University of Alberta

How the transnational education industry informs international student migration and impacts international student experience on western post-secondary campuses

by

Megan McCaskill

A capping exercise submitted to the Faculty of Education
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education
in
Social Justice and International Studies in Education

Faculty of Education

Edmonton, Alberta

December 3, 2023

Abstract

Since the post-World War II era, the circular migration of western curricula to the developing world and the reverse migration of international students to western post-secondary institutions has created a pipeline allowing for the increase of international students on western campuses. As the number of international students increase, their student experience is minimised to one of expected assimilation, while in reality, international students face a wealth of challenges that impact their ability to succeed. This paper will provide a foundation that places responsibility on post-secondary institutions to provide additional support to their international students and a series of recommendations as to how this could be achieved.

Keywords: Student Experience, Canada, Transnational Education, Student Services, Post-secondary institutions

Table of Contents

Introduction

I began my career in post-secondary education working for the international recruitment team at a top five institution in Canada. I spent my days in contact with young people from around the world interested in attending a Canadian university, and my position was to encourage this endeavour and guide them through the application process. We developed strategies as to how we would solicit applications, considering with care which countries recruiters would travel to and what schools they would attend while there. We would carefully plan how to increase the number of international students attending our institution, promoting our institution as inclusive, welcoming, and a place of exceptional learning with world-class facilities and award-winning instructors. We promoted the positive job prospects our students encountered after they had finished their degree. However, once they had arrived on our campus, we in recruitment removed our involvement with these students to transition responsibility to the orientation team and had little interaction with them after. It is only since I have changed positions within the institution where I work to occupy a student service focused role that I have become increasingly aware that the support institutions offer on campus largely fall short of what international students need.

In this paper, I intend to look at the transnational education system through the lens of Critical Development Theory. This is to establish a historical foundation to build my argument that post-secondary institutions profit off international students without providing the necessary support to ensure they are equipped for success before they begin their program of study, while they are students on Canadian campuses, and after they have graduated from their programs and are entering the job market. My argument is that institutions have a responsibility to provide adequate holistic support to improve international student experiences. I will be by putting

forward a set of recommendations that post-secondary institutions should take into account based on a literature review about student experiences in both Canada and the United States.

The migration of students that I encouraged while working in the recruitment team has deep roots in many facets of global society. It has roots in the development project put forward after World War II as rich nations of the world sought to develop the impoverished ones to mirror their image, a form of imperialism that continues to impact the world's poor (Rist, 2014).

In the years since its creation as a way for wealthy nations to fund impoverished nations in development goals through loans, the World Bank has become the leading global investor in education. It created a baseline for quality education as determined by assessments like the Programme for International Student Assessment that largely reward western education (Spring, 2015). The transnational education industry, an industry that exports western curricula to the developing world, has ties to the knowledge economy this development created, as some knowledge was ingrained in the global marketplace as valuable. It continues to be an integral part of the transnational education industry, an industry that has grown to create a circular loop that feeds western curricula to the developing world, which in turn cycles international students back to western post-secondary institutions, like the one I work for.

In the neoliberal global society we inhabit, individuals seek to buy the most valuable knowledge they can in order to be competitive in the global employment marketplace, something western post-secondary institutions and governments exploit for their own gains. The original view of international students in governmental policy in the 1960's and 1970's was of migrants needing aid and support in their educational pursuits. This shifted significantly in the 1970's to the policy perception of international students as wealthy visitors, leading to a reduced responsibility to support international students on the part of institutions. This change of policy

language between the 1960's and 1970's governmental policy created the narrative that allowed for the implementation of differential student fees and began the trajectory of international students to be viewed as individuals that could serve Canadian interest (McCartney, 2021). Both of these perceptions continue to present day, with differential fees in Canada reaching amounts much higher than domestic counterparts, frequently viewed by institutions as a way to increase revenue, and a lack of adequate support provided to these students to succeed in their programs of study for which they have paid dearly.

Critical Development Theory's Place in International Student Research

In the post-World War II era, the UN Charter was ratified by 50 nations and the United Nations was established with the overarching goal of promoting peace around the world (UN, History of the United Nations). With it came the advent of modern development as a pillar of the United Nations as the global northwest began to work towards a global development project that mirrors the political and social ideals of western nations. There have been several iterations of ratified development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals which have both faced criticism (McGrath, 2015; Scholtz & Barnard, 2018).

The reason that defining development as a concept is important is because it ties into further discussions of mobility that stem from the search for important education and knowledge. Both the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals have action items that involve education, with the current SDG 4 being Quality Education for All. As Tucker says in Critical Development Theory, "development as a practical and intellectual project has been steeped in optimism […] yet many areas of the world are worse off today than they were" (1999, p.1). While the United Nations and powerful western nations view the development project as a positive one, Tucker's definition of development is "the process whereby other

peoples are dominated and their destinies are shaped according to an essentially Western way of conceiving and perceiving the world" (1999, p.1). This can be interpreted to mean that development is the erasure of the global south's individual cultures as the north western ideal is positioned as the pinnacle of development, the only acceptable blueprint to successful development.

This creates an environment where colonialism and imperialism in many forms can become dominant and thrive (Tucker, 1999, p.4). As the developed north makes a project of developing the south in their image, it creates a new form of colonialism that is arguably more detrimental than traditional forms of physical occupation due to the minimising of individual cultural identity to emulate a western image: the occupation of the mind. An important part of this is creating the social consciousness that says it is right to emulate the global north's ideals and practices and adopts the idea of a knowledge economy with western knowledge as the most valuable, removing cultural nuance and locally important customs from the development equation. The knowledge economy also grows through the creation of recognized academic research and publishing, something that has historically and continues to be based in the north with little recognition of southern scholarship. Knowledge about the developing world has taken place largely in the context of developed nations, with Europe and North America having the majority of recognized post-secondary institutions and the knowledge disseminated within them (Tucker, 1999, p. 13). This is changing slightly in the global context as China emerges as a post-secondary powerhouse; however, this is a very recent change in global migration patterns so the effects this will bring are still unknown.

