MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

GLOBALIZING CAMPUSES: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POST-SECONDARY

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT

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Abstract

As the world continues to become more globalized, so does education. The internationalization of higher education is inevitable with globalization and institutions continue to recruit students from around the globe to diversify their institution. The question is how institutions do this and why it matters. This paper answers these questions by uncovering the best practices of recruiting and supporting international students at post-secondary institutions in the City of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. In order to determine the best practices and support services interviews have been conducted with employees in the international student recruitment (ISR) industry and surveys have been provided to international students. Interviews have been analyzed to identify the ISR strategies currently in place at post-secondary institutions in Toronto, and surveys have been analyzed to identify the student perspective of these methods and the support provided to them. Both sets of responses have also been compared to identify ways to improve ISR and international student support services. This paper will uncover the ways in which ISR is conducted, the ways students perceive these methods, and how best meet student needs in the future. Based on the research conducted it has been determined that the most effective strategies for ISR are relationship development, transparency of institutional expectations, and the use of effective cross-cultural communication practices. Students have assisted in determining that institutions in the GTA do have support services in place and most do provide adequate services to students. Many recommendations have been made to improve ISR including obtaining feedback from students to incorporate student needs into ISR practices and ensuring that a clear outline of the Canadian education system is provided to students.

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Introduction

This major research paper (MRP) aims to identify the current strategies used to recruit international students and to make recommendations to improve these strategies to better meet the needs of international students. The inspiration of this paper comes from my experience working with international students. I was an English as a second language (ESL) instructor who worked with students from a variety of countries. One summer a group of Taiwanese students was enrolled in the program I was teaching. It was a five-week program that would then allow them to transfer into a college program that continued their studies from school in Taiwan. After the five-week program had ended, I met with these students again and when talking with them it came to my attention that they were displeased with their programs and living situations. I began to question why these students were feeling such a strong dislike towards the program. When the opportunity to write an MRP arose, I knew it was necessary to explore the methods which institutions promote themselves to international students in hopes of uncovering what my past students had experienced to contribute to preventing such an experience occurring again.

Between 2006 and 2016 the number of international students attending universities in Ontario increased by 96%, with a total of 60, 000 international students enrolled (Council of Ontario Universities, 2017). With the continuous growth of international education within Ontario, it is imperative that institutions have a foundational understanding of the most successful strategies to recruit students internationally, while considering their needs. To ensure institutions are not only successful in obtaining applicants, but in retaining students and assisting in their successes.

Recruiting international students has always been of interest to post-secondary institutions in Canada, for several reasons, the most prominent ones being to improve economic

gain, to fill the talent gap, and to become a more diverse institution (Andrade, 2006; Government of Canada, 2015). As will become evident from expert interviews conducted for this MRP, the need for international student participation is in the best interest of the institution, allowing it to become more globalized with a wider array of perspectives in the institution; it also permits the institution to obtain the best and the brightest from around the world to help the institution become more well-known

This MRP will determine the international student recruitment (ISR) strategies used by post-secondary institutions and private recruitment agencies in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and will propose best practices from cross-cultural communication. It will also incorporate findings from primary research. Toronto and the GTA have been selected as the focus for this paper because of the scale of the project and time constraints.

Surveys and interviews were used to determine strategies, student needs, and recommend improvements. ISR literature has also been used to further support findings from primary research. Currently, much of the literature on ISR concentrates on marketing for economic gain; however, this MRP will centre on the importance of ISR employees understanding how to support students throughout the application process and during their time at the institution.

This paper has been divided into eight sections. The first section will be the introduction to state the topic and research questions. It will then lead into a literature review of several papers written about ISR. The following section will state the research questions aimed to be answered in this MRP. Then methods will be outlined, including an explanation of the criteria used to select participants and how they were recruited, questions in the surveys and interviews, and how the research and analysis were conducted. The succeeding section will detail the results of the primary research. A discussion of the findings will follow to answer the research questions

posed below. A brief explanation of research limitations and future research possibilities will be

mentioned in the second to last portion of the MRP. In the final section, the MRP will be

concluded by restating the key findings and recommendations from the research conducted.

Literature Review

Three topics have been explored in this literature review: internationalization, marketing

and recruitment, and challenges faced by international students. Each topic was selected to

provide context to primary research and provide more clarity surrounding findings. In order to

best understand why ISR matters to institutions, the researcher found it imperative to understand

the term internationalization. Internationalization explains what ISR is and its necessity to

expand globalization and cultural awareness in higher education. An understanding of marketing

and recruitment is absolutely necessary when recruiting a group of individuals and attempting to

make a product or service appealing. This section primarily focuses on cross-cultural practices of

marketing and recruitment in a business setting instead of an educational one. Though business

and education do differ in their purpose, business concepts can be applied in an educational

setting. Lastly, student challenges were explored in this literature review to provide insight into

what international students experience when they enrol into their post-secondary studies abroad.

This understanding will provide context for what institutions can do to better assist international

students enrolled at their institution. Knowing student needs is necessary to be successful in ISR.

Defining Internationalization

A recurring topic within ISR literature is how to define the term "internationalization";

this is due to the increasing numbers of international students attending post-secondary

institutions (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Chen, 2008; Cudmore, 2005;

Guo & Chase, 2010; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Knight, 2004; Teichler, 2004). The most widely

accepted definition appears to be one developed by Knight (2004) who states that internationalization is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (p. 9). A similar definition is presented in various other publications, which state internationalization seeks to integrate diversity into educational institutions to allow cultural understanding to develop and expand the perspectives of members of the institution (see Altbach & Knight, 2007; Cudmore, 2005; Leask & Carroll, 2011). Other explanations of internationalization include Cudmore's (2005) five definitions, the first of which defines internationalization as subjects that would be listed under the field of "International Studies," such as languages, political science, and sociology (Cudmore 2005). The second definition defines internationalization as providing assistance to faculty or students from developing countries as a form of foreign assistance (i.e. providing specific training programs to individuals in an international country) (Cudmore, 2005). The third focuses on educating students and faculty about how to interact and work in a highly diverse society (Cudmore, 2005). The fourth sees internationalization as the exchange of services (Cudmore, 2005), as also suggested by Altbach and Knight (2007): "Current thinking sees international higher education as a commodity to be freely traded and sees higher education as a private good, not a public responsibility" (p. 291). Cudmore's (2005) final definition states that internationalization is used as a form of economic gain to prioritize the country's needs over international students. Obtaining profits from internationalization is repeated in much of the ISR literature; researchers often discourage this type of thinking and encourage internationalization to be seen as a way to benefit the global society by allowing students to learn about one another (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bolsmann & Miller, 2008). Another definition, not mentioned by Cudmore, indicates internationalization is the physical act of students moving across national

borders to participate in education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Teichler, 2004). Though there is no

agreed upon definition of internationalization, the following principle is prevalent in most – it is

the coming together of students from all areas of the world to share ideas in education to develop

a cultural understanding of one another (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Cudmore, 2005; Knight, 2004;

Leask & Carroll, 2011). The aforementioned definition will be used to shape this MRP.

Marketing and recruitment

Marketing is regularly discussed in ISR literature as a means of communicating

information about a post-secondary institution to international students. One common theme that

stood out amongst marketing and recruitment methods was the need to put customers (students in

this scenario) first and satisfy their needs (Dosa, 1993; Ndubisi, 2004; Ross & Grace, 2012;

Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2006). Dosa (1993) supports the abovementioned idea and

believes that with a clear understanding of what international students wish to gain from the

post-secondary institution, the institution will be able to communicate successfully during

recruitment. By understanding student interests, post-secondary institutions have the ability to

market their institution in an appealing manner. This form of marketing has also been referred to

as 'market-orientation' (Naidoo, 2010; Ross & Grace, 2012). According to Ross and Grace

(2012) and Ross, Grace, and Shao (2013), it is imperative that post-secondary institutions see

themselves as service providers and orient their recruitment strategies to understand international

students and the competitive markets. This concept is similar to the fourth definition of

internationalization provided by Cudmore (2005) which states that education should be viewed

as a service that is traded. Ndubisi (2004) has a similar perspective of marketing in the sense that

he believes it is necessary for an organization to understand the customer's interests in order to

appeal to them, but what sets Ndubisi (2004) apart is his use of cross-cultural communication practices in his marketing strategy.

