacity, limited autonomy)*
Facilitates internationalization (e.g. favourable immigration policies, funding for universities, clear internationalization policy)	(Positive) Synergy I	Mismatch/clash III
Hinders internationalization (e.g. restrictive immigration policies, insufficient funding, no clear internationalization policy)	Mismatch/clash II	(Negative) Synergy IV

Source: Cerna, (2014,) p. 7 – adapted from Hénard *et al*., (2012).

Table 2 Policy Context

Global Affairs Canada[11]	*Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*
"International students are a future source of skilled labour, as they may be eligible after graduation for permanent residence through immigration programs such as the Canadian Experience Class (introduced in 2008). International students are well positioned to immigrate to Canada as they have typically obtained Canadian credentials, are proficient in at least one official language and often have relevant Canadian work experience". (DFATD, 2014, p. 12)	"International students bring with them new ideas and cultures that enrich the learning environment within Canadian educational institutions. International students are well-prepared for the Canadian labour market and integrate more quickly into Canadian society since they have Canadian educational credentials and have spent several years interacting with Canadian students in their post-secondary institutions". (IRCC, 2013, p. 21)

It is important to note the policy coherence between the federal and provincial governments when it comes to retention and recruitment of IS. Parallel to federal policy, at the provincial level, Ontario, similar to other provinces, has also worked strategically to "make Ontario the destination of choice for international students" (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2010). Thus, Ontario's immigration and economic policies are aligned with the federal governments. It sets a strategic goal of doubling the number of IS (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2010) and retaining IS as future immigrants (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2012). Ontario has worked cooperatively with the federal government to attract and retain IS through immigration routes targeting IS such as the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program[5] and the Canadian Experience Class in addition to allowing IS to work on/off campus pre- and post-graduation.

Research Questions

In examining Ontario universities' internationalization strategies, our three research questions were: How are policies (federal and provincial) to attract IS as future immigrants acknowledged by Ontario universities in their mission statement/goals/visions and/or strategic plans? What organizational (structural, funding and programmatic) changes do they make in response to government policy? What opportunities and challenges do university staff perceive as factors facilitating and hindering the recruitment and transitioning of IS as future immigrants?

Methodology

We targeted a representative sample of 11 (50%) of Ontario's universities[6] ensuring diversity in geographical location, institutional size, and IS population.

We also captured data from all affiliated campuses and thus our final sample of 11 universities included two multi-campus institutions resulting in a total of 14 campuses. Data collection included two stages: (a) web-scan of university policies/strategies and IS programs/services, and (b) survey of managers and front-line staff at 6 central university student service offices (IS office, IS recruitment services, career services, counselling services, alumni services, and language support services). Web-scans were conducted in October 2014 and surveys administered from 1 December 2014 to 20 February 2015. Our study received ethics board approval from the host and participating universities and all participants were assured complete anonymity. One hundred and four university staff from 13 out of the 14 multi-institutional campuses participated in the survey (Figure 1).

Using recommended internet research techniques (Monash University, 2004; Simon Fraser University, 2010), the research team agreed on several keywords for a systematic web scan. This maximized inter-coder reliability and agreement on inclusion/exclusion criteria. We focused on reviewing the most recent institutional strategies/policies (2012–2013) including those submitted to government such as Multi-year Accountability Agreements and Strategic Mandate Agreements[7]. For program and services, we reviewed webpages of the six student service office websites. As these offices are responsible for institution-wide outreach and for serving all students, including IS, research on these offices' websites enabled us to capture an institution-wide perspective on IS programs/services. Faculty-specific websites were not examined. The data collected provided insight into individual campuses and served as a comparison across campuses.

Using the web to search institutional internationalization strategies enabled us to collect data in an efficient and cost effective way; however, we recognize the several limitations of this method. Website searches are time-bound and only reliable and useful if sites are kept up-to-date. Our web search strategies may have been limiting,

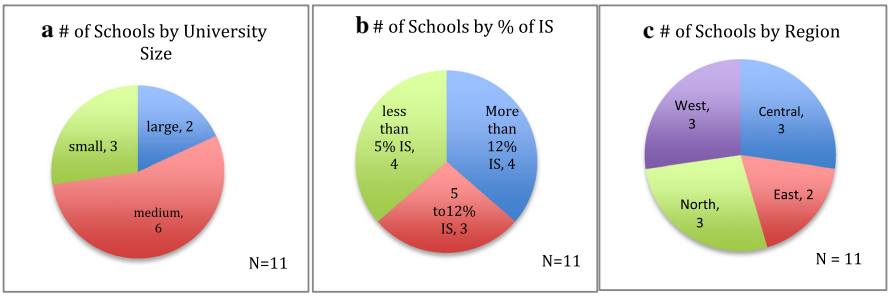

Figure 1. University sample demographics.

as we mainly focused on internationalization strategies, programs and services as they pertained to IS excluding broader university strategic goals, programs and services. Internationalization strategy plans provide an indication of a university's articulated commitment to internationalization; however, we acknowledge the limitations in assessing how these articulated goals are operationalized and ultimately realized by the institution. Similarly, we acknowledge that individual institutions make different decisions in making their strategies public.