Quality education is perceived to be a western-style education as the global knowledge economy strengthens, informing the global south that if they want to succeed and move forward

in the global economy, they must subscribe to a western education. This is often at the expense of their local customs and oftentimes at the expense of their way of life, since western education in the developing world is an expensive endeavour for families. While the UN says all primary education should be free, and free primary education is widely available, families that can afford to will send their children to private international schools to boost the chances of their children being able to obtain a quality post-secondary education in the global northwest. It creates a pathway to global migration for students who leave their home countries to further pursue western education in the global north. This creates a brain drain from the global south of people who have the potential to be influential voices in their home context, since many international students who travel north to attend post-secondary institutions do not return home at the end of their studies. This also creates an environment in which post-secondary institutions can profit and take advantage of the global impetus for students to travel north for an education they are unable to obtain in their home country. Global development and the various projects associated with it have informed the creation of a transnational education industry that profits off the mobility of both curricula flowing to the global south and students flowing to the global north, allowing for the continued unsuccessful development of southern nations, since in this case, development is furthering the problem instead of creating a solution.

The Transnational Education Industry

As development created and reinforced a knowledge economy, the transnational education industry emerged to facilitate access to the knowledge needed to engage in the global markets. The increased number of international students from the global south studying in the global north did not happen organically. It did not happen through lack of effort on the part of governments, post-secondary institutions, and social pressures created through the establishment

of a knowledge economy. There are many precipitating factors that led to the current environment that ensures a steady stream of international students flowing from developing countries to the global north. The history of both curricula from the global north migrating to the global south and students moving in the opposite direction is a long one, and one that has informed Canadian immigration policy over the last 50 years and continues to impact student experiences at post-secondary institutions in Canada.

Canadian post-secondary institutions rely on the presence of international students to continue their operations, and more broadly the Canadian economy relies on international student populations to bolster both the economy generally and the workforce. It is important to consider the power imbalances involved in the global development project, the knowledge economy, and the influence both things have on family decision-making when considering whether to send a child to study internationally. The place of education is not an "organic, apolitical phenomenon where the world gets smaller" (Johnstone & Lee, 2020, p. 3), but is rather a mechanism to continually channel resources such as human capital and knowledge to the powerful global north. There are global societal pressures that make this migration for education appealing, with the perception that it is imperative for individuals to gain a western education, and with this also comes a large benefit to institutions. This history should not be minimised since it allows international students to be under supported once they have arrived in their western university.

The History of Transnational Education

As World War II ended and the development project began along with increased global mobility for diplomats, politicians, and missionaries, the foundation of international education was also established as curricula were exported out of their native context and transplanted

abroad. Educational institutions were established using international curricula so that the children of globally mobile individuals had a pathway back to Europe and the United States to attend university since they had completed a recognizable high school program. These international schools were not intended for local populations, so the first literature that emerged that mentioned international schools cited only 50 international schools worldwide in 1964 (Hayden, 2011, p. 214). The exclusivity associated with international schools in the global south has shifted, and access was expanded to allow attendance of local populations. Hayden (2011) acknowledges that even if students never leave the countries or regions that they come from, the lives of these children will be heavily influenced by international development and factors that emerge from outside their country, and individuals will be disadvantaged if they do not have access to the knowledge capital needed to survive (p. 212). This perception that populations in the global south hold about gaining western education being the golden ticket to financial security in an increasingly globalised world is one that western institutions and governments target, leading to the converse migration of students leaving their home countries to attend a western educational institution.

A key aspect of the international education industry is that these students are learning a curriculum while located outside the region the curriculum was created for. International education at all levels privileges western dominance, and those students who can assimilate to this western education and perform according to western ideals even while occupying space outside of the western context will succeed (Johnstone & Lee, 2020, p. 7). This is also paradoxical, since it implies that international students who have completed western curricula programs abroad are well equipped to succeed in the actual western educational environment, yet we should not diminish the fact that learning occurs in many arenas of life, with formal

schooling being only one. The prominence given to western education is upheld by the perpetual rhetoric that countries in the global south cannot provide adequate quality education to their student population due to a perceived lack of capacity, leading to western capacity-building projects in developing countries, like the projects described by West (2016). While western education privileges the English language, local students often will speak a different language at home, which may also be a different language than that of the local majority, making English the second or third language they have learned (Johnstone & Lee, 2020, p. 9). For students learning at an international school with a foreign curriculum or for students that travel to western institutions, assimilation and adjustment to the environment are the expectations, which alleviates the responsibility institutions should hold to address the systemic barriers international students face and provide only the minimum general assistance to international students

The Knowledge Economy Reinforced by Transnational Education

Through the establishment of a transnational education industry, education and knowledge became a commodity that could be bought and sold on the global markets (Altbach, 2002, p. 2). The very first international schools were perhaps the first iteration of this idea since they established the belief that globally mobile children would not be able to receive a quality education in the locality they found themselves in, so a recognizable curriculum must be transplanted for them to access (Hayden, 2011, p. 214). In the neoliberal free market, education has become the source where individuals can buy the knowledge capital needed to engage successfully in the global marketplace, as long as one can afford it (Altbach, 2002, p. 2). Education is an investment to obtain a certain form of knowledge capital, and this knowledge capital must be that which is considered superior. This perception of superiority stems from the understanding that certain skills and knowledge hold inherently more value than others, and that

those who can afford to obtain the most valuable knowledge capital can expect to succeed in the workforce more than those who do not (Little, 2003, p. 438).

The creation and reinforcement of the knowledge economy also concurrently creates a global empire of knowledge that "can be mapped according to a global geography whereby Europe and the USA occupy key positions" (Fahey & Kenway, 2010, p. 629), with countries like Canada occupying important position in the near periphery. As of 2018, Canada was placed fourth globally in terms of the number of international students overall that were enrolled in post-secondary institutions, but when considered in proportional terms adjusted for population, Canada ranked first for the number of international students studying in post-secondary institutions (McGregor et al., 2022, p. 6-7). This shows clearly how territories are linked together "via various flows and exchanges including those associated with people and knowledge" (Fahey & Kenway, 2010, p. 629) when considered alongside the fact that Canada is a major exporter of its provincial high school curricula to offshore institutions around the world, largely to developing countries (Wang, 2017, p. 523). As of November 2023, there are 125 Canadian curriculum international schools globally (CICIC, 2023), which shows that Canada exports their various provincial curricula to a large number of students around the world, who then offer post-secondary institutions the perfect opportunity to recruit international students to study abroad to further obtain so-called valuable knowledge as dictated by the knowledge economy.

