

Chapter 15

International Undergraduate Student Choice of Alberta for Post-Secondary Education

Darren Howes

Medicine Hat College, Canada

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author provides an overview of the decision-making process that international students will go through when choosing a country, province, and ultimately, an institution for their international higher learning education. After conducting exploratory qualitative research from an Alberta perspective, it was determined that international students are influenced by (1) safety, (2) quality, (3) knowing someone locally, (4) jobs and strength of the economy, and (5) cost. Subsequently, the author will also consider the factors that would influence international students to enjoy or remain in a province after their studies. Having an understanding of the factors that influence international student choice can help the reader understand some of the marketing implications of recruiting international students to institutions and how international students end up studying in the Canadian post-secondary system.

INTRODUCTION

Walking through the halls of one of the twenty-seven publicly funded post-secondary institutions in the province of Alberta, and seeing a plethora of diverse international students, it crossed the researcher's mind "how in the world did this many students from around the globe end up here?" As a faculty member for over fifteen years at this institution, where the institution is great and the community is beautiful, but it is not necessarily a destination for tourism or travel. And yet the international student population within the business program has grown from four percent to over forty percent in that fifteen-year time frame. There are other Albertans in the province who are not necessarily sure where the community is or that a post-secondary institution exists here, so then, how is it that these international students managed to locate and choose to study here? Those students cannot possibly be sitting in their bedroom in Delhi, India, or their kitchen in Beijing, China, or at their school in Osaka, Japan, dreaming of coming to this

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-5030-4.ch015

specific institution. Maybe this happens to institutions like Harvard, but certainly not here. This pondering led the researcher to ask that exact research question to try to understand the factors that influence international students to choose Alberta, Canada, as their choice for higher learning.

The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of how international students come to study higher learning in Alberta, Canada. Understanding the motivations and factors that influence international students' choice of destination for schooling can provide some insight into how administrators can market to those students. Or perhaps, just help everyone to better understand the cohort of students filling classrooms and some of their rationale for studying in Canada. The chapter will also discuss the aspects that international students like about studying in the country as well as what existing factors would allow them to want to continue to stay in Canada post-graduation.

BACKGROUND

International students have been choosing Canada as a destination for higher education for many years and this number continues to increase. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE, 2019) in 2018 there were 571, 215 international students enrolled in Canadian post-secondary schools representing a 16% increase over 2017. Research has previously been conducted in several different ways to try to understand the choice of institution by international students (Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervino, 2006; Eder, Smith, & Pitts, 2010) and further research has been conducted to understand location choice, which means the selection of country or province where students will attend schooling (Abubakar, Shanka, & Muuka, 2010; Bohman, 2010). The challenge, however, is that the flows of students from the sending countries will change over time. In 2018, India surpassed China as the largest contributor to international students attending Canadian post-secondary institutions (CBIE, 2019). It seems that as soon as research is conducted, the flows of students tend to change. What impact will the next United States election have on international student flows? The political relationships between countries can ebb the flow of students or help to increase it. What about the impact of COVID-19 or whatever the next global health pandemic? We know that Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), a contagious respiratory coronavirus that impacted both Asia and Canada in 2002 and 2003, had a negative impact on international student enrollment in Canada the following year. There will always be the next thing.

Internationalization of the higher learning education system in Canada is important to administrators within the Canadian federal government and in October 2011 a panel was formed to develop a domestic "international education" strategy. So, although there is a national level strategy, the authority for post-secondary education (PSE) lands under provincial governments in Canada to coordinate and regulate PSE with their provincial jurisdictions (Kirby, 2007, Shanahan & Jones, 2007). In Alberta, specifically, even though there is a recognized gap that exists between the goals of the federal and provincial governments, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology (MAET) felt there has not been a concentrated effort by government to assure marketing of PSE with the province's institutions of higher learning towards international learners (Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, 2012).

By understanding the reasons why international students choose to study in Canada, a province, and then down to a specific institution is becoming increasingly more important for institutions of higher learning administrators due to increases in competition. Understanding the factors which international learners consider when they make their choice for higher education in Alberta can be beneficial to administrators in the creation of future recruitment strategies of institutions (Greene & Kirby, 2012;

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/international-undergraduate-student-choice-of-alberta-for-post-secondary-education/262385

Related Content

Writing Self-Efficacy and Performance Among Students in an Online Doctoral Program

Erin Breitenbach, Katherine Adler and Vanessa Pazdernik (2022). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-14).

www.irma-international.org/article/writing-self-efficacy-performance-among/304080

Incremental Learning in a Capstone Project: Not All Mature Students Are the Same

John McAvoy, Mary Dempsey and Ed Quinn (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-15).

www.irma-international.org/article/incremental-learning-in-a-capstone-project/260945

Challenge-Based Learning in Higher Education: A Malmö University Position Paper

Cecilia E. Christersson, Margareta Melin, Pär Widén, Nils Ekelund, Jonas Christensen, Nina Lundegren and Patricia Staaf (2022). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-14).

www.irma-international.org/article/challenge-based-learning-in-higher-education/306650

Responding to Critical Feedback by Challenging Pessimistic Attributions: A Cognitive Tool for the Dissertation Journey

Aaron Samuel Zimmerman, Stephanie Millett, Chau H. P. Nguyen, Ngan T. T. Nguyen, The Nguyen, Stacey Sneed and Joseph Mbogo Wairungu (2020). *Creating a Framework for Dissertation Preparation: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 23-40).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/responding-to-critical-feedback-by-challenging-pessimistic-attributions/238299

Coaching for Raising Awareness Towards Research Project Planning and Management Using Grow Group Awareness Model

Ziad Hunaiti (2021). *Coaching Applications and Effectiveness in Higher Education* (pp. 78-96).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/coaching-for-raising-awareness-towards-research-project-planning-and-management-using-grow-group-awareness-model/285037