Given these limitations, the survey provided a more up-to-date and comprehensive source to assess the university's commitment and approach to internationalization. It asked for responses from several staff (both upper management and front line staff from the six student service offices) on both strategic planning and operational practices. All responses were coded; the final stage of data analysis was conducted in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Several cross-tabulations were conducted to establish patterns between participant demographics, institutional characteristics and IS policy, programs and services. Given that decisions to circulate the survey among staff were made by upper administration, this might have resulted in restricting/swaying access to the survey. Similarly, as participating in the survey was voluntary, responses may be biased. As the survey included only these six offices, valuable input from academic units, students and other relevant administrative staff has not been captured. In this sense, our findings and implications are limited.

Key Findings

Institutions acknowledge government policies

Our web-scan search revealed that approximately half of the selected universities (six of 11) referenced one or more federal and/or provincial policies pertaining to IS; the remaining five universities did not mention them[8] (see Figure 2).

Five of the 6 universities referencing government policy on IS in their documents position their institutional IS recruitment plans within these broader policy frameworks. Notably, one university that recognizes government policy on IS has chosen to steer away from strategic expansion of IS enrolment, giving priority instead to increasing spaces for domestic students.

It is also important to note that of the 5 universities not mentioning government strategy, four have prioritized targeted growth of their IS body. Therefore, a total of 9 of 11 universities aimed to increase IS enrolment (see Figure 3). Additionally, 7 of the 11 had clear statements suggesting that they were interested in attracting "high quality" or "the best" IS. They framed these students as an asset to their institutions, broadening the diversity of their student body and providing international exposure to their domestic students. We observed that the one

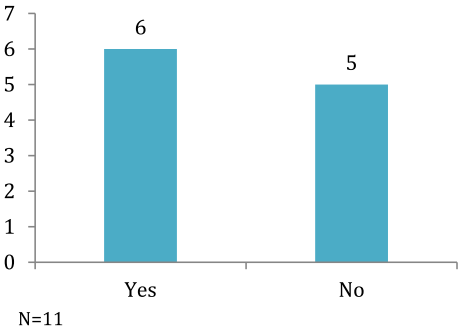

Figure 2. Do university strategy documents refer to Federal/Provincial IS policies?

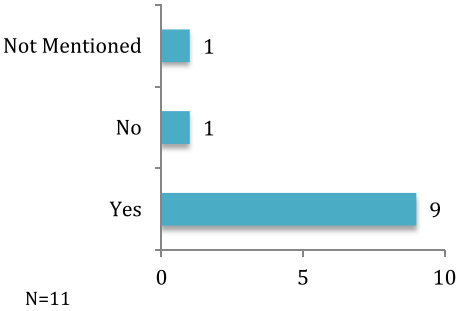

Figure 3. Does the University aim to increase IS enrolment?

institution not mentioning IS enrolment targets in its documents is situated in Northern Ontario and identified its priority as access for local aboriginal students. Most universities located in large metropolitan settings identified clear plans to increase IS enrollments. Two institutions mentioning federal/provincial policies also noted inconsistencies in provincial policy on IS. Specifically, they addressed how Ontario's International Student Recovery fee[9] and its current lack of funding for international graduate students runs counter to their increased IS enrolment goals and ultimately disincentivizes institutional recruitment efforts. Our web-scans revealed that all 11 institutions had a statement on, or made reference to, institutional internationalization goals or strategies in their policy documents. Although some statements contained clear reference to IS recruitment, others positioned internationalization within the context of establishing more research links with international institutions, and/or providing more study abroad, exchange opportunities and international exposure for their domestic students, faculty and staff. We surmise that most Ontario universities are invested in recruiting IS;

however, their geographical location can impact their recruitment goals/targets. We also note that institutional approach to internationalization encompasses a wider range of programs and activities than just IS recruitment. Strategies focus on enhancing "international partnerships", identifying and engaging "in relationships with world-leading programs and institutions to support research and learning internationally", "build[ing] and strengthen[ing] academic and teaching global relations" through seeking international research collaboration and faculty and student exchange.