Why Transnational Education as an Industry Matters

The transnational education industry's creation as reified by the global development project and its implications in the establishment of the knowledge economy has a significant impact on the migration of students to western post-secondary institutions and their experience at these institutions. The first major reason why this industry matters is because with the continued

growth of the transnational education industry, education is increasingly becoming corporatized. With this corporatisation comes the generalisation of curricula to ostensibly be neutral, but in actuality, privileges western knowledge as universal (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Spring, 2015). Internationalised education and spaces integrate a diversity of knowledge and experiences so that students can recognize their experiences in their education (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, p. 65). The centring of western knowledge as universal leads to the increased understanding that profit can be derived from educational pursuits of all kinds, creating an environment where ideas and concepts that are disseminated around the world can be controlled by powerful entities (Spring, 2015, p. 127).

It is also important to recognize how these global power structures that exist impact the experiences international students face when it comes to topics of race. Many international students that attend western institutions will be people racialised as not white, increasing the chance that international students will experience racism on western campuses. Educational institutions are racialised ones, something that Meghji (2022) speaks at length about. Unless institutions actively work to eradicate racism on campus, we will continually "generate knowledge of entities and activities that are linked to one another in such a way that they regularly bring about a particular outcome" (Hedstrom, 2005, as cited in Meghji, 2022, p. 91) but do nothing to address the entities and activities that bring about the outcome. Race and racism are tied closely to many of the experiences that international students face. As a key piece of the neoliberal free market, education cannot be considered race neutral any longer, as it has often been argued to be. "Neoliberalism produces its own distinctive structures of racial oppression" (Kundnani, 2021, p. 52), and educational institutions play into this through the generalizable curricula that has already been mentioned as not serving anyone adequately, but particularly not

the students studying the curriculum from abroad. It extends into the classroom as well, as Pullman (2015) speaks about how in offshore schools in China, foreign instructors are imported along with the curriculum, so the students are not only learning a curriculum rooted in a culture and context that is unfamiliar to them, but it is being taught by unrecognisable faces and individuals who begin the erasure of their Chinese identity by enforcing English naming conventions (p.1). This extends further abroad when international students arrive in Canada and are told their names are too difficult to pronounce or are not able to obtain employment when using their birth names (Chira, 2017). The transnational education industry has pervasive influence for young people around the world, and it impacts their experience once they have arrived in their Canadian institution frequently because of perceptions that may not be true, as informed by the changing policies and view of international students from the Canadian governmental level over the last 50 years which has trickled down to institutions and to the general population (McCartney, 2021).

The transnational education industry opens education opportunities to those in the global south who may not have access to it otherwise. It allows for a sharing of knowledge that is important in our interconnected world and adds new and nuanced perspectives to the western classroom when it is done correctly. On the surface, the migration of students from the global south to the global north is a positive one for young people to seek out opportunities, and yet the neoliberalism rampant in our capitalist society has made knowledge a commodity for sale. Western post-secondary institutions are the entities truly moving further ahead since they are selling the knowledge many seek. As long as they sell the product individuals are buying, their responsibility is met and anything outside of that is left to the students themselves to navigate. The opening of borders to increase international student populations is to bolster finances for the

western institutions, and not to benefit the globally mobile students. In fact, policy has been implemented to the detriment of the international students. Transnational education policy does not adequately take students themselves into account, leading to education lacking humanity, which creates barriers to success that are not addressed sufficiently and a question as to whether institutions have a responsibility to provide differentiated support to international students. As the upcoming sections will illustrate, international student experiences in the United States and Canada are filled with racism, insecurity academically, culturally, and linguistically, a lack of space on campus for international students to gather and obtain specialised support, and difficulties obtaining employment both while students and after they have finished their program of studies. Is a positive student experience not part of the product being sold? If it is part of the product being sold, then it is the responsibility of the institution to provide support to better the student experience, something that the upcoming section will show is currently falling short.

The International Student Experience in the United States

Although the bulk of my discussion and the recommendations I will provide in this paper are centred on the Canadian international student experience, I first want to begin by discussing the student experience for international students in the United States. The United States and Canada are culturally quite similar, as demonstrated in research when Canadian international students are removed from American data sets since their responses and perceptions were similar to those of domestic US students (Hanassab, 2006, p. 161). Their global proximity to each other means that they share many traits, and therefore looking at the US international student experience offers valuable insight as there is extensive research that has been conducted, even if there are differences in experiences for international students studying in Canada when compared to the US.

A central theme within research discussing international student experience within the United States is race. Race has been an important discussion point in American society due to the long history of racial tensions that persist to the current day. International students of colour arrive on US post-secondary campuses and are required to renegotiate their racial identities to align with US norms, leading to a variety of perceptions in how race is experienced in US postsecondary institutions. Fries-Britt et al. (2014) found that international students did not automatically examine their racial identity upon arriving in the United States, but rather had an experience act as a catalyst to this examination, such as being addressed using racially motivated derogatory terms by strangers that would not exist in their home context (p. 6). With the use of these derogatory terms that did not occur in their home countries, students perceive their status as racialized individuals in a way that is different from how one may be racialized at home. Much of the research regarding race and racism on United States post-secondary campuses looks at the precipitating factors that led to students being racialized.