Ndubisi (2004) uses Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions to determine methods of marketing across cultures. Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint) are often referred to by other business marketing articles as an effective framework for cross-cultural marketing. Hofstede's (2011) dimensions of culture have often been used by organizations to aid them in their cross-cultural communications (Ma & Allen, 2009; Soareas, Farhangmehr, & Shoham, 2006). Kale (1991) argues that an international organization must understand a culture when selling products or services abroad, and he believes the use of Hofstede's dimensions provide helpful insight into a culture. This argument is supported by Ndubisi (2004) article, who states that understanding a culture not only allows an organization to determine the market needs, but also assists in developing relationships with consumers.

However, there is controversy surrounding Hofstede's work since it is often viewed as a dated perspective of cross-cultural communication. Hofstede's cultural dimensions were first developed over thirty years ago in the 1970s. It has been argued by Taras, Steel, and Kirkman (2012) that cultures are bound to change over time, and that Hofstede's dimensions may not be as applicable today as they once were. Marketing is an important aspect of any organization that is promoting a service or product, but as has been noted by several researchers, marketing strategies should be monitored to ensure that they are not used solely for the purpose of economic gain (Ross & Grace, 2012; Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013).

Challenges faced by international students

In both ISR and international student education journals, the challenges faced by international students are exposed. The most common challenges faced by international students are challenges with communicating in a new language and dealing with personal emotions. When international students attend an international institution, they face challenges with the host language if it is their second language. Due to this, many international students feel as though they are not able to understand the content covered by their instructors in class and cannot effectively communicate their thoughts (Andrade, 2006; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). Their inabilities to communicate effectively gives them a false sense of why international students do not participate in class. Rather than understanding that international students cannot participate, host nationals believe their withdrawal is part of the cultural beliefs the students have which often leads to stereotyping (Andrade, 2006; Guo & Chase, 2009).

International students also face emotional challenges because of homesickness and having to adapt to a new culture; they feel anxious, lonely, and often disengage from social activities with host nationals because of these emotions (Andrade, 2006; Dosa, 1993; Guo & Chase, 2009; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). Despite these emotions, Brown (2009) explains that even if an international student is open to overcoming these emotions, host nationals are not as welcoming and open to communicating with different cultures. This indifference from host nationals causes tensions between the two groups of students allowing for little to no interaction and makes international students feel unwelcome (Brown, 2009).

The conclusion drawn in the literature with respect to these challenges is that improvements need to be made in post-secondary environments to encourage both academic and

social integration of international students and national students (Andrade, 2006; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Zhou, Jindal, Topping & Todman, 2008). Andrade (2006) provided examples in which intervention by a post-secondary institution aided in lowering the presence of these challenges by pairing a host national with an international student. These interventions included reviewing class notes, and providing international students with English peer-tutoring sessions. Similarly, Leask and Carroll (2011) explain how the use of mentors being paired with international students improved their learning and allowed for both parties to understand one another's culture. Many researchers believe that without post-secondary institution involvement, cross-cultural communication and understanding will not take place (Leask & Carroll, 2011).

Research Questions

The research questions posed in this MRP were created to offer suggestions for ISR professionals about improving recruitment and retention of international students. In order to make recommendations for improvement, it is necessary to identify the recruitment strategies already in place in post-secondary institutions and private recruitment agencies to identify the changes that should be made. The first research question aims to understand existing strategies around international and cross-cultural marketing and recruitment:

> *RQ1: How are post-secondary institutions and recruitment agencies in Toronto and the GTA communicating with prospective international students?*

Without student insight, ISR and support services cannot be improved; therefore, this question explores these challenges to gain knowledge about international student experiences in Toronto and the GTA. International students in Canada are not well represented in the literature regarding

student challenges, so it is necessary to conduct research among current international students in Toronto and the GTA to uncover the challenges present.

The second research question was designed to elicit student responses about their experiences as international students:

RQ2: What is the international student experience of post-secondary recruitment efforts and support services in Toronto and the GTA?

Based on the challenges faced by international students, as outlined in the literature review, it is evident that post-secondary institutions need to improve international student recruitment and support services. Not only do students face challenges, but institutions sometimes recruit for financial gain.

The third research question will explore how ISR and support services for international students can be improved to enhance the international student experience and uncover some of the reasons for internationalization outside of the economic realm:

RQ3: How can post-secondary institutions improve international student recruitment and support services?

Methods

Primary research was conducted using a mixed methods approach, involving both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. A total of four interviewees and thirteen survey respondents participated in the research. A Research and Ethics Board (REB) application was completed and approved prior to conducting the primary research. The data collection adhered to REB policies and follow the guidelines outlined by the researcher in the REB application.

Secondary research, much of which has been presented in the literature review, was used to supplement and further support the findings from the primary research.

Interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted among ISR employees working at post-secondary institutions in Toronto or for private recruitment agencies. Four interviews were completed, three with university recruiters and one with a private agency recruiter. Private agency recruiters are often employed by an agency and recruit international students on behalf of institutions in different countries. The agent interviewed in this study works independently and recruits for students to study in Ontario as a whole; their methods do differ from other agencies that work for one institution or work for institutions across the globe. All employees were recruited as participants through direct email or through word-of-mouth and employee recommendations. In order to ensure the anonymity of participants, they are not identified by name and instead are referred to as Employees 1, 2, 3, and 4. Interview participants were credible sources, with experiences ranging from four to ten years in their respective positions.

Interviews were semi-structured; that is a set of six questions was posed to participants in a way that allowed for the conversation to flow naturally and explore topics not raised by the researcher (Bryman, Bell & Tivan, 2012). Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and provided to participants for review. Participants had the opportunity to have any content omitted from the research. (See Appendix A for the full interview guide used with interview participants.)

Surveys

An online survey was circulated to international students who were current or past international students that attended or had attended a post-secondary institution in the GTA.

Students had to have been enrolled in a full-time or part-time program that is a minimum of one year long at a post-secondary institution in the GTA and have attended the institution for at least six months. Students were recruited through public international student Facebook groups and word-of-mouth. The researcher also recruited through multiple social media posts from Ryerson University International Student Support's channels. There were several challenges in recruiting survey participants and only thirteen survey respondents participated.

The online survey was designed using Google Forms and included sixteen questions. The majority of the questions were quantitative, written as multiple choice, Likert scale, or checkbox questions, to determine whether or not students were satisfied with their recruitment, application, and educational experiences. Some questions were open-ended and asked students to provide context to their selection. (See Appendix B for survey questions.)

Participants were asked to complete the survey honestly, in order to indicate whether students felt recruitment strategies were representative of their institution and program and whether the support services provided by the institution assisted in their transition to university and life in Toronto. The responses obtained from this portion of the research were designed to answer the second research question by uncovering student experiences with recruitment and support services at an institution. All survey responses were anonymous.

Analysis

Upon the completion of interviews, they were transcribed and initial codes were developed using open coding as explained in grounded theory. The following codes were identified in the initial coding stage: student needs, information for students, use of agents,

digital recruitment, in-person recruitment, improvements to international student recruitment, and student services.

In the second stage of coding, the researcher used NVivo 11 to identify specific quotes that matched the aforementioned codes. During this process, sub-codes were identified for each as well as other main codes. The sub-codes were developed to determine more specific themes that came up in conversation and to easily organize responses to each research question. Table 1 outlines the codes used during data analysis.