When probing staff's knowledge and awareness of federal, provincial and institutional policies pertaining to IS, our survey revealed wide discrepancy among managerial and front-line staff. More front-line staff members indicated large unawareness of government and institutional policy changes as opposed to managers who were aware of these policies (see Figure 4). Awareness was higher within IS service departments, where 100% of managers and 78% of front-line staff

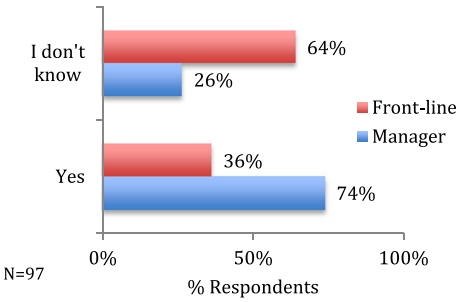

Figure 4. Staff knowledge of government policy changes in the last 5 years.

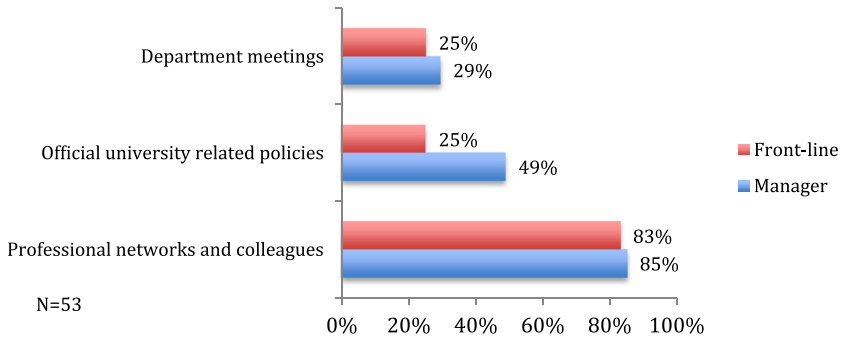

Figure 5. Sources of knowledge of government policy changes among managers and front-line staff.

reported being aware of government policy changes. For those managers and front-line staff aware of policy changes, they overwhelmingly reported professional networks and colleagues as their main source of information on internationalization policies, followed by official university related policies and departmental meetings (see Figure 5).

Organizational Changes in Response to Government Policy

Interestingly, although nine universities set enrolment targets and all 11 referred to institutional internationalization strategies, only 6 included specific initiatives in their strategy documents targeting IS support and engagement. These universities discussed plans for better developed, coherent, resource-rich and targeted IS services such as expansion of IS advising, counselling and academic support services, expansion of staff positions to assist IS with transition experiences, and even building residence facilities to accommodate increased IS presence on campus.

When asked if their university instituted any changes to service delivery for IS in reaction to relevant government and/or institutional policy changes, 54% reported changes have taken place (see Figure 6).

Staff reporting changes to service delivery most often noted changes in relation to immigration services (see Figure 6b), which occurred as a direct result of changes in federal IRCC policies. Here, respondents noted the most recent policy change, Bill C35 Section 91, specifying that only individuals who completed the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council certification program (ICCRC) can provide immigration advice. Thus, IS advisors, who in the past could provide immigration advice and service to IS, are no longer able to do so. Therefore, universities still wanting to offer this service have had to introduce new staff positions by hiring licensed immigration lawyers/consultants and/or provide

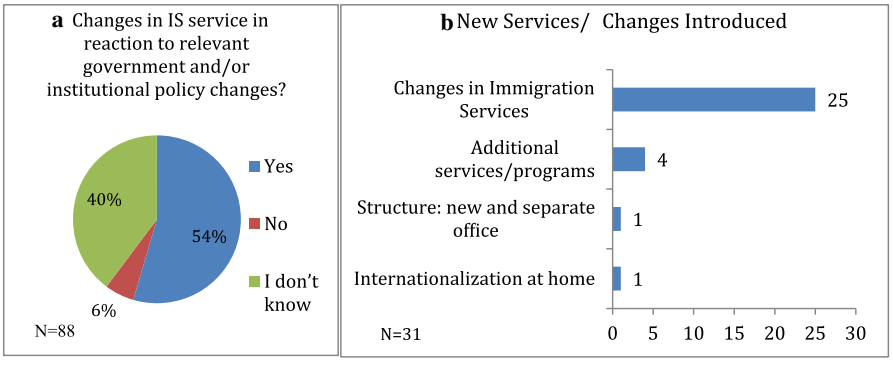

Figure 6. Changes to service delivery in response to government or institutional policy changes.

one or more of their staff with the required training. In addition to the requirement for ICCRC certification, respondents mentioned introduction of other new regulations and processes to address changes to immigration laws. For example, a respondent stated "[n]ew changes to international student program by IRCC …require[…] [a] biannual reporting piece on the status of the international students at the institution". Apart from changes related to immigration services, respondents reported changes to the funding model as an outcome of provincial policies, where IS fees have been "[m]odified …. to absorb the $750/head tax on international student enrolment imposed by Ontario Government".

