

Qualified migration and International Students in the University of Alberta: expectative and motivations to study in Canada

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ABSTRACT

This work addresses the topic of qualified migration and higher education in Canada, from an interdisciplinary analysis of the motivations, migration pathways and social capital of international students. Also, emphasis is made in the immigration processes that Canada offers to international students to obtain work permits. Presenting as an objective, to analyze the transnational trajectories of young international students at the University of Alberta, and their instrumentalization of education to access Canadian citizenship. From a qualitative approach, through the semi-structured interview technique.

Keywords: Canada, qualified migration, international students, social capital.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Canadian government's migration plans include welcoming 350,000 foreigners each year with specific qualifications and visas for agricultural and construction migrants. As well for qualified individuals, such as professionals and foreign students, entering the country as international students, which allows them to subsequently apply for permanent residence.

Talking about skilled migration, a skilled migrant, due to his skills, he receives preferential treatment in terms of admission to a country other than his own. There are certain benefits in transportation and arrival. Qualifications, skills that grant preferential treatment in the destination country. Luxury migration, circulation of talent, appreciated both in sending and receiving countries. (Tuirán & Ávila, 2013)

According to the UN, 7,960,657 immigrants live in Canada, representing 21.18% of the Canadian population. Female immigration is higher than male immigration, with 4,174,467 women, which represents 52.43% of all immigrants, compared to 3,786,190 male immigrants, who are 47.56%.

Canada's immigration policies are relatively more flexible and inclusive than the United States', therefore, this paper addresses the issue of qualified migration in North America, who entered the country through the study path, being this, the main characteristic of our subjects.

The same economic process that operates globally to generate emigration from peripheral areas simultaneously makes it easier for them to emigrate to the developed world (Sassen, 1991).

This paper explains the migration paths of international students in Canada, and their expectative after graduation. To describe the migration experiences of International Students at the University of Alberta, we analyzed interviews applied to international students.

Another point to highlight is that the work is based on interdisciplinary research. One interesting fact of the formation of interdisciplinary teams is that they should seek the achievement of common goals and not only individual glorification. That is an aspect that Szostak (2017) mentions regarding the need to do collaborative work.

2 ORIGIN OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CANADA

The following graph shows us the Canadian study permit holders by nationality at the end of 2018.

Graph 1. Canady Study Permit Holders by Nationality, end 2018



Source: immigration.ca

By the end of 2018, there was a total of 490,945 international students, India stands out with 172,625 students, (35.16% of the total). In second place is China with 142,985 students (29.12%). While the representative countries of Latin America are Brazil in seventh place with 13,835 students (2.81%), Mexico is in eleventh place representing 1.59% with 7,835 students, and Colombia with 4,035 students (0.82%) for the year 2018.

This indicates that international students from Latin American countries are a minority, since adding the percentages of these three countries (Brazil, Mexico and Colombia) we have a total of 5.22% compared to the individual percentages of India (35.16%) and China (29.12%).

In this article, our informants are from: a female from Nigeria, a female from Indonesia, a male from China and two males from Mexico.

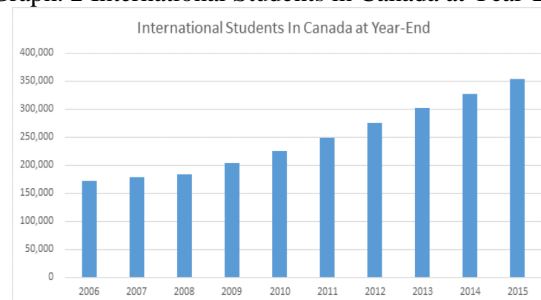
3 IMMIGRATION POLICIES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The internationalization of education is a process that is linked to the configuration of a particular scenario, that is, a global academic market, using the English language as an internationally accepted language for communication and teaching. Albach (2009) and Knight (2006).

UNESCO (2012) points out that the offer of educational programs and services constitutes a new market in which governments and Higher Education institutions seek to position themselves and develop specific niches that allow them to attract students and talents that guarantee their development.

The following graph shows the annual increase of international students in Canada.

Graph. 2 International Students in Canada at Year-End



Source: immigration.ca

We can notice that every year is a notorious increase of international students in Canada, this is something that benefits the country, in the economic and social sphere.

4 METHOD

The research was carried out at the University of Alberta facilities, in the city of Edmonton, capital of the province of Alberta (Canada) during my stay as a research student.

The paradigm used is the qualitative one, from a symbolic interactionist approach, in which interaction and symbols are used as key elements to understand individual identity and social organization. With an explicative type of research, and a case study. Subjects are male and female international students in Canada. The data collection technique is the semi-structured interview.

Regarding the inclusion criteria, the informants met the following characteristics:

- Arrived in Canada with an international student visa.
- Be enrolled in a bachelors' degree.

5 HISTORIES OF LIFE

As mentioned before, the interviews were conducted during my stay as a visiting research student at the University of Alberta. Four face-to-face interviews and one virtual interview through the Zoom platform, with the prior informed consent of the participants.

The virtual interview was with a nursing student originally from Nigeria, who tells us that her sister was already studying in Canada, and that for that reason it was easier for her to settle in Canada as well. Basically, she says that the decision was made by her parents because her sister arrived first, thus being a support for her. She also emphasizes that she is in Canada for the job opportunity, making comparison with the United States.