Table 1

Codes and explanations of each code used during data analysis of interviews

Name	Description
CHL	Challenges that need to be overcome during the ISR process and while students are attending an institution
CHL-E	Challenges face by ISR employees when recruiting
CHL-S	Challenges faced by international students while being recruited and when beginning their studies. This includes any cultural adaptation challenges faced by students such as language barriers.
EXT	External influencers that increase the number of international students attending an institution in Canada
EXT-C	Canada's reputation; Canada as a safe place to study and live
EXT-I	Immigration opportunities after graduation
EXT-P	The ways which the political climate throughout the world shape student decisions to study abroad
IMPR	Suggestions to improve current ISR practices in place
INF	Information provided to international students during the application process

INF-A	Academic requirements for application/enrolment
INF-P	The process and timeline of the application
INF-F	Financial commitment to study internationally in Canada
INF-J	Job opportunities available to international students while they are students and after graduation
INF-N	Information that students feel they need to know while applying and when beginning their students
NEG	Negative aspects of ISR
RFR	Reasons for ISR
RFR-D	Diversification of an institution
RFR-E	Providing an opportunity for students to receive a better education
RFR-M	Obtaining more revenue for an institution
RFR-R	Improving research opportunities at an institution
RFR-T	Filling the talent gap that is present at institutions
SERV	Support services and opportunities provided to international students
SERV-I	Internship opportunities during studies
SERV-S	International support services and offices at an institution
SERV-V	Visa and immigration support
STRAT	Current ISR strategies used by institutions
STRAT-A	Private recruitment agents
STRAT-C	Cross-cultural communication practices
STRAT-M	Connections with a country and or members within a country
STRAT-E	Recruitment events hosted internationally to promote institution and education in Canada
STRAT-D	Digital communications including email and social media
STRAT-F	Funding opportunities available to students
STRAT-I	Highlighting what the institution can offer to students and why it is reputable

STRAT-L	Highlighting the location of an institution
STRAT-P	Providing international applicants with a direct contact person (either in-person or online) to communicate with regarding questions they have
STRAT-R	Relationship development with students and residents of a country or region
STRAT-S	Profiling current international students and using them to connect with international applicants
STRAT-T	Traditional media and communication (i.e. handbooks, direct mail)
STRAT-W	Word-of-mouth promotion from students

A final step involved connecting each code to the research question that it helped answer (see Appendix C). In doing so, the researcher determined that codes EXT, INFO, RFR, and STRAT and corresponding sub-codes answered RQ1; codes SERV and INFO, including sub-codes, CHL-S answered RQ2; and NEG, IMPR and the sub-code INF-N gave insight into RQ3. While coding, the number of times a code appeared in interviews was determined.

Surveys were analyzed using a quantitative research approach to calculate the frequency and type of student responses for each question. The more common a response from participants, the more insightful it was in providing an answer to student opinions regarding ISR practices and support services at their institution. Survey responses were then organized into tables and charts for ease of determining the number of times responses were selected. Survey responses were categorized to match a specific research question. Survey questions were categorized according to the research question they addressed. Response rates determined how well the school managed their services and helped identify which ISR practices could be improved. For instance, when participants were asked whether they were satisfied with their institution's support services for

international students, it was determined that the majority of respondents were satisfied to some degree. As such, it was determined that institutions were providing international students with adequate support. Due to the low number of responses, however, broad generalizations are not possible but quantitative data has been used to add information to the qualitative analysis.

To best respond to RQ3, a comparative analysis of survey responses, interview responses, and ISR literature was conducted to identify common themes and suggestions for ISR. The data from each source was compared to make recommendations on how ISR can be improved at post-secondary institutions in Toronto. Using student responses concerning the challenges they faced, recommendations were made about which components post-secondary institutions should add or remove certain components from their ISR to better suit student interests and needs. Similar recommendations were made based on interview responses; when participants stated certain methods could be improved, these were added into the recommendations for ISR practices. Along with the data collected, previously published academic literature was reviewed to provide additional responses for the third research question. Using all three resources of information, recommendations were categorized and determined as a response to RQ3. All three data sources supplemented one another.

Results

In this section, the results from interviews and surveys conducted by the researcher will be presented. The subsequent section discusses the importance of responses and provides insight into the research questions posed in this MRP.

Interviews

        The data collected during interviews answers the first research question and provide some

responses to the second and third research questions as well. In this section, the findings from

interviews will be explained followed by the responses provided by respondents. The questions

mentioned in this section were prepared by the researcher prior to interviews; however, other

questions did arise throughout the interview process and are not mentioned in this section. For

privacy reasons, participants will be identified as P1, P2, P3, and P4. P1, P2 and P4 work in well-

known universities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in international student recruitment; P3 is

the owner of an independent private international student recruitment and international student

support agency in the GTA. The responses from employees provided great insight into the realm

of international student recruitment from a worker's perspective.

Q1 - How many years have you worked in international student recruitment? What interests you

about international student recruitment? Why do schools recruit internationally?

        Participants had worked in the industry between four and ten years. Three interviewees

stated that they enjoyed the industry because they could impact a student's life, and they enjoyed

having the opportunity to connect with a variety of individuals from different cultures and

learning about the appropriate methods to communicate with each culture. One participant added

that the travel piece of ISR was appealing at first, but as time had passed in their career, it

became less attractive as the opportunity to explore the countries visited was quite limited while

at work and travel kept them on the road more frequently than they liked. P3's response differed,

as this person was an international student and was more intrigued by providing students with a

successful opportunity to thrive in a new culture and educational system. In response to the third

portion of Q1, P2, P3, and P4 continuously reiterated the importance of ISR to allow the

university to diversify its student population and gain new perspectives from individuals

throughout the globe. Though there was much focus on the diversity, only P3 and P4 stated that

the economic impact was a large reason for ISR as international students pay a much higher

tuition fees than domestic students. P4 said, "Financially, it's a lucrative thing. There is a

lucrative financial aspect and you can't ignore it, as much as people talk about diversity, but at

the same time the diversity piece is big." This demonstrated that despite the focus on diversity,

the economic impact definitely encourages a post-secondary institution to pursue ISR efforts. P3

also noted that international students benefit the Canadian economy as a whole; this was

something noted in the Government of Canada's (2014) Canadian International Education

Strategy, which estimated that the expenditures of international students was $3.5 billion in

2012.

Q2 - How many international students attend this university currently? Have the numbers

changed throughout the last five years? Which programs do most international students enrol

in?

No official numbers were provided by participants; however, all respondents suggested

that the number has increased. All of the participants noted that Canada had become a place that

many students wanted to study in, particularly Toronto, due to the diversity that is prevalent

throughout the city. As well, it was stated that since Canadian higher education is not tiered, a

student at a Canadian institution receives a good education no matter what institution they attend.

Lastly, participants stated that within the last year there has been a great increase of students

wanting to attend Canadian institutions, particularly from the United States. P4 stated that the

current political climate in the United States had influenced student decisions to move out of the

country to remove themselves from that environment. Two participants also stated that students

from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, countries that have been banned from entering the United States as per Executive Order 13769 (The White House, 2017), are now interested in attending institutions in Canada. A similar response has come from students in other countries, as they are concerned about eventually being barred as well. It is unclear whether students from Iraq may also feel similarly to students from the aforementioned countries, as Iraq was removed from Executive Order when revised to Executive Order 13780 (NAFSA, 2017).

Participants indicated that the majority of international students enrol in engineering, international business, medical sciences, and technical programs. One reason for this, as mentioned by P2, is that the degrees obtained from these programs are transferrable and recognized abroad. P3 did state that this interest in specific programs also stems from private ISR agencies, since many of the individuals running the agencies were once students in these same programs and they tend to promote the programs they are familiar with. P3 did comment on the fact that some agencies receive commissions from institutions by recruiting large numbers of international students to apply to institutions. Specific programs do also pay higher commission rates because the cost of the program itself is higher, so this could contribute to the promotion of specific programs over others to international students, as mentioned by the private recruitment agency employee.

Q3 - How do you and your department recruit international students? Do you adapt your approach to different cultures? If so, how?