Respondents also noted the addition of services and programs such as increased ESL support, implementation of academic English programs, and "more training in relation to working with ESL speakers and cultural inclusion". Additionally, structural changes were reported; for example, "International Student Centre became an independent unit from the broader Student Life Centre". A survey of the full range of IS programs and services through campus web sites and staff survey responses suggests a higher number of programs and services meeting IS social as compared to academic/professional and/or career needs. There are lacunae in offering targeted professional services for IS towards the later stages of IS cycle. Whereas all universities offer career services to the student body as a whole, a few opted to offer services tailored to the specific needs of IS such as workshops on working in Canada. Many respondents stressed the need for greater upper-year and alumni programming to respond to the many perceived roadblocks to IS' transition to the Ontario/Canadian labour market.

Perceived Factors Facilitating/Hindering Meeting Policy Objectives

In two open-ended questions, staff identified three factors that were most important in encouraging IS to remain in Canada as permanent residents. These were career prospects, immigration policies/prospects to apply for permanent residence (PR), and sense of belonging (See Figures 7 and 8).

Staff reported securing job offers before or immediately after graduation and/or at least having perceived positive employment opportunities to work in Canada post-graduation as an important factor facilitating IS transition to PR status. Some indicated that it was also important that the job offer be related to the IS' field of study with future career growth prospects. They indicated that IS have a difficult time with the Canadian job market due to the perceived unavailability of jobs and their inability to navigate the Canadian labour market as they lack "networking … and market[ing] skills". Others highlighted that IS' lack of Canadian work/volunteer experience is a major hindrance. In this regard, staff noted the importance of providing IS appropriate career advice and support and on/off campus work/volunteer opportunities.

Figure 7. Factors that facilitate IS transition to PR status.

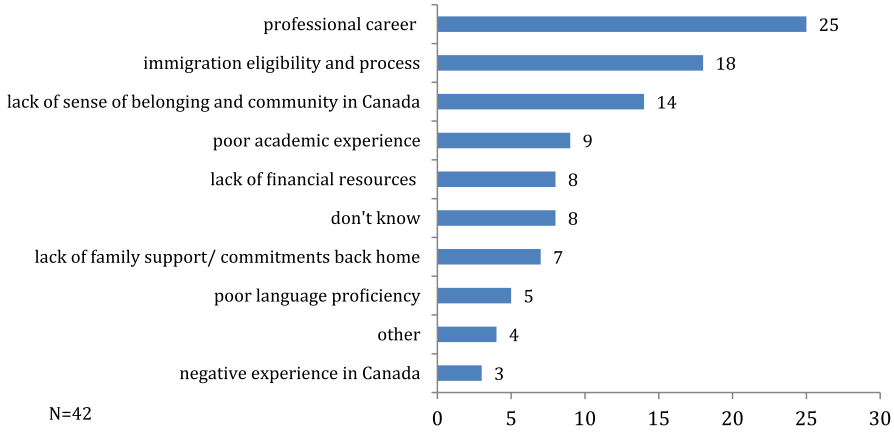

Figure 8. Factors that hinder IS transition to PR status.

Staff also identified specific challenges IS face pertaining to immigration matters. In particular, they highlighted perceived "bureaucracy", "complicated paperwork", "systemic difficulties" in the immigration processes and "changing immigration policies" as factors hampering IS transition to PR status. Some referred to meeting eligibility criteria and "challenging immigration policies" especially in terms of "finding work in the approved NOC[10] skill levels to qualify for work experience" and the constantly "changing [immigration] regulations" as

barriers. Therefore, staff reported the need for immigration support services at institutions. They lamented that "[t]he government and community resources in terms of immigration advising and assistance with this process … is practically non-existent".

Staff identified quality of life and sense of belonging and community in Canada as being critical to the IS experience. They noted that IS are more inclined to stay if they perceive Canada as providing them and their families with better "social security", "political stability", "cultural exposure" and "safer living situation" than their home countries. "Feeling a sense of community" and "a welcoming environment" are important factors ensuring "engagement in academic and larger community" and "integration into Canadian culture". This is made easier with a strong "support network" and through communities helping IS maintain their "cultural identity and integrat[e] into their community of choice". In the reverse, IS sense of isolation and alienation "as though there are [no] people to turn to for advice and help" is perceived as a hindrance to IS's sense of belonging and community affecting their ability to integrate as future immigrants.

Staff specifically identified IRCC as the federal government department that ought to be more responsive in providing universities with support and resources to meet set policy objectives of increasing IS enrolment and retention. In particular, they highlighted need for clear, consistent, and updated information from IRCC staff on new policies and procedures. They expressed interest in connecting with IRCC before new policies are implemented to provide input into the policy process. The lack of availability of IS settlement services was also identified as a challenge. Finally, funding to address staff and resources shortages and support from university leadership were identified as important to "increase/improve services", increase "training opportunities relevant to post-secondary immigration issues", and "reach a larger pool of students". Respondents noted the need for senior administration to show "increased awareness and appreciation of the value of these services".