Hanassab (2006) details how perceptions about experiences will change depending on who an individual is speaking with, whether that be an instructor, a classmate, administrative staff, or the wider community off-campus, and will vary depending on where a student is from. The other complicating factor in this equation is how perceptions will change with changing geopolitical events. Hanassab conducted their research before the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, but the article was published after 9/11, leading Hanassab to question how the experience of Middle Eastern students changed after this significant event. Similarly, many Asian students in Koo et al.'s (2021) study, who had not previously had racist experiences in the United States, saw that change during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since individuals will attempt to minimise discomfort as much as possible, and as experiences of racism are deeply unsettling and fear-inducing, international students will segregate themselves into familiar groups, limiting interactions with domestic students and students of other ethnicities (Jiang, 2021; Koo et al., 2021; Kwon et al., 2019). Kwon et al. (2019) found that student groups centred around ethnic identities were a common way that international students found support on campus (p. 62). However, with this trend comes a decrease in responsibility for post-secondary institutions to provide adequate support to their international students. If there is support on campus to aid in international students' adjustment and assimilation to the US campus environment, even if not provided by the institution itself, it is sufficient. Integration is preached and encouraged as a beneficial aspect of the learning experience on post-secondary campuses, however if there are no active integration efforts put forward by the institution to support international students, the assertion put forward by institutions seems disingenuous. Jiang (2021) points to the idea that the Chinese students in their study are "largely objectified as capital and a diversity signifier" (p. 33) and are used to show that campuses are inclusive by their presence, which can be extrapolated to international students as a whole.

Though international students are viewed largely as diversity signifiers and their presence on campus is celebrated, the manifestation of their diversity is minimised. Yao et al. (2019) assert that much of the existing literature regarding international student experience in the United States looks at assimilation and coping mechanisms for international students to adjust to their new environment rather than delving into the reasons why these are necessary due to pervasive oppressive systems located within institutions that can be fixed (p. 38-39). International students arrive on campus having met the admission requirements and having paid exorbitant fees in

order to maintain their place at the institution, but also having travelled to a new country, obtained the immigration related requirements needed, and established their lives in a new environment. The commitment that international students undertake to study abroad is immense. Post-secondary institutions may provide some settlement assistance to their newly arrived international students, but international students are largely left alone to assimilate to a new scholarly and cultural environment with the assertion that supports exist, though the supports may not be appropriate or easily accessible. Negative student experiences lead to negative outcomes in many aspects of an individual's life, including homesickness, poor academic performance for individuals who are banking on academic success in the United States to increase their value in the knowledge economy, low self-esteem, decreased engagement, increased stress, and increased mental health concerns (Yao et al., 2019, p. 43).

The International Student Experience in Canada

International students in Canada share similar experiences as students studying in the United States, including facing discrimination, othering on campus, segregation, and racism on campus. However, the form these experiences take often look different for students studying in Canada. There is a common perception that racism and discrimination does not exist in overt forms in Canada. Canada holds a reputation of being welcoming and inclusive to newcomers (Chira, 2017, p. 137). Part of this, I opine, is tied to the state policy of multiculturalism that has in the past minimised the acknowledgement of difference between different populations in Canada. This minimization has caused a homogenization of diverse populations, allowing for support in many arenas of society to be generalised as well. Walcott (2011) frames multiculturalism as a system of unfreedoms. As multiculturalism continues to be a central identifier of Canadian societal consciousness, we must investigate what that means when people

racialized as not white continually cite racist experiences in society. Canada can position itself as post-racial due to its multicultural policy, showing that race no longer acts as a barrier since there are people of colour in prominent positions of power in Canadian government, yet scholars engaging in anti-racist work "argue that race always remains a salient element of Canadian citizenship" (Walcott, 2011, p. 21).

Researchers have studied how students on Canadian campuses experience discrimination and the forms it takes. Many researchers found that students perceived discrimination or stereotyping based on language ability (Howe et al., 2023; Chira, 2017; McGregor et al., 2022; Legusov et al., 2023) and both overt and microaggressions on the basis of race (Avenido, 2023; Houshmand et al., 2014). The accents that international students have impact the perceptions that others hold regarding their English ability. Even if they speak grammatically perfect English, students with accents are hyper-aware of their accented speech, which then makes them withdraw and disengage in both classrooms and in greater life so as not to face judgement in terms of their language ability, as indicated by Chira (2017) when one of their research participants mentioned comments on their accent made them "shut up because…[they] do not want to be the foreign person" (p. 143).

Howe et al. (2023) furthered this idea of language insecurity when they noted "language barriers were recurrently reported throughout the interviews" (p. 124). Avenido (2023) as well shows language is a pervasive aspect of international student experience when one of their research subjects explained a circumstance where they were required to engage in a conversation in their place of work where the customer made derisive comments about an accented person not being understandable, when the subject themself is obviously from outside of Canada (p. 30). Avenido (2023) and Houshmand et al. (2014) both had research participants reference

experiences they had in classrooms or other interactions where they were made to feel othered by their classmates due to their accent, leaving them uncertain and self-conscious about communicating with others. These are definite forms of racism that are paired with other forms of discrimination, such as individuals not being invited to interview for jobs when putting their birth name on the application, but receiving calls back regarding applications when using western names (Chira, 2017, p. 145) or exclusion from various aspects of Canadian society (Howe et al, 2023, p. 125; Houshmand et al., 2014, p. 381-382), which ties into the other barriers that international students face when studying at western post-secondary institutions.

Discrimination also permeates other aspects of international student life, and most directly it informs academic skills and the supports available to international students. While not discrimination exactly, barriers related to differences in academic culture that international students face are important to acknowledge. International students are expected to assimilate to the western academic environment, with little institutional support to aid in the transition. Participants in Howe et al.'s (2023) study acknowledged how helpful advisors are while also noting that more advisors need to be available (p. 122). Participants in the study also cited the need for additional specific writing support, since much of the general writing support was found to be insufficient when it came to writing for specific classes or disciplines (Howe et al., 2023, p. 124). The increase in international students on campus in the last two decades also seemed to take faculty by surprise, leading to instructors being unable to adequately support their students in learning since they themselves were not suitably prepared to “adapt their teaching to best serve this growing population” (McGregor et al., 2022, p. 6), something that sets both populations up for failure.