The girl originally from Indonesia, a medical sciences student, did not hesitate to say that she chose to study in Canada because she is interested in obtaining permanent residence after graduation. Also, because she got a good scholarship, since she had applied in other countries and that she found the best scholarships in Canada.

The Chinese student also compared Canada to the United States, saying his first reason to study in the University of Alberta was because of the better tuition costs and immigration. He had already lived in the United States before.

On the other hand, the two Mexican students have in common the fact that they belong to families with a good income in Mexico, their parents had the opportunity to enroll them in private schools, from elementary school, where they learned English.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Let us then analyze the interviews conducted with five international students at the University of Alberta, two women and three men. The woman from Nigeria explains that she studied in Canada because: *"... because of my sister, she came first. I am here also, for work opportunity. You can also work here, like compared to the U.S which is you know good for students who are struggling."*

On the other hand, the Indonesian woman expressed having chosen Canada to study specifically because she had a good scholarship: *"I choose Canada, specifically because I got a big scholarship here and also, I am interested on getting a PR (Permanent Residency) here after I graduate... I did apply in some other countries, but what I have seen is that I get more of the scholarships awards here in Canada."*

A student from China, mentioned that his first reason to study in Canada was migration. He stated the following: *“The first reason, actually, immigration, its, compared to the U.S is lucky too, to immigrate to Canada, plus the tuition here isn’t that much, compared to the U.S and U.K is way lower, at least for my program.”*

The two students of Mexican origin give us answers that indicate that they have a social capital that contributed to their insertion as international students at the University of Alberta. Both studied in private schools since elementary school in Mexico, which allowed them to learn the English language, an essential aspect to be able to carry out their studies in Canada.

The first Mexican student interviewed, originally from the state of Queretaro, explains that he decided to study in Canada for the following reasons:

“Obviously Mexico, it was always the first option, I was also researching for universities in the United States and well, I applied to several universities in the United States, but I did was accepted in some of them, and I got scholarships in some of these universities. But in the end, looking at all the costs, in those universities in the United States, the costs are very high, compared to Mexico and Canada as well. So here in Alberta I applied to the University of Alberta and well... the tuition is much lower than compared to the United States, so that is why I decided to come to Canada and Alberta.”

Another student of Mexican origin, specifically from the state of Puebla, responds that: *“well, oh, I wasn’t going to choose Canada at first... I had Australia in mind and the thing is that what I’m studying right now is biology...and Australia I felt that I had more field in marine biology the problem was the scholarships, there are many universities that do not give as many scholarships or a good number of scholarships for international students, much more if we are Latin American, because obviously for the coin exchange.”*

6.1 MOTIVATIONS TO STUDY IN CANADA

When questioning the five students about their decision to study in Canada, what their motivations were, we find the answers oriented to:

- A) Immigration
- B) Tuition costs/ scholarships

We found in the interview with the nursing graduate originally from Nigeria, that selecting Canada as the country to study was more of a family decision than of her own, since her sister was already living in Canada and had already lived the experience of being an international student, therefor, her sister was a support for her. Social capital is explained here.

The Indonesian student clearly mentions that she seeks to obtain permanent residence in Canada, and that also, she received a good scholarship. It is practically the same response from the student from China who says that his first reason (motivation) for studying in Canada is immigration, and that the “tuitions are not that much compared to the U.S and U.K” both students consider Canada as a good country to immigrate and settle.

The two Mexican students say they looked for universities in different countries and that in the end, the costs and opportunities were better in Canada. Tuition costs and scholarships were the main point when making their decision.

6.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND QUALIFIED MIGRATION

A skilled migrant: due to his skills, he receives preferential treatment in terms of admission to a country other than his own. There are certain benefits in transportation and arrival. Qualifications, skills that grant preferential treatment in the destination country. Luxury migration, circulation of talent, appreciated both in sending and receiving countries. Rodolfo Tuirán and José Ávila (2013).

Each migratory event creates social capital among the people related to the migrant, thus increasing the probabilities of emigrating (Massey, Goldring and Durand, 1994).

The transnationality explained by Luger Pries in his book: “The Trans-nationalization of the social world. Social spaces beyond national societies” (2017), indicates a complex way of explaining migration.

The movements of people from one place to another can not only be explained with the phenomenon of globalization, but we must go further. Considering that migratory flows are not unilateral nor are they always based on the economic sphere, Pries explains this complexity with the term “transnationalism”.

Returning to the phrase from the interview, where the interviewee argues that her sister was already living in Canada, and that was the main reason for choosing that country to study, indicates that social capital plays a very important role in migratory motivations. The support that a person or institution can provide, is crucial when migrating. Students who don’t have this type of support, would take longer to achieve their goal of studying abroad. What we can see in all the interviewees is that they have support, social capital.

7 CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude that international students tend to stay in Canada after graduation, and they seek to enter the Canadian labor market through work permits, and that later, their work experience can help them apply for permanent residence.

The University of Alberta is described by all the students interviewed as one of the best universities in Canada, as well, the tuition costs are lower compared to other universities, also some of them managed to get good scholarships.

All of them indicated that they want to follow the path towards the Canadian residency. As the student from Indonesia and the student from China said, seeking residence in Canada is the clearest and most important expectation. This is a viable path for international students, through Canadian immigration policies such as the Post Graduate Work Permit (PGWP) program.

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