Discussion

Our study reveals that internationalization is high on the agenda in all eleven institutions. However, does this indicate an alignment with government policies?

The Synergy Between Institution and Government Policies

A majority of Ontario universities make reference to the federal and/or provincial government priority to recruit IS. Even those not referencing any government policies still set IS recruitment as their priority, aligning their institutional goals with those of the federal/provincial governments. At first glance, this reflects policy alignment between the strategic goals of the federal and provincial governments and Ontario universities. However, could one interpret this as indicative of Cerna's

first quadrant of a successful and positive synergy between governments and institutions? Could this lend credence to scholarship reinstating the predominance of the nation state as the main policy actor or policy determinant of universities' internationalization policies?

The federal government frames the IE policy discourse in context of Canada's future prosperity; it states "[i]nternational education has a vital role to play in creating jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity in Canada" (DFATD, 2014, p. 6). The Ontario provincial government mirrors these policy interests with Bob Rae, former Premier and author of *Ontario, A Leader in Learning,* a HE policy document, stating, IE is "not just about education. This is about the economy, immigration, our innovation, and our overall capacity to succeed as an economy" (Trilokekar, 2011). Both levels of government largely quantify benefits of IE in terms of hosting IS given their economic benefits. Government policy context undoubtedly impacts university strategic goals. Both levels of government have set targets to increase IS enrolments within the system at large by 50%. Further, the provincial government has created a policy context encouraging universities to recruit IS by deregulating IS fees at the same time it has reduced funding to the post-secondary sector. Thus, what one observes within the Canadian context, similar to several other countries, is an economic case for internationalization (Foskett, 2010; Maringe, 2010). Scholars argue that this instrumental-neoliberal discourse in HE at the national/regional level has penetrated to the level of institutional policies (Stromquist, 2007; Taskoh, 2014). In response to these policy levers, Ontario institutions have set enrolment targets to increase IS number on their campuses. One also observes a set of common "buzz words" (Stier, 2010, p. 341) associated with government strategy towards IS repeated in institutional strategies. Many institutions refer to their goal of "pursuing a higher profile in international student recruitment" and "attract[ing] the world's best talent". Perhaps this is suggestive of what Stensaker *et al.* (2008, p. 5) refer to as the "symbolic and rhetoric power of internationalization" or what Viczko (2012, p. 5) states as "the ideological baggage". Tamtik and Kirss (2016) refer to these as the facilitation of internationalization as a norm building process. Thus, at the level of policy rhetoric and strategy priority, there seems to be close alignment across federal, provincial and institutional IS recruitment policies.

Nevertheless, a closer examination of our data suggests that although this policy alignment exists, it is not even across all institutions in the province and there is a lack of a perfect synergy between government policies and institutional strategies. Overall, our research suggests that Ontario universities are contingent and variable in their responsiveness to government policy (Marginson and Sawir, 2005). Our findings indicate that few universities did not have IS recruitment as their strategic priority. Marginson and Sawir (2005, p. 258) remind us of the importance of the "place bound identity" of institutions, specifically that their capacity and potential is dependent on their geographical location and national/global hierarchy as well as

their leadership. Similarly, Stensaker *et al*. (2008) report that institutions do make unique policy choices implying less evidence of complete policy convergence with respect to how internationalization is interpreted at the institutional level. They also suggest that this variation in institutional pathways seems to be a result of geography, with institutions in the metropolitan centres in close alignment with national/global policy. Similarly, scholars note that it is easier for large well-known and centrally based universities than for small regionally based institutions to adopt an internationalization strategy (Foskett, 2010; Maringe, 2010; Suter and Jandl, 2008). Our study supports this research as we found geographical location to be a determinant in policy priorities. For example, one university referenced its remote location as a reason for prioritizing access for its domestic aboriginal student population. We also found one institution rejecting the government policy priority for admitting IS given its own institutional priority to raise its profile domestically.

In addition to recruitment, federal and provincial government policies value IS as future immigrants contributing to the labour market. Supporting the transition of IS as new immigrants is a policy arena resulting in close cooperation between the two levels of government; however, university strategy documents rarely reflect this policy intent. The survey enabled us to go beyond institutional strategy documents by examining institutional practices. Survey responses revealed that in practice some institutions have opted to offer specialized programs to assist IS with immigration support for permanent residency and help them integrate into the Canadian labour market, services/goals that were not mentioned in institutional strategy documents. Several universities, however, have chosen not to offer such services. While there is a need to examine the rationales for these differences, our findings reveal that there is no clear synergy between government policy of attracting IS as immigrants and institutional strategy.