Attached to the idea that instructors are unprepared to support their international students comes concerns about culturally different study norms. These concerns arise as these ways of learning are called into question regarding acceptable academic conduct. International students bring with them a way of learning and navigating their education that may be unfamiliar in western contexts, and something that must be accounted for is cultural differences associated with study style and a respect for the challenges international students may face in the classroom. The idea of guanxi, which is learning based on social connections and sharing of information to aid each other in success, is one such study technique that is seen within international student populations from China (Pullman, 2015). As Pullman (2015) posits, it can be an "ethical grey area" since this sharing of knowledge can sometimes delve into the realm of academic integrity concerns, being "viewed as a culturally linked informal transgression of rules of conduct" (p. 9). However, as Xin and Pearce (1996) outline, guanxi is a natural response to the lack of support provided by the institution since it "compensates for [the] lack of institutional support by cultivating personal connections" (p. 1654).

Different academic cultures will have different expectations or acceptable practices, so recognizing this difference and supporting students through it so they can still learn authentically is important for institutions to consider. McGregor et al. (2022) mentions plagiarism and how some collectivist cultures view information sharing differently than western contexts, which is dangerous when considering how seriously academic dishonesty concerns are considered, often viewing students that plagiarise as morally corrupt (p. 8). Anecdotally, I remember in my undergraduate program having a conversation with an international student from India who was planning to copy a classmate's assignment and submit it as his original work, leading to a conversation about the consequences this could lead to, many of which he was unaware of. Is

this a moral failing of his, or is it an aspect of maladjustment to his new academic environment? Should the institution have provided a mandatory orientation session that addressed academic conduct norms in Canada? Are they responsible for offering this? If institutions want to mitigate this kind of cultural response due to legitimate concerns regarding academic integrity, then preventative initiatives should be integrated early in academic careers, and not when it becomes a perceived problem.

Much of the literature that I examined also showed the importance of employment and finances when it came to studying on campus for international students. As has already been mentioned in the previous sections, the rates of tuition for international students have continued to increase. Howe et al. (2023) cite that international students fund 27% of Thompson River University's operating costs (p. 116) and universities around Canada have rapidly increased their international student population to generate revenue. The misconception that international students are wealthy and can easily afford the exorbitant tuition fees is a harmful view to hold.

Chinese students, along with other groups of international students, are often seen favourably in recruitment efforts since they are perceived to be of high economic status, which is not always true (Yao et al., 2019). International students do not have access to the same financial aid opportunities as domestic students, as they are excluded from student loans and have access to a limited number of scholarships (Legusov et al., 2023, p. 124). The pressure this financial crisis creates for students to do well and succeed at their western post-secondary institution stems from the not infrequent story told by international students about how their parents exhausted all their savings or resorted to borrowing from friends and family in their home country with the expectation that once their child was done their schooling, they would obtain a high paying job and would aid in repaying the debts (Avenido, 2023, p. 32). This is not to mention the need for

international students to work while attending post-secondary, something that has in the past been severely limited due to immigration restrictions on study permits which dictate that international students can only work a maximum of 20 hours per week. This rule is still listed on the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website (2023), with a temporary change that allows international students to work more than 20 hours per week from November 15, 2022 to December 31, 2023.

While a student, individuals holding a study permit often find it very difficult to gain employment; when they do, it often leads to exploitative environments where international students feel as though they are being taken advantage of (Avenido, 2023, p. 29). After international students graduate, Canada has several pathway programs that lead to Permanent Residency. Nearly all of these pathways have requirements regarding acceptable employment that individuals must have in order to be eligible for Permanent Residency, which causes extreme pressure for students to make a difficult decision about employment at the end of their studies.

International students who come to study in Canada are eligible for a postgraduate work permit upon completion of their program; however, the length of the work permit is dictated by the length of their post-secondary program and is dependent on finding eligible employment if they want to gain Permanent Residency (IRCC, 2023). If a student takes a one-year program, they will only be eligible for a one-year work permit (IRCC, 2023). This is often not enough time to obtain employment that makes an individual eligible for Permanent Residency. Many students feel as though they have one opportunity to find suitable employment after they are done with their studies since they can only obtain the Post-Graduate Work Permit once (Avenido, 2023; Chira, 2017).

All these factors, paired with the aspects of student experiences that have not been discussed such as housing concerns and food scarcity, create a perfect storm for international students to experience severe mental health concerns. Much like with academic norms differing across cultures, so too do reactions to mental illness and the likelihood international students will seek out support. Legusov et al. (2023) cite Moissac et al.'s (2020) findings that international students are less likely to be public about their hardships and therefore do not seek help as often as they may need to (p. 123). Though domestic and international students may face the same stressors based on research conducted, their comfort in seeking help is different (Clarke, 2023, p. 296). There are also few resources on campuses fully capable of supporting the various aspects of an international student's identity when considering the mental health concerns of international students, like career and immigration related concerns (Clarke, 2023, p. 296). In Lu et al.'s (2013) study, they found that of the 54% of the Chinese student population interviewed, only 9% utilised mental health services on campus. This indicates that tailored support is needed for international students and that customization needs to be informed by an understanding of how international students experience academic life differently than their domestic counterparts (Clarke, 2023, p. 297). This is an area of research that Clarke (2023) acknowledges is lacking, something that must be rectified as the international student population continues to increase without a similar level of expansion of mental health supports (p. 299). Mental health exists in an ecosystem comprising all the topics that have been discussed and more, so a holistic solution that expands across many forums of student services and that adequately addresses various topics at appropriate times in an international student's life cycle is imperative.

Discussion and Recommendations

To begin the discussion that emerges from the literature review, a basic but important definition must be established: what does student service mean? There are numerous ways that this can be defined. Montsion (2018) defines several different spaces that could be considered facets of student services, like resource desks and experiences offices, each developed with the intention to provide a certain service. Clarke and Arnold (2022) make the distinction between student affairs and student services, where student affairs professionals are those who develop programming surrounding student learning and development, whereas student services employees are to provide specific services to students. These terms can all be summarised, to me, under one umbrella definition that can be manipulated to further refine context specific definitions: student services are those services that strive to assist students within an institution to succeed in their chosen field of study through the entire student life cycle.