All participants stated that they commonly use digital media communication methods, particularly social media and the institution/company website. Along with that, all participants noted that it was important to highlight the location of the institution, both in Canada and Toronto, as a form of demonstrating the diversity of the institution and country. Another

prevalent strategy mentioned by three participants was highlighting the institution and the many

opportunities available to students within it. For instance, if an institution has a business

incubator that is an appealing aspect to students, that is promoted by ISR employees to attract

students. All participants mentioned the use of private recruitment agencies in ISR as a strategy;

however, P2 did state that their institution was cautiously entering the relationship, as agencies

can be challenging to work with, but they did note that it has permitted the institution to reach

parts of the world that were once inaccessible. Two interviewees did caution against some

agencies, as they warned some agencies do recruit only for the financial gain. Agencies also

often take advantage of students even if they are underqualified for a program. P3 specifically

warned that agencies often lie and provided one instance of an agent recruiting for an institution

that was approximately two hours away from Toronto. The agent had told international

applicants that the institution was located in the city of Toronto. P4 explained that their

institution does not use agencies to recruit internationally, as they are not always seen as

trustworthy and must be closely monitored. The most discussed strategy from all employees was

the use of relationship development with students and their families.

P1 works in ISR through the production of communication materials and often using

digital platforms. They expressed that even through the use of online social media and email,

they develop relationships through the communication that occurs on those platforms by

responding to students and maintaining contact throughout the application, acceptance, and

transition process. P2 did note the importance of in-person contacts to develop relationships, but

also mentioned the importance of developing relationships with international guidance

counsellors. The reason for P2's mention of this was that developing and maintaining these

relationships with guidance counsellors can play a large role in giving international students in

high schools recommendations about an institution. Two participants suggested that an institution or agency must connect with students from the start to ensure that they feel taken care of when applying to a school abroad, as it will help them understand that the institution/agency wants to help them succeed in their future as a student at the institution. Some other strategies discussed by the participant are listed below:

- international events to promote the institution or agency to students,

- funding opportunities for students at an institution,

- the use of traditional print media handbooks that showcase an institution to students,

- the use of current international student profiles to exhibit the successful experience an international student can have at the institution,

- and recommendations from past students about an institution or agency.

All participants expressed the importance of using cross-cultural communication when recruiting internationally was mentioned 23 times which is quite high considering that the average mention of codes related to RQ1 was 10.23 mentions. All participants continually expressed the importance of being culturally sensitive to ensure that students from different cultures were not offended; this also meant being cognizant of the language used, the political and cultural environment in a country or region, and simply respecting different cultural norms. P3 expressed the reason for this: "Because it's better for business if you understand your customers … it shows that you understand their cultural identity better and will be able to provide better services."

Q4 - What strategies are most effective? Why are they the most effective?

When asked about strategies, responses differed; however, the focus often remained on building relationships with students and using past and current students of an institution or agency as a means of promotion. There was also mention of how useful social media and email communication is for prospective students to stay connected to an agency or institution. Using digital communications allows students to learn about the program and be able to contact an individual with their questions, which once again allows them to develop a relationship online.

Q5 - What information do you provide potential applicants with to make the university attractive to them?

When asked about the information provided, responses were consistent. All participants focused on being honest about the necessary steps of applying to an institution in Toronto and the GTA, particularly in relation to cost, academic requirements, and cultural experiences. P1 mentioned the importance of continuously reminding students, through email communications and handbooks, of the steps necessary to apply to the institution and move to a new country. P2 also focused on the significance of highlighting the institution, particularly about the opportunities available to students (i.e. co-op, business incubation, scholarships and funding) and student services (i.e. career and mental health support). Highlighting the city of Toronto as a very liveable city was noted as an effective strategy by P2. P4 was adamant about providing students with honest information about their institution in order to give each student the best opportunity for them, whether it is at their school or another. P3 had a slightly different response as they would ask students what they were looking for at an institution through a survey and then match them with the appropriate school in the GTA – or other parts of Ontario – for them. This strategy would be not be useful for employees only recruiting for one institution, unlike private agents

recruiting for multiple institutions; however, it could be useful in assisting students determine a program that matches their academic interests.

Q6 - Are there any ways that you think international student recruitment can be improved? If so, how?

Two participants had similar responses as they both stated that, in order to improve recruitment, a better understanding of students' needs was necessary. P1 did indicate that their institution is now beginning to obtain feedback from international applicants to implement the necessary changes to ISR based on the feedback given by students. This feedback will help improve communication between the institution and students, as the institution will be able cater to student needs during the application process. P3 stated their company focuses on using feedback from students already and continuously provides services to students to help them succeed in their academic goals. P2 expressed the need to understand competing institutions and constantly improve strategies by thinking ahead about where the institution hopes to be in five years. P2 also stated it was necessary to try new strategies and take risks. Finally, P4 mentioned that their institution specifically needs to provide better funding packages for international students as current funding is quite limited and highly competitive. Domestic students can receive funding for themselves based on their financial situation; however, international students do not have this luxury and, due to the lack of funding, often have to abstain from attending the institution because they are unable to pay for the fees.

Surveys

Sixteen responses were received to the survey; however, only thirteen were acceptable for analysis as one had been conducted prior to a finalized revision of the survey, another was completed by a domestic student, and a third was a duplicate. The majority of the questions

posed in the survey were multiple choice and provided students with the option to write in their own response under "Other"; however, some were open-ended to allow participants to contextualize their responses.

Respondents attended York University (3), Humber College (2), Centennial College (2), Seneca College (1), and the University Of Ontario Institute Of Technology (1). Four respondents did not specify an institution (see Figure 1.1).
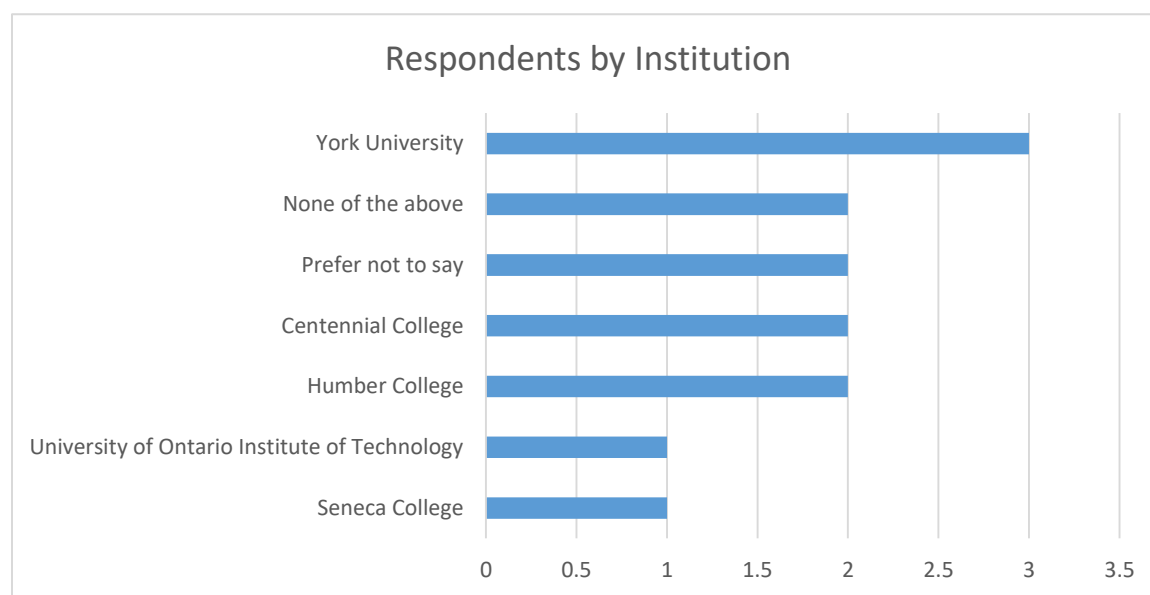

Figure 1.1 - Number of participants by institution

All but one respondent stated they were full-time. Ten were current undergraduates, two had graduated, and one was a graduate student. Three students were from India, two from Saudi Arabia, and one from each of the following countries: Belgium, Ghana, Honduras, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Pakistan, and Ukraine.