Whereas the current government policies focus mainly on internationalization's economic rationale (human capital and revenue generation), institutional policies give importance to academic and social/cultural rationales which are in synch with their missions and roles. This is similar to the observation made by previous researchers who note the diversity in characterizing institutional rationales. Taylor (2004, p. 157) noted that institutions developed internationalization strategies "much more far reaching and inclusive" than simple IS recruitment. Stensaker *et al*. (2008) reported that while some institutions identify their goals more narrowly in terms of economic motives, others include broader academic and cultural objectives embedded in their missions as universities, engaging in what Taskoh (2014) refers to as an academic-liberal discourse. Thus, as per Cerna's (2014) typology, both synergies and mismatches between government and university policies are visible. While there is positive synergy between government policy and institutional strategy on IS recruitment, this is not necessarily the case when it comes to their retention as immigrants.

One may argue there is also mismatch and clash of policy alignment between and across the government and institutions. There are multiple stakeholders at both government and institutional levels often working at cross-purposes and sometimes in opposition. At the federal level, while the IE strategy was announced by the DFATD (currently GAC), immigration policy is set by another federal department, namely IRCC and labour market policy is the jurisdiction of Employment and Social Development Canada. On the provincial level, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (now Advanced Education and Skills Development) is responsible for funding universities, the Ontario Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship, in collaboration with the federal IRCC, is responsible for immigration, and the Ministry of Finance emerged as a stakeholder identifying IS recruitment as a major revenue generation and job creation tool for the province through its Open Ontario Plan (2010). The policy priorities of each of these departments do not necessarily align; there is an absence of formal mechanism to ensure policy coordination. Similarly, at the institutional level, leadership and staff positioning within academic and/or administrative units can differentially impact policy priorities, resource allocation and programs and services.

In Canada, the absence of a federal ministry of education results in IE as a policy arena split across various federal and provincial departments with lack of clear national leadership. In referencing "the federal government", universities mostly refer IRCC. Perhaps this is because IRCC's policy and regulations more directly impact institutional operations. Our data point to the powerful role that IRCC plays in the eyes of the institution as a "gate keeper" of internationalization. After all, it sets regulations that govern immigration. Given that in the Canadian policy context, the agenda for IE and immigration has become so tightly knit, there is need to fully examine these staff perceptions alluding to the changing role and growing importance of IRCC in IE governance.

Operationalization of Policies on Institutional Levels

Knight (2004) proposes it is at the institutional level that the real processes of internationalization take place. While states provide an enabling (or hindering) framework, universities can devise their own strategic responses that can align, mismatch or clash with state priorities (Cerna, 2014). Further, it is at the institutional level that the gap between aspiration and reality can be observed as this is where commitment in the form of resources, operational activities and programs becomes more evident. Are there inherent variations among institutional approaches given their individual structures and systems or is there large-scale conformity when it comes to operationalization of internationalization policies? What impact do government policies and institutional strategies ultimately have on the inner workings of the institution and on university governance processes?

Stensaker *et al*. (2008) argue that issues related to internationalization trigger processes of trying to enhance the institutional capacity for strategic decision making and institutional integration through processes of *formalization*, *centralization* and *professionalism*, all of which are evident in our study.

a. *Formalization:* Most institutions in our study had strategic plans for internationalization and mention IS recruitment as part of their strategy making this "a formal and routinized activity" (Stensaker *et al*., 2008, p. 4). However, universities' definition of internationalization has a broader scope perhaps reflecting global influences and/or institutional goals to build their profile and prestige (Foskett, 2010; Maringe, 2010). Given the scope of our research, it is not possible to either decipher these external influences from government priorities nor assess the gap, if any, between institutional rhetoric and reality.
b. *Centralization* is a tendency to centralize decision-making and responsibility (Stensaker *et al*., 2008). Besides developed institutional IE strategies, structural changes within institutions such as creating new structure for IE service offices and introducing new services and expanding current ones are evident. Most survey respondents refer to an upper administration in charge of IS and internationalization policy and identify a central IS services office.

Both formalization and centralization imply a change in institutional resource allocations, decision-making and ultimately governance. However, with this centralization, new challenges arose. Foskett (2010) speaks to the important role of leadership in setting vision and actively discussing strategy and engaging colleagues in its development and operations. Leadership has the responsibility of ensuring staff is aware of policies keeping communication channels open between upper/middle administration and front line staff. In our study, staff identified the important role of leadership, e.g. the knowledge, awareness and commitment of leaders backed with resource support as key to meeting policy objectives. However, what our data made evident is the importance of recognizing front-line staff as key policy actors in governance and execution of internationalization strategy. While literature has addressed the importance of senior administration and academic staff, the role of front line has been largely overlooked. As discussed earlier, our study revealed that managers are more aware/knowledgeable of government and institutional policies. Whereas the commitment of managers is important for setting policy priorities and ensuring resource allocations, front line staff's limited awareness and knowledge of these priorities could have serious implications for successful implementation of both governmental and institutional policies as they are ultimately the policy actors executing those policies and interacting directly with IS.