Student services professionals at post-secondary institutions "work tirelessly and 'enthusiastically support the goals of student success in the academy…these individuals inform, orient, advise, challenge, support, and guide students through a myriad of decisions during the post-secondary years'" (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010, as cited by Clarke & Arnold, 2022, p. 147), but this also raises questions as to how prepared these professionals are to support the diverse student population in their many differing challenges. A danger that is frequently seen in post-secondary institutions when investigating student services is the homogenization of international students into a monolithic group. As Hanassab (2006) demonstrated, international students from different cultures will face different challenges. The same professionals in student services are expected to support students from a multitude of backgrounds, so while I do agree with Hardy-Cox and Strange that student services professionals are largely enthusiastic and

committed to providing exceptional service to ensure success for students, they may be under-equipped to provide differentiated support necessary for international students.

Another aspect that must underpin the discussion and the associated recommendations must be mental health. Mental health is a major concern on post-secondary campuses and international students are a significant demographic that requires specialised support. Mental health is still a very stigmatised subject in many countries, so international students may not feel comfortable seeking help or accessing resources on campus, even when literature has demonstrated that international students have high incidence rates of severe mental illness. Creating a network of mental health supports that are culturally informed and can address international student identity in many ways will help provide safe environments for students to connect with and gain the help they need. This network, tied into additional supports that allow students to gain academic and personal support, will help alleviate mental health concerns stemming from academic success and personal concerns like finances and cultural adjustment. So, while this is not a formal recommendation, additional research about international student mental health and what its main impacts are is an important undertaking to address a major underlying concern for international students on Canadian campuses.

Recommendation 1: Create an ongoing consultation process to ensure that adequate resources are available for international students as their needs change based on geopolitical happenings and to identify areas of improvement that institutions may not be aware of.

In order to make student services effective, international students should be consulted in the creation process. Who is better to say what help is needed than those people needing help? Institutions create monolithic service centres that cater to international students, but is the programming provided enough to help students through their holistic experience as a student and

beyond? Institutions recruit around the world to increase international student populations, and it is working, but institutions are not keeping up with resources needed to support students. This starts by asking students who they are and what they bring with them to their studies. As King et al. (2023) writes, students do not just enter the institution and then leave at the end of their studies. They must "survive several years to achieve a diploma or degree. Yet survival is not just about meeting academic or cognitive requirements; it is also about being able to navigate campus culture and climate" (King et al., 2023, p. ii). They follow this shortly by acknowledging that experience is rooted in a student's identity and history, and a student's personal life impacts their academic achievement.

While administrators in institutions may know this theoretically, creating practical and tangible structural changes may not emerge for equity deserving students. Students should regularly be consulted on what they need to achieve success, since geopolitical events and changes more broadly may impact outcomes. Storytelling is an important way for international students to express their needs and offers a critical race methodology to begin breaking down institutional barriers (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Creating a method of collecting stories as opposed to just general surveys that asks students to rank their experience from one to ten will provide a more fulsome conceptualization of what students experience and how it impacts their campus experience. Initiatives like the Student Experience Action Plan at the University of Alberta (University of Alberta, 2023) are a good place to start, and show that institutions do care about their students' experiences on campus, but initiatives should look separately at the needs of equity-deserving groups.

Recommendation 2: For institutions to take tangible action to address student concerns of racism in order to maintain a positive relationship between students and institutions

As has already been stated, much of the international student experience on both Canadian and American post-secondary campuses and in the greater community is informed and shaped by racism in its various forms. From interactions on campus to discrimination in the wider community, race is a pervasive facet of the international student experience for many. Harper and Hurtado (2007) identified nine themes regarding race in the post-secondary environment in the United States, but many reflect what the Canadian articles found in their studies, such as institutions not doing enough to address racism, race being a taboo topic that should not be discussed, self-segregation along ethnic identities, and gaps in terms of how race was perceived by various groups on campuses, with racialized student groups being vocal about racism on campus and non-racialized groups denying it. Institutions need to begin addressing racial tensions on campuses if they wish to better the student experience, as they are publicly declaring to do.

Though this work must be done, institutions should take care to develop strategies to address racism that are informed by the student experiences of those studying in the institution. The student experience in major Canadian centres, like Vancouver and Toronto, will be different from prairie ones like Edmonton, or smaller ones like Halifax, so the root of strategies must be solidified based on information from the context they are meant to impact. Initiatives that are effective in one context may not be best suited for another. Additionally, institutions should ensure that when individuals come forward to express a concern or need that impacts the international student population as a whole, the institution takes tangible action to address the concern. Part of the problem expressed by international student participants in many of the articles cited is that institutions did not take their concerns seriously nor did they see changes

made to address the concerns (Hassanab, 2006; Houshmand et al., 2014; Koo et al., 2021; Kwon et al., 2019).

Recommendation 3: A fulsome, culturally informed student service system that supports the student as a holistic individual.

When looking at academic-focused services that are provided to students on post-secondary campuses, such as writing or language assistance programs, there must be an adequate training program in place to ensure individuals who are staffing these spaces are knowledgeable about students from different backgrounds and can support them using their home contexts academic norms. International students come to western institutions with their own cultural background and academic norms, with the expectation that they will be able to succeed. However, they are expected to assimilate to a western academic culture when they do not have the tools to adequately do so. Therefore, institutions should ensure that services linked to areas of student life not associated with academics are available for international students in contexts specifically for them, and further ensure that the student services are differentiated depending on where a student's home country is. Students have a more holistic experience than just academics, and their adjustment to Canadian life must include support in terms of cultural adjustment and life adjustment that should be ongoing past orientation events.

Recommendation 4: Provide immigration and employment support to students and graduates to ensure they are provided assistance in finding a job as a student in a safe environment and a pathway to their post-graduation life.

Canada provides extensive immigration pathways to Permanent Residency; however, many of these pathways are connected to obtaining qualified jobs post-graduation, something that can be challenging. Institutions should have a dedicated team to develop employment

networks of safe employment opportunities for international students, ongoing immigration support for students before, during, and after their programs of study, and the ability to provide resume, interview, and Canadian workplace culture support so that graduates are set up for the job market.