Four students had learned about an institution from a friend or family member. Four other students had learned about the institution from a private recruitment agency in their country. Three participants indicated they learned about their institution by searching online. One student

had attended a recruitment event and met with an employee from their institution, while another

had learned about the institution from a current international student from their country. None of

the remaining options were selected.

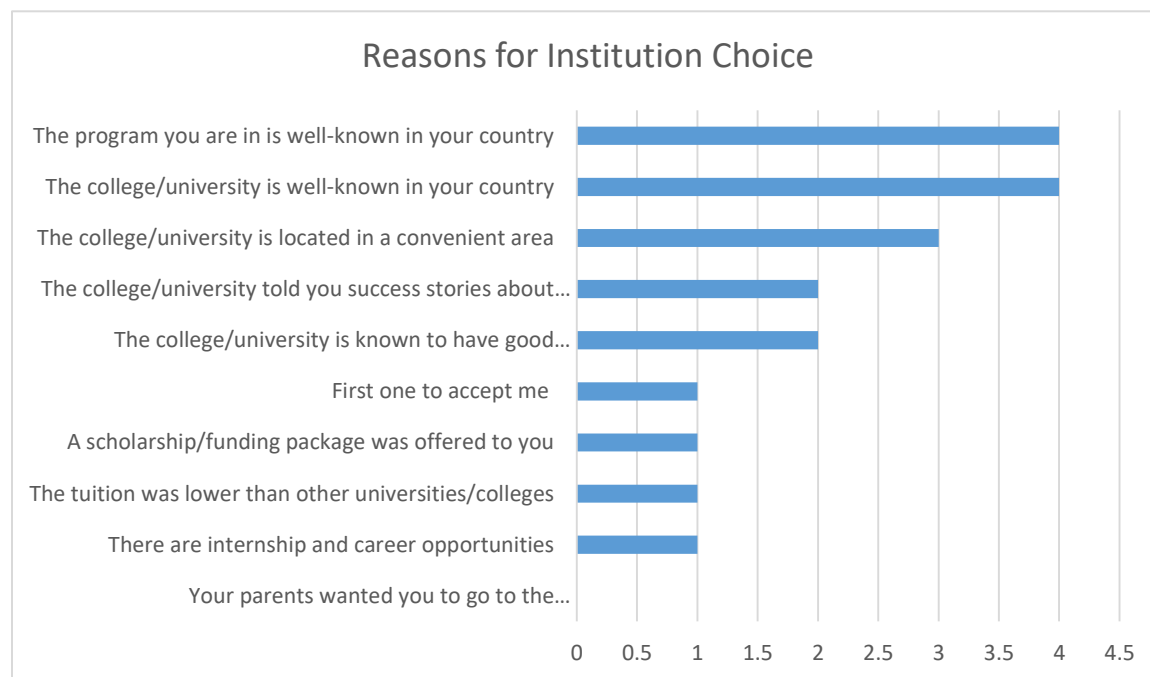Students were asked to indicate the reasons they chose to attend their institution (see

Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 – Reasons for international student choice of institution

Students selected their institution and program because it was well-recognized in their home

country. A convenient location was another top choice, which was not surprising to the

researcher, as it will become evident later on in the findings that students wanted to be more

informed about their institution's location. Using international student and faculty success stories

as a recruitment technique does appear to work based on the responses above, as each option was

indicated as a reason for attending the institution by two separate participants. Having success

stories may allow students to imagine themselves in a similar situation and make them feel as
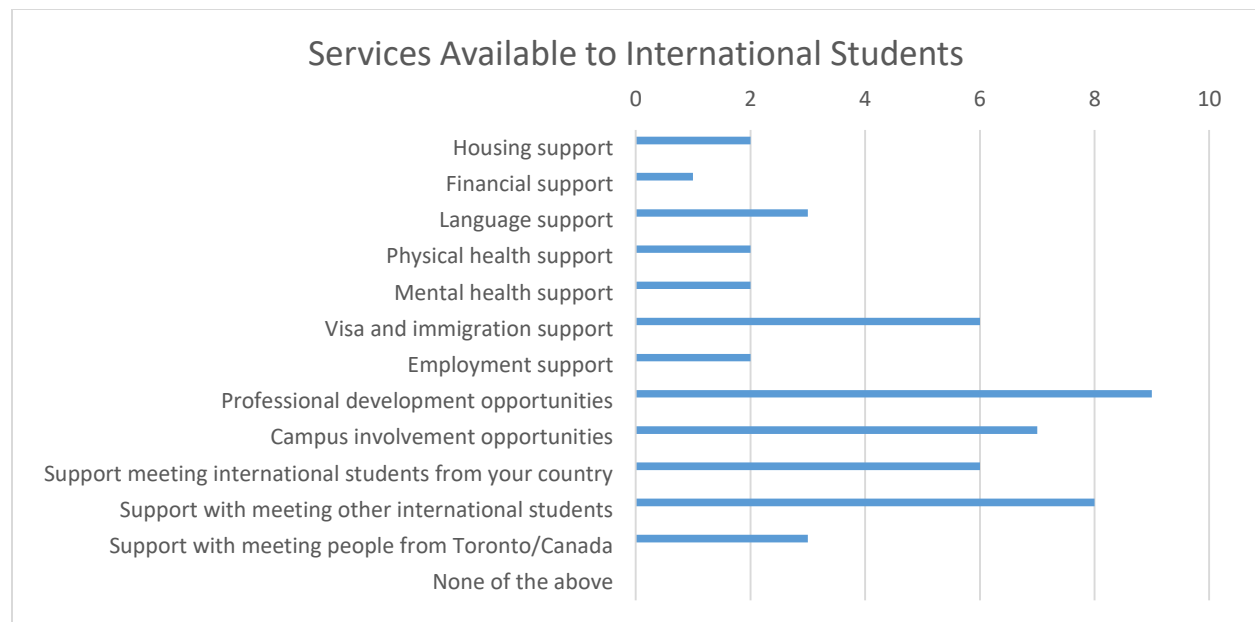
though they can be just as successful and increase their interest in the institution. One student indicated their choice to attend their institution was that it was the first one to accept them.

When asked what they knew about the institution prior to enrolling, nine of the twelve participants only knew one thing about their institution. Two students indicated they knew no information about their institution prior to enrollment. One student stated they only knew the school was well-known in their country. Another participant stated that their institution is known to have the best co-op in the province of Ontario. A different participant stated that they only knew the program offered by their institution. One student said they were aware of the ranking of the institution, although the source of the ranking was not indicated. One participant stated that they could attend their institution after finishing English school, which could possibly mean that attending and completing a language program at an institution then allowed them to enroll into a specific program of interest. A participant noted that they did not know a lot of information about their institution before enrolling, and they were only aware of the location of the institution. One participant stated that they knew about the access to technology available to students, and it was what the student wanted as it has assisted them in learning more. One respondent stated that the varsity sports available at the institution was quickly growing, and the institution was developing in "the area of green energy." The second student stated they knew their institution was a community college and that it had a large number of international students enrolled. The information known by students prior to beginning their studies at their institution varied greatly. Overall, it appeared as though the majority of students knew little to no information about their institution prior to enrollment.

Question seven asked participants to indicate their satisfaction with the way their institution had communicated with them during the application process. Four participants were

satisfied or *very satisfied*; two participants stated they were *dissatisfied*; *somewhat satisfied*,

neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and *somewhat dissatisfied* were selected by one participant

each. When asked if survey participants were currently satisfied with their school or program,

five participants said they were *very satisfied*; three were *somewhat satisfied*; two were

somewhat dissatisfied; two were *dissatisfied*; and one was *satisfied*.