c. *Professionalism* is where "the autodidactic is replaced by the skilled and trained specialist" (Stensaker *et al*., 2008, p. 7). As mentioned, new staff positions/training programs have been created at universities as a response to Bill-C35 Section 91. Hence, we note a gradual devolution of role and responsibility in managing immigration from the federal government to the provinces and ultimately to universities (Baglay, 2012). This is an area for future research as much work is still needed to grapple with policy questions arising from this new policy landscape. We also note that staff in specialized and centralized IS service offices are more knowledgeable of national and institutional IE policies than student service staff in other departments. The growing professionalism of these IE professionals is also evident through repeated reference to professional associations/networks as important policy actors filling existing communication gaps between upper administration and front line staff and between government and universities. An area for further investigation is the impact of this growing professionalism on the normative conformity among institutions on internationalization (Foskett, 2010).

Universities Canada 2014 report highlights that "[g]iven the importance placed on IS recruitment, and, by the government, on the conversion of IS into future citizens", it is important to examine how support services in universities are keeping up with the recent growth in IS enrolments and how well universities are retaining IS throughout their degree programs (AUCC, 2014, p. 26). Whereas universities offer a wide range of programs and services to attract IS and facilitate their orientation and transition to their campuses, our data reveal that currently universities do not prioritize offering targeted professional services for IS to meet their employment and transition to PR status needs. Yet, as discussed earlier, government immigration policies have brought about organizational changes at the institutional level influencing resource allocations and governance structures.

Perceived Factors Facilitating/Hindering Meeting Policy Objectives

The Universities Canada 2014 report expresses hope of greater consultation between federal, provincial and educational sectors (AUCC, 2014), identifying the need for more research "on the conversion of international students into future citizens" (AUCC, 2014, p. 26) "to better inform federal and provincial governments' policies and actions" (AUCC, 2014, p. 4). Our survey data indicate that while staff may be aware of the intent of individual IS and/or numbers intending on pursuing permanent residency in Ontario, they recognized the attraction of IS friendly immigration regulations to IS recruitment and the role of universities in providing a "steppingstone" (Suter and Jandl, 2008, p. 403) to IS to permanent residency and as agents of internationalization facilitating IS' study-to-work transitions. However, staff also expressed frustration in not adequately

supporting IS in these functions. Staff recognized that to retain IS as permanent residents, there is a need to provide them with a "sense of belonging", "networks" for employment opportunities and more contact with domestic students (Arthur and Flynn, 2011, Chira, 2013; Nunes and Arthur, 2013; Scott *et al*., 2015). These expressions hold potential to challenge the highly normalized and problematic discourses on immigration including the IS-as-commodity perspective (Trilokekar and Kizilbash, 2013). While governments may wish to co-opt universities and are certainly powerful in influencing the policy contexts within which universities operate, they must recognize the broader purposes and functions of universities within Canadian society. As IE becomes increasingly linked to immigration, recruitment and retention of IS, it cannot just be about numbers. The policy must focus more broadly on the importance of fostering Ontario's/Canada's social cohesion as a society through promoting a sense of shared citizenship.

Staff provided important observations on the many opportunities and limitations in meeting government policy objectives. They attributed challenges in meeting these responsibilities largely to mismatch between government policies, the role of institutional leadership in providing vision, communication and required resources, and the importance of communication with government policy makers. Specifically, they identified gaps and inconsistency in government policy including how goals to retain IS as future immigrants were jeopardized with perceived complicated immigration processes, denial of settlement services for IS, and the constant changes in immigration policy without grandparenting previous applicants. Most of these challenges speak to the fragmented and ad-hoc nature of governance of this policy arena within Canada.

Our data suggest that staff were fairly astute in their observations in the misalignment, "mismatch, clash and negative synergy" (Cerna, 2014) between the levels of government and the universities. They perceived their lack of communication and input into government policy as a major challenge and expressed interest in working in partnership with government to develop "university-nation synergy" (Marginson, 2002, p. 423). Ultimately, our study confirms what literature on HE policy speaks to the changing roles of universities. The new government policies have expanded and continue to expand the role of universities to include the selection (implied, weeding out) of potential immigrants; the systemic policing and reporting of potential immigrants and their training and preparation for the labour market. In short, as Cerna (2014, p. 6) proposes, we observe an example of the state co-opting a non-state actor, in this case universities, "in the performance of the migration control 'function'" and "shifting liabilities outward … agents who are more likely to meet policy goals". We recommend further examination of these changing roles and the importance of institutions and staff as non-state actors in this new policy context (Cerna, 2014).