Recommendation 5: Establish better support and training opportunities for instructors to facilitate success for a diverse student population.

Instructors are the individuals that interact most closely with international students, so ensuring they have the tools needed to support them, especially as the number of international students on campus continues to grow, will benefit the instructors, as well as the students they support. Several of the articles cited in this paper recognized the surprise that instructors feel at the increase of international students in Canadian post-secondary institutions, and several of the students that were surveyed in the various articles explained the feelings of isolation and misunderstanding in their classes. Anecdotally, I have had international classmates explain that they often find it difficult in classes to explain themselves in real time due to language concerns and feelings of being self-conscious. These individuals have high English language proficiency, but they also still speak English as an additional language. With so many classes having a portion of the grade breakdown consisting of class participation, international students are put at a disadvantage. Instructors should be supported in developing culturally informed syllabi and assignments, as well as support in providing a classroom space that is truly welcoming of all individuals. Academic support must come from a holistic consideration of the whole learner on our campuses and not from assumptions that international students are deficient in some way, but rather come with a different set of academic tools to their post-secondary studies (Weiner, 2006). It is important that there is buy-in from members of both faculty and staff and that there are

assurance measures in place to verify that culturally informed syllabi and student services goals are being met, even if there are certain individuals reluctant to comply.

There are limitations to my work, and I am aware that additional research needs to be conducted. One intentional aspect of my paper that I want to acknowledge is the separation of international students and indigenous students in Canada. Both are incredibly important groups in Canadian academia and both are groups that are equity deserving. However, frequently in my research, international and indigenous contexts were discussed together, and I view this as a dangerous conflation. These two groups are not the same and they should not be considered together as needing the same kinds of support. Institutions need differentiated support for each of these groups, and in that regard, they can be discussed together. When it comes to the support itself, they should not be conflated as it is disingenuous when considered in the same breath as equity. It is largely due to the need for additional research specifically regarding indigenous specific support needs that indigenous students have not been discussed in this paper to consciously remove the conflation so often seen in work addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in Canadian post-secondary contexts.

Conclusion

Through the creation of the transnational education industry and the connection it has forged with the knowledge economy, international students migrate to the global northwest at a rapid rate. The migratory pathway creates an environment where international students must travel to the global north to acquire knowledge that is considered valuable in the market, a migration established by the global development project. This allows a pass for post-secondary institutions to fully support their international students on campus, emphasising a need to assimilate for international students, yet not providing the support necessary for students to

achieve this. Post-secondary institutions benefit greatly from the presence of international students on campus, since they generate revenue through differential fee models, something that came about through the shift in understanding regarding international students as individuals needing aid and academic refuge to wealthy individuals that can be exploited. This work is especially important at this point in time as legislation is being proposed to remove EDI offices and initiatives on post-secondary campuses, like Policy Proposal 9 put forward by the United Conservative Party Government (UCP, 2023).

It is through the historical lens of the transnational education industry, an industry that exploded through the global development project, that post-secondary institutions have been able to increase their international student population. This increase in student population has happened rapidly in the past twenty years, but the student service support needed to ensure these students succeed and are retained as students has lagged. This may partially be because of a lack of priority to this regard, or a lack of responsibility felt by institutions. Based on the research I have conducted and the experiences I have had professionally, I feel that post-secondary institutions in the global northwest have a responsibility to provide adequate support to the student population that provides so much necessary funding to keep institutions running the way they have been to date. These institutions need to establish adequate support networks for international students anyway. A global network of influence that is informed by historical imperial factors brings these students to our campuses where they have challenging times in many facets of their lives. It is the post-secondary institutions responsibility to ensure they have the best possible experience while they are here and to begin breaking the exploitative model to which international students have been subjected.

References

Altbach, P. (2002) Knowledge and education as international commodities. *International Higher Education*, *28*, 2-5. https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2002.28.6657

Avenido, K. (2023) An intersectional analysis of Chinese international students' experiences in postsecondary institutions in British Columbia. *Journal of International Students*, *13*(1), 22-39. DOI: 10.32674/jis.v13i1.2877

Chira, S. (2017) Learning opportunities: International students and lessons about education, immigration and cultural diversity on and off the (Atlantic) Canadian campus. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, *49*(3), 133-152. DOI: 10.1353/ces.2017.0025

CICIC (n.d.) *Directory of offshore schools and international education resources*. Retrieved November 5, 2023, https://www.cicic.ca/982/perform_an_advanced_search_in_the_directory_of_offshore_schools_and_international_education_resources.canada

Clarke, K. (2023) International graduate students' mental health diagnoses, challenges, and support: A descriptive comparison to their non-international graduate student peers. *Journal of International Students*, *13*(3) 280-304. DOI: 10.32674/jis.v13i3.3148

Clarke, K. & Arnold, C. H. (2022) An analysis of trends and themes in research articles on Canadian student services. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *51*(3), 145- 165. DOI: 10.47678/CJHE.VI0.189137

Fahey, J. & Kenway, J. (2010). Thinking in a 'worldly' way: Mobility, knowledge, power and geography. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *31*(5), 627-640, DOI: 10.1080/01596306.2010.516943

Fries-Britt, S., Mwangi, C. A. G., & Peralta, A.M. (2014) Learning race in a U.S. context: An emergent framework on the perceptions of race among foreign-born students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *7*(1), 1-13. DOI: 10.1037/a0035636

Hanassab, S. (2006) Diversity, international students, and perceived discrimination: Implications for educators and counselors. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *10*(2), 157-172. DOI: 10.1177/1028315305283051

Harper, S. R. & Hurtado, S. (2007) Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, *120*, 7-24. DOI: 10.1002/ss

Hayden, M. (2011). Transnational spaces of education: The growth of the international school sector. *Globalisation, Societies, and Education*, *9*(2), 211-224. DOI: 10.1080/14767724.2011.577203

Houshmand, S., Spanierman, L. B., & Tafarodi, R. W. (2014) Excluded and avoided: Racial microaggressions targeting Asian international students in Canada. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *20*(4), 377-388. DOI: 10.1037/a0035404