Question seven asked participants to identify the types of support services available to them at

their institution. As evident in Figure 1.3, an array of support services is available to international

students to assist them in their transition to life in Toronto and the GTA and with becoming

acquainted with members of their new community. Professional development opportunities was

the most selected by students which demonstrates that institutions want to provide students with

services to improve their abilities to obtain a career in the future. Meeting other international

students was also selected by many respondents, which showcases that institutions do assist

students in making connections. Figure 1.3 shows support services identified by participants.

Services Available to International Students

Service	Value
Housing support	2
Financial support	1
Language support	3
Physical health support	2
Mental health support	2
Visa and immigration support	6
Employment support	2
Professional development opportunities	9
Campus involvement opportunities	7
Support meeting international students from your country	6
Support with meeting other international students	8
Support with meeting people from Toronto/Canada	3
None of the above	

Students were asked to indicate in their own words what they wish they had known about their institution before enrolling. Four of the participants indicated they wish they had known the location of the institution, with one specifically stating that they did not know their institution was so far from Toronto's downtown and another stating that they would have liked to know their institution was located in Scarborough. One participant stated housing information; another stated that they did not know they could not transfer college credits to universities and that knowing this would have been preferred. A participant indicated that they would have liked to know that their institution did not care, which can be assumed to mean that the institution appears not to care about their students. A participant added that they would have liked to have known more people.

When asked their overall satisfaction with their institution's support services for international students, four were somewhat satisfied, six were satisfied or very satisfied, two were very dissatisfied, and one was somewhat dissatisfied. Participants were asked to qualify their previous response. Four students explained that they had not received adequate support; one

student believed the administration at their institution to be racist. The remaining eight participants had positive responses. Four stated that their institution provided good support to them and were co-operative and responsive to their inquiries. Two stated that their institutions hosted several events that allowed them to get involved and meet people, but one of the two respondents said they would have liked more support with meeting Canadian students. Another student noted their institution had many services available that they were not aware of. The final respondent indicated good instructors and was assumed to mean that the student was satisfied with their course instructors; therefore, indicating their course experience was a positive one, but it was unclear how satisfactory international services were for the student.

The next question asked students to explain what their institution could have done to help them as students; eight responses were received. One participant stated they wanted their institution to have the exam period extended to be longer than one week. Another participant stated they would like for their college to have better connections with universities to be able to transfer credits between institutions easily. Another respondent stated they believed professors should be aware there are international students enrolled in the class in order to provide them with the necessary support and accessibility information. One response state they would like to create their own schedule rather than have the institution create it for them. A participant stated they would prefer a larger variety of courses and for the institution to be more flexible with their rules. One participant would have liked their institution to prepare international students for graduation by providing them with the necessary information and resources to continue living in Canada after their studies are completed. Better lighting on campus was the response received from one student. An additional respondent said there was nothing else their institution could do to help them.

When asked if students would recommend their institution to a friend or family members, eight participants said yes; five said no. Participants were given an opportunity to provide additional information, and one advised "stay[ing] away from it."

Discussion

Based on the findings from interviews, surveys, and secondary research some key observations have been made in regards to the research questions. RQ1 posed the question: How are post-secondary institutions and recruitment agencies in Toronto communicating with prospective international students? Based on the interviews conducted, the most common strategies used to communicate with students were digital communications, including both email and social media, relationship development, and in every situation the use of cross-cultural communication was noted. It is evident that all employees interviewed strongly understood the importance of cross-cultural communication practices in ISR, with their main focus being on current events that are taking place worldwide. There was no mention of any cross-cultural theoretical practices being used in ISR. Rather participants only mentioned staying up to date with politics and worldly events, as those then shape the conversations which can take place in a country. Though it is imperative for ISR employees to be aware of the current events in a country or region, it may be useful to also understand some of the theoretical practices of cross-cultural communication. For instance, Said's (1978) theory of Orientalism critiques the assumption that western society is superior to eastern society. Being aware of Orientalism (Said, 1978) could assist ISR employees in understanding of the preconceived notions of western culture about countries that were once labeled as "The Orient." Having this knowledge could only increase their understanding of western biases and assist them in overcoming these biases to have better relationship development with individuals from those countries. Interview participants did make

note of understanding how to communicate with different cultures (i.e. when to shake hands, when not to make eye contact). This understanding of using cross-cultural communication practices, though not overtly stated by ISR employees, does allude to some cross-cultural theory such as Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions. Though participants did not state they used theoretical practices in their work, it appears as though they had some basic understanding of theory without realizing that they had been using it.

It is not surprising that digital communication is often used as a strategy of ISR. The growth of technology has only allowed more access to regions abroad thanks to the globalized use of online networks (Castells, 2000). With the internet, as many of the interviewees stated, it is easy to follow-up with individuals met either in-person or through online communication, provide them with quick responses to their questions, and keep them on track when applying to the institution. This easy form of online communication appears to not just be used for ease of communication, but also provides individuals with instant connections with the institution. For instance, one of the participants stated that current international students are asked to volunteer for Facebook Live and Twitter chat sessions. This use of students allows potential applicants to connect with a member of their potential institution and allows a relationship to form between applicants and students. However, it is important to note that some individuals are not online and do not have access to digital communications (Castells, 2000; Cudmore, 2005), which could hinder some students from learning about an institution. Lack of access to the internet or even specific websites (i.e. Facebook) may be uncommon, but it does occur and if online communication is too heavily relied on some students may miss an opportunity to study internationally.

Relationship development was the most prevalent strategy mentioned by all ISR employees, for obvious reasons. Building relationships with individuals who are planning to move their entire life to a new country can provide them with a sense of comfort and safety. The researcher believes that if an institution is able to demonstrate that they are willing to help a student succeed and meet others living in their new country residence, it allows international students to feel connected and more willing to attend an institution, as noted by one interviewee. The emphasis on developing relationships with students and even families demonstrates that ISR employees truly care about applicants and want them to succeed. Though there is a financial benefit to having international students enrol in an institution, it appears that ISR employees do not focus only on that piece of recruitment efforts, and want to assist in diversifying their institution to ensure students continue to thrive in their new country of residence. This also demonstrates the essential part of understanding student needs and what they require from their institution of study. By developing these relationships, ISR employees create a discourse with students and families that allows for open communication. This ease of access to communicating with someone can only make students more intrigued by an institution, as they will see their needs and concerns are being put at the forefront of an ISR employee's concerns. From this analysis, the most important piece to ISR appears to be developing relationships with students and understanding what they want from an institution and supporting them with their needs. Without this piece, an essential part of the communication process would be eliminated, and it is assumed that more students would be deterred from attending an institution than attending it.

RQ2 asked: What is the international student experience of post-secondary recruitment efforts and support services? The surveys conducted among international students provided responses to this question. Since the number of responses from students were quite low, only

preliminary observations and statistically unverified assumptions can be made. Based on the responses provided by students, it is assumed that the majority of students in the GTA were quite pleased with their recruitment process, which in turn demonstrates that the institution must have communicated effectively with these students. This conclusion comes from the response to Q8 (see Appendix B). Those students who were dissatisfied with the communication efforts of their institution during recruitment would not have had a pleasant experience, unlike those students who responded they were satisfied with the communication of their institution during recruitment. However, students were asked (Q9) to state whether they were pleased with their program and institution. The majority of students indicated that they were satisfied, but some students (30.8%) said they were dissatisfied. The number of dissatisfied students increase from 23.1% in Q8 to 30.8% in Q9. These responses lead the researcher to believe that the way the program and school were represented to students may not match the reality of the program/school once they had enrolled. If the institution had been promoted honestly, the same number of satisfied students would have been apparent in both questions seven and eight. However, the responses from students could also be affected by other external factors that were not explored in the question, such as feeling homesick. It is also necessary to mention that if the institution had been misrepresented, this could have been done from agents that were not employed by the institution itself.