Conclusion

Our findings confirm that "the nation remains the major influence in the [international HE] sector" (Marginson and van der Wende, 2009, p. 24). Many institutions remain nationally embedded and depend on resource support and legitimation by government (Marginson and van der Wende, 2009). However, "internationalisation is not developing in similar ways in HE"; instead "strategies are filtered and contextualised by the specific internal context of the universities, by the type of university and how they are embedded nationally" (de Wit, 2010, p. 5). As Mosneaga and Agergaard (2012) argue, internal characteristics influence universities' capacity to strategize while external policy developments shape the context for IS recruitment and universities' prospects within it. Therefore, far from being straightforward, what we know is that the transformation of universities into agents of internationalization involves complex processes engaging a multitude of stakeholders positioned at various levels within universities and government policy circles. Our study reaffirms the existence of a gap between national policy making and institutional interpretation of internationalization (de Wit, 2010; Stensaker *et al*., 2008). We conclude that Cerna's (2014) typology, while useful, is simplistic and limiting as it does not capture the complexity of government and universities, in terms of organizational structures, multidimensional purposes/functions and multitude of actors. It is unable to provide a more nuanced understanding of the governance "of the making and doing of [internationalization] policy" (McGee (2004), cited by Viczko, 2012, p. 5); what Mosneaga and Agergaard (2012, p. 519) speak eloquently to as the balancing act between passively "being internationalised" and actively "doing internationalisation".

Enders (2004, p. 365) was spot on stating that universities are "objects as well as subjects of internationalization. They are affected by and at the same time influence these processes". Understanding government-university policy interface requires examining multi-level and multi-actor contexts within which both HE and governments operate and develop their international policies. Marginson and Rhoades (2002) have contributed to this understanding through their proposed "gloconal" agency heuristic aiming to explore the relationships and interactions between the global, national and local levels. Jones (2008) proposed a global HE matrix shifting the focus to incorporate both multiple levels of authority within the HE system and recognition that HE operates on multiple dimensions. Our study reinforces the need for newer models to better understand and analyse internationalization governance. In particular, we support Jones's (2008) recommendation to examine understructures within universities (focusing on central administrative, student support program and services and academic units) and incorporate perspectives offered by network theories (emphasizing the key role of professional organizations and administrative, managerial and front line staff). Also, the multiple national dimensions particular to the Canadian federal context

(multiple departments both provincially and federally) need incorporation. We call for newer models to better analyse the complexity of state-university relations experiencing major changes as they are influenced by and are instrumental in influencing the changing landscape of internationalization policy.

Notes

1 "The Global Competition for International Students as Future Immigrants: The role of Ontario universities in translating government policy into institutional practice" is a study funded by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and is available on http://www.heqco.ca/en-ca/Research/ResPub/Pages/The-Global-Competition-for-International-Students-as-Future-Immigrants.aspx.
2 Universities Canada previously known as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) is a membership organization providing university presidents with a unified voice for HE, research and innovation.
3 For further description on the contentious and contradictory nature of the relationship between federal and provincial governments, refer to Allison (1999, 2007), Savage (2009); Shubert *et al.* (2009) and Trilokekar (2009).
4 It is a department in the Government of Canada that manages Canada's diplomatic relations and works on enhancing Canada's international trade, international development and humanitarian assistance. In the 1990s, this department was known as Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). However, in 2013, DFAIT was amalgamated with the Canadian International Development Agency and renamed DFATD. In 2015, it was renamed again to GAC.
5 Previously known as the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP).
6 There are 20 provincially funded public universities in Ontario, distributed throughout the province. Our sample included 11 universities: 3 (5 campuses) from Central Ontario, 2 from Eastern Ontario, 3 from Northern Ontario and 3 from Western Ontario.
7 Strategic Mandate Agreements are documents signed between the ministry and individual PSE institutions outlining the role they perform in the PSE system and how they will build on current strengths to achieve their vision and help drive system-wide objectives.
8 Of those that made reference to federal/provincial policies, the policies referenced included the 2014 federal international education strategy, *Canada's International Education Strategy: Harnessing Our Knowledge Advantage to Drive Innovation and Prosperity (2014)*; the *Ontario Open Plan 2010*, *Ontario's Immigration Strategy* (2012), and Opportunities Ontario – the PNP.
9 International Student Recovery stipulates that the Ontario government will recover $750 per each IS (except for PhD students) from each institution's operating grant allocation effective 2013–2014.
10 National Occupational Classification is a system used to classify jobs/occupations based on type of work a person does and types of job duty. Many of Canada's immigration programs use it to decide if a job, or type of work experience, is valid for that program's criteria.
11 See note 4.

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