Howe, E. R., Ramirez, G. & Walton, P. (2023) Experiences of international students at a Canadian university: Barriers and supports. *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education, 15*(2), 115-133. DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v15i2.4819

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (2023, September 12) *Work in Canada after you graduate: About the post-graduation work permit*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/about.html

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (2023, November 2) *Work off campus as an international student*. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/work-off-campus.html

Jiang, A. (2021) Diversity without integration? Racialization and spaces of exclusion in international higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *41*(1), 32-47. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2020.1847635

Johnstone, M. & Lee, E. (2020) Education as a site for the Imperial project to preserve whiteness supremacy from the colonial era to the present: A critical analysis of international education policy in Canada. *Whiteness and Education*, 1-17. DOI: 10.1080/23793406.2020.1784038

King, A. E., Qureshi, N., Stevenson, C. & Toledo, E. (2023) Listening to students: Perspectives and next steps. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *52*(4), i-x. https://journals.sfu.ca/cjhe/index.php/cjhe/article/view/190185

Koo, K. K., Yao, C. W., & Gong, H. J. (2021) "It is not my fault": Exploring experiences and perceptions of racism among international students of color during COVID-19. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1-13, DOI: 10.1037/DHE0000343

Kwon, S. A., Hernandez, X., & Moga, J. L. (2019) Racial segregation and the limits of international undergraduate student diversity. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *22*(1), 59-72. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2017.1417830

Kundnani, A. (2021) The racial constitution of neoliberalism. *Institute of Race Relations*, 63(1), 51-69. DOI: 10.1177/0306396821992706

Legusov, O., Thule, A., Leong, J., & Ramdass, J. (2023) Equity, diversity, and inclusion from the perspective of international community college students. *Canadian Journal of Higher*

Education, *52*(4), 121-134. https://journals.sfu.ca/cjhe/index.php/cjhe/article/view/189821

Little, A. W. (2003). Motivating learning and the development of human capital. *Compare*, *33*(4), 437-452. DOI: 10.1080/0305792032000127748

Lu, S. H., Dear, B. F., Johnston, L., Wootton, B. M., & Titov, N. (2013). An internet survey of emotional health, treatment seeking and barriers to accessing mental health treatment among Chinese-speaking international students in Australia. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, *27*(1), 96–108. doi: 10.1080/09515070.2013.824408

McBurnie, G. & Ziguras, C. (2007) Chapter 5: The cultural politics of transnational education. *Transnational Education: Issues and trends in offshore higher education* (pp. 60-72). Routledge.

McCartney, D. M. (2021) "A question of self-interest": A brief history of 50 years of international student policy in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *51*(3), 33-50. DOI: 10.47678/CJHE.VI0.189179

McGrath, S. (2015). Education and the post-2015 development agenda. In S. McGrath & Q. Gu (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of International Education and Development* (pp. 401–415). Routledge.

McGregor, A., Whitehead, W., Decarie, C., & Aylesworth-Spink, S. (2022) Supporting international students in an Ontario college: A case for multiple interventions. *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, *22*(2), 5-28. https://journals.nipissingu.ca/index.php/cjar/article/view/529

Meghji, A. (2022) Chapter 4: Meso racial structures and racialized organizations. *The Racialized Social System: Critical Race Theory as Social Theory* (pp. 90-111). Wiley.

Montsion, J. M. (2018) Resource centre or experience desk? Producing spaces for delivering services to Indigenous and International students at universities in Ontario, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *48*(1), 132-147. DOI: 10.7202/1050846ar

Pullman, A. (2015) Racialized bodies, pliable minds: Ethnography on the fringe of transnational education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *35*(1), 1-13, DOI: 10.1080/02188791.2013.860007

Rist, G. (2014) *The history of development from western origins to global faith*. Zed Books.

Scholtz, W., & Barnard, M. (2018). The environment and SDGs: We are on a road to nowhere. In D. French & L. J. Kotzé. (Eds.), *Sustainable development goals: Law, theory and implementation* (pp. 222–249). Edward Elgar.

Solórzano, D. G. & Yosso, T. J. (2002) Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 24-44. DOI: 10.1177/107780040200800103

Spring, J. H. (2015) *Globalization of Education: An Introduction*, Routledge.

Tucker, V. (1999). The myth of development: A critique of a Eurocentric discourse. In Munch, R. & O'Hearn, D. (Eds.), *Critical development theory: Contributions to a new paradigm.* (pp. 1-26). Zed Books.

United Conservative Party (2023) *UCP AGM 2023: Policy and governance resolutions.* https://www.unitedconservative.ca/wp-content/uploads/Resolutions2023.pdf

United Nations. (n.d.). *History of the United Nations*. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un

University of Alberta (n.d). *Student Experience Action Plan*. Retrieved November 12, 2023. https://www.ualberta.ca/strategic-plan/student-experience-action-plan/index.html

Walcott, R. (2011) Disgraceful: Intellectual dishonesty, white anxieties, and multicultural critique thirty-six years later. In M. Chazan, L. Helps, A. Stanley, & S. Thakkar (Eds.), *Home and native land: Unsettling multiculturalism in Canada* (pp. 15-30). Between the Lines.

Wang, F. (2017) Canadian offshore schools in China: A comparative policy analysis. *Journal of Education Policy*, *32*(5), 523-541. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2017.1303545

Weiner, L. (2006) Challenging deficit thinking. *Educational Leadership: Journal of the department of supervision and curriculum development*, *64*(1), 42-45. https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/challenging-deficit-thinking

West, P. (2016) "We are here to build your capacity": Development as a vehicle for accumulation and dispossession. *Dispossession and the environment: Rhetoric and inequality in Papua New Guinea.* (pp. 63-86). Columbia University Press.

Xin, K. R. & Pearce, J. L. (1996) Guanxi: Connections as substitutes for formal institutional support. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *39*(6), 1641-1658. https://jstor.org/stable/257072

Yao, C. W., Mwangi, C. A. G., & Brown, V. K. M. (2019) Exploring the intersection of transnationalism and critical race theory: A critical race analysis of international student experience in the United States. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *22*(1), 38-58. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2018.1497968