Students were asked (Q10) to identify what they'd known about the institution prior to enrolment, and the location of an institution seems to have been the most misrepresented piece in recruitment. Four of the ten individuals who responded to Q10 stated that they were not aware of the exact location of their institution. It could be that students were told they were attending an institution in the City of Toronto, but were then surprised to find their institution was actually

one hour away from the city; this assumption is made based on two student responses where they did not know their institution was far from the downtown core of Toronto. From these responses, the researcher suggests that it may be best for institutions to not misrepresent their locations. Students who have never visited Toronto or the GTA will not be aware of how large the city is.

The majority of international students had a positive experience with the services provided to them by their institution. Six of the thirteen respondents were satisfied or very satisfied, while four were somewhat satisfied. The researcher assumes that the majority of institutions in the GTA do have adequate services that assist students in transitioning to life in Canada. It is believed that institutions do assist international students in making connections with one another. This is viewed as a beneficial service for students, as they can then connect with another student in a similar situation as themselves and receive advice whenever necessary. However, the one thing that raises concerns is the lack of support students receive in meeting Canadian students that attend their institution, as only three (23.1%) of survey respondents selected this support service as available to them in Q10 (see Appendix B). Though international students will attend classes with Canadian students, many may be deterred from speaking to them because of the language barrier or for fear of exclusion (Andrade, 2006; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). Institutions should provide more support in this realm as it will help students become more acquainted with their new home and potentially improve their language skills (Andrade, 2006; Leask & Carroll, 2011).

RQ3 aimed to uncover recommendations for improving current ISR practices and services available to international students at post-secondary institutions in the GTA. Based on interview responses, it appears that it is imperative that ISR needs to consider students and their needs throughout the recruitment process. In order to provide students with exceptional ISR,

student needs must be well understood in order to improve the recruitment process. As one

interviewee indicated, removing students from the ISR process would only diminish the value of

ISR. This is also clear through the survey responses, as students want to have a realistic

description, particularly when it comes to the location of their institution and program. It is

believed that when students have an individual to speak to at an institution or agency, they are

more likely to recommend it to their friends and family. This was noted by P3, as his agency is

mainly supported by recommendations from past students. Based on P3's claim, it is presumed

that an institution with reliable employees and contact will interest more students through past

student recommendations. In order to understand student needs, it is recommended that current

international students enrolled at an institution be asked what they found most helpful during the

recruitment process and what they wish had been done differently. P1 did mention that they were

in the process of implementing this practice, which can only improve the recruitment strategies

of that institution. Knowing what students require during recruitment will assist them in feeling

supported and understood. Market-orientation research points out that when selling a product or

service (education in this case) to consumers (international students), the consumers' interests

must be known (Naidoo, 2010; Ross & Grace, 2012). In knowing consumer interests, marketing

techniques can be used to target different markets, specifically in reference to culture in the case

of ISR (Naidoo, 2010; Ross & Grace, 2012).

   Another key point brought up during the interview process was that providing adequate

funding for international students would assist in attracting more students. International students

do pay higher tuition fees than domestic students (Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013), but with

funding opportunities more international students would be given the opportunity to attend an

institution and talented individuals could pursue their academic studies. This was also indicated

by one survey participant who said their choice to attend their institution was because the cost of tuition was lower than others. Finances can contribute to a student's decision to attend an institution, but the significant of this factor could be diminished by better funding at institutions across Toronto and the GTA for international students.

Along with providing students with the information about financial commitment, the researcher notes that an institution should not solely recruit international students in order to gain funding for the institution. Doing this would only be detrimental to the institution, and could potentially lessen the value of an education at the institution. As noted by one interviewee, only accepting international students to expand financial resources at an institution is a disservice for the institution and the student. If a student is only accepted to gain money, they may be unprepared for the education they are to receive and fail out of the program, and this will only make them bitter towards the institution. This will also make the institution appear less reputable, as they will have opted to accept unqualified students to assist in obtaining more funding. Trilokekar and Kizilbash (2013) explained how Australia did lower acceptance standards to increase the number of international students in order to obtain more money when government funding was cut to post-secondary institutions; their practices were viewed as unethical and their services lacked adequate support for international students. This choice to simply increase profits prevented Australia from attracting the most talented students and in turn sacrificed developing their education systems for monetary gain (Trilokekar & Kizilbbash, 2013). Though Australia has made several changes to their recruitment patterns, this method of ISR was detrimental to the value of education from Australian institutions, as students were not properly supported and were accepted even if they were not equipped to attend the institution (Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013).

This method of ISR should not be practiced in Canada where a well-rounded education is valued more than funding.

In terms of remaining successful in the ISR realm, institutions do need to make note of what other institutions are doing and constantly look for ways of improving, as stated by one of the interviewees. Without this drive to continue attracting international students, an institution can easily lose its appeal abroad. It is also suggested that institutions continue to be forthcoming about academic requirements for acceptance and financial commitments during the ISR process. As P4 indicated, leading a student to believe that they will be accepted into an institution without the required marks will only cause them more disappointment in the long run and paint the institution in a negative light. In continuation of this point, P4 stated, if students require higher marks, they should not be exploited in the process of applying internationally is already costly and stressful. Financial commitments should be expressed from the start of the ISR process, as a student must know what will be expected of them in that realm. Without this knowledge, a student may apply without the necessary funds and could then be left disheartened when they learn they cannot afford to attend the institution. Providing students with false hope regarding finances and academic requirements could be viewed as a form of exploitation.

To continue the success of an institution in ISR recruitment, it is suggested that institutions continue to meet with students in person and create in-person contact with as many students as they can. Meeting students in person will continue to aid in relationship development that is valued highly by ISR employees. Though technology is readily available to many individuals worldwide, an in-person contact appears to improve the chances of a student applying to an institution. This point was stated by Pretlow (2014) in a study that asked high school students to identify how they had learned about a summer educational program at an

institution. Students stated that counsellors at their high school had informed them of the program which encouraged them to apply (Pretlow, 2014). Students had noted they saw posters around their high school promoting the program but did not apply until approached by a person (Pretlow, 2014). Internet use is much more affordable for institutions, but without in-person contacts it is believed students will not be as informed about an institution and be less likely to apply.

Survey participants indicated that they would like more information regarding the institution and the structure of the Canadian education system. This was demonstrated through responses regarding what students would have liked their institution to do to provide them with better support. Some students stated that they would prefer more course options and a longer exam period. Since students are coming from a variety of countries, their educational experience is very different; to help better their experience it is suggested that institutions be transparent about what the programs offer and how terms will be structured. This understanding would prevent students from feeling confused when the situation appears to them during their studies.

According to literature related to ISR, many instructors are unaware of how to manage international students in their classes (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). In order to better an international student's experience, it is suggested that instructors be made aware that international students are in their classes, as suggested by a survey participant, and that they receive some sort of cross-cultural training to prepare them to work with international students (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, & Topping, 2008). Though this would not affect ISR practices directly, it would assist students in transitioning and feeling more supported at an institution. In turn this could lead to more recommendations from those students to potential students in the future.

It is believed that if institutions are well-equipped to assist international students once enrolled, they can promote this in their ISR practices. Institutions will appeal to a wider audience if they express to potential applicants that their institution has resources and services available to help students succeed in their future. Though institutions in the GTA do appear to have several services in place, as determined by the interviews conducted, more could be done to support students. As previously mentioned, international students are often not provided with the opportunity to connect with domestic students, but if an institution was able to implement this in the support services provided to students, it could be highlighted as a great opportunity in ISR. The researcher believes that with this promotion more students would feel confident in coming to a new country, as they would know that they would soon meet Toronto residents who could assist them in their transition. This would also demonstrate to students that the institution cares about their needs and wants to assist them in becoming well-adjusted in their new home, which could influence their decision to choose the institution.

Lastly, the researcher cautions against the use of private recruitment agencies unless they are closely monitored. Though some do great work and recruit students honestly, it was noted by two interviewees that many private recruitment agencies are untrustworthy and recruit for financial gain and should be closely monitored when working with an institution. Hulme et al. (2014) stated that agents can do work that is not always viewed as ethical. According to Hulme et al. (2014), interviewed agents indicated that an institution that pays commission will be promoted more than an institution that may suit a student more because of the financial gain. Though agents do promote an institution and assist in engaging students, they also attempt to benefit more than they should at times, which leads to an untruthful promotion (Hulme, et al., 2014).

Limitations and Future Research

Throughout the process of research in this MRP, there were some limitations that could be improved on in the future. First, the number of interview participants was too low to gain enough insight into Toronto and GTA post-secondary recruitment practices. In order to gain a greater understanding of institutions in the GTA, the researcher recommends two interview participants from each institution in the GTA be interviewed along with at least four agency employees. A larger sample of interview participants from a wider array of institutions would provide more insight into the various strategies used at the different institutions and agencies and assist in determining how universities, colleges, and agencies differ in their ISR practices.

The number of survey respondents was very limited despite the researcher's efforts to recruit international students. In order to improve this, it is suggested that the researcher obtains the support of various institutions to circulate the survey to all international students currently enrolled. Instead of using only social media and word of mouth to recruit survey participants, directly circulating the survey through email would increase the number of respondents. Conducting interviews or focus groups with international students would also be beneficial to understand their experiences in greater detail than a survey.

Another area to research is to identify the ISR strategies used at post-secondary institutions in all Canadian provinces and territories. Provinces such as Ontario and British Columbia are well known because of their major cities, Toronto and Vancouver. However, there are many provinces and cities in Canada that are not as widely known. Noting how each province recruits international students would be a fascinating comparative analysis to conduct in greater depth. Understanding the successful strategies from each province could help Canada as a whole diversify its institutions even more.

Exploring how private recruitment agencies operate would be useful, as it would shed light on some of the claims made in this MRP by ISR employees. The statements made are quite disconcerting, and it is imperative that research is conducted to understand the reason for the actions of private recruitment agencies. This research could also force agencies to improve their actions and encourage institutions to be cautious when working alongside agencies. Agencies must be held accountable for their actions especially if they are falsifying information regarding institutions in the GTA. This research could help change the way agencies recruit international students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this MRP was to identify ISR practices, student experiences of these practices and services, and recommendations to better ISR practices in the future. Based on the interviews conducted, the use of digital media (i.e. social media and emails) and developing relationships with students and contacts in certain countries and regions are the most effective ISR strategies. In regards to the second research question, it was determined that most students had a positive experience in the recruitment process, but the process was not reflective of what students experienced after they arrived. There were a higher number of participants in surveys who stated they were unsatisfied in some form with their institution's support services. This was interpreted to mean that students were led to believe their institution would provide them with a certain opportunity that was not met upon arrival. It has been noted that external factors could influence this outcome and that with a larger sample size, responses may have differed. In hopes of improving future ISR practices, recommendations were made that indicated institutions should have better support services in place to assist international students with meeting domestic students. Improving support services would provide students with a sense of comfort when

enrolling in an institution and would allow for better promotion of the services to attract more students. A caution against private recruitment agencies was also noted, as they could be responsible for the misrepresentation more so than institutions themselves. Using agencies can be beneficial, but must be very carefully monitored so as not to instill a false hope in students.

Overall, it appears as though the institutions in the GTA are being quite transparent with students regarding application and enrolment processes and this should continue. Without honesty, international students will not trust their institution once enrolled and will deter students from applying in the future. Developing strong relationships with potential students during the recruitment, application, and enrolment processes will only assist an institution in their recruitment. Along with that, understanding student needs is absolutely imperative to successfully recruiting students and implementing some market-orientation practices when promoting the institution to applicants abroad. Continuing current practices and implementing the recommendations above could help improve ISR practices. Most importantly, the needs of international students must be put at the forefront of ISR to prevent the use of ISR only for the financial gain of an institution.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. How many years have you worked in international student recruitment?

   a. What interests you about international student recruitment?

   b. Why do schools recruit internationally?

2. How many international students attend this university currently? Have the numbers

   changed throughout the five years? Which programs do most international students enrol

   in?

3. How do you and your department recruit international students?

   a. Do you adapt your approach to different cultures? If so, how?

4. What strategies are most effective? Why?

5. What information do you provide potential applicants with to make the university

   attractive to them?

6. Are there any ways that you think international student recruitment can be improved? If

   so, how?

Appendix B

Survey Questions

The Effectiveness of Post-Secondary International Student Recruitment: The Student Experience

Survey Questions

Which university or college do you attend?

○ Ryerson University

○ York University

○ University of Toronto

○ University of Guelph-Humber

○ Humber College

○ Seneca College

○ George Brown College

○ Centennial College

○ Prefer not to say

○ None of the above

○ Other: _____

Are you a full-time or part-time international student?

○ Full time

○ Part time

○ Other: _____

What type of student are you?

○ Undergraduate

○ Graduate (Masters or PhD)

○ Graduated

What country are you from?

Your answer

How did you learn about your college or university? (Select all that apply)

☐ From a friend or family member

☐ From a current international student that IS NOT from my country

☐ From a current international student that IS from my country

☐ You received recruitment materials in the mail

☐ You received recruitment materials by email

☐ You found the college or university by searching online and viewing their website

☐ I went to a recruitment event in my country and met with an employee from the school

☐ My previous school recommended the school to me

☐ Other: _____

Why did you choose to attend your college or university? (Select all that apply)

☐ The college/university is well-known in your country

☐ The program you are in is well-known in your country

☐ The college/university is known to have good professors

☐ The college/university is located in a convenient area

☐ There are internship and career opportunities

☐ The tuition was lower than other universities/colleges

☐ A scholarship/funding package was offered to you

☐ Your parents wanted you to go to the college/university

☐ The college/university told you success stories about international students

☐ Other: _____

What did you know about your college or university before you started? Please explain.

Your answer

Are you satisfied with how your school communicated with you when you were applying?

○ Very satisfied

○ Satisfied

○ Somewhat satisfied

○ Neither satisfied nor disatisfied

○ Somewhat disatisfied

○ Disatissfied

○ Very disatisfied

○ N/A

Are you satisfied with your school or program?

○ Very satisfied

○ Satisfied

○ Somewhat satisfied

○ Neither satisfied nor disatisfied

○ Somewhat disatisfied

○ Disatissfied

○ Very disatisfied

○ N/A

Which types of support and opportunities were you provided with by your college or university? (Select all that apply)

☐ Housing support

☐ Financial support

☐ Language support

☐ Physical health support

☐ Mental health support

☐ Visa and immigrantion support

☐ Employment support

☐ Professional development opportunities (i.e. networking, resume writing)

☐ Campus involvement opportunities (i.e. campus clubs, intramural sports)

☐ Support with meeting international students from the country you are from

☐ Support with meeting other international students

☐ Support with meeting people from Toronto/Canada

☐ None of the above

☐ Other: _____

What do you wish you knew about your college or university before you enrolled?

Your answer

How satisfied were you with the help you received from your college or university's services for international students?

○ Very satisfied

○ Satisfied

○ Somewhat satisfied

○ Neither satisfied or dissatisfied

○ Somewhat dissatisfied

○ Dissatisfied

○ Very dissatisfied

○ N/A

Please explain why or why not you were satisfied with the support you received from your college or university.

Your answer

What else could you college or university do to help you?

Your answer

Would you recommend your college or university to a friend or family member?

○ Yes

○ No

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Your answer

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Appendix C

Participant ID			RQ1: Strategies												
Interview ID	Employer	# of years in ISR	STRAT-A	STRAT-C	STRAT-M	STRAT-D	STRAT-E	STRAT-F	STRAT-I	STRAT-L	STRAT-P	STRAT-M	STRAT-S	STRAT-T	STRAT-W
Particpant 1	University	10	1	12	2	15	1	0	2	1	2	5	6	4	0
Participant 2	University	4	1	5	4	3	1	2	6	4	3	5	1	0	1
Participant 3	Agency	6	5	3	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	2
Participant 4	University	8	2	3	0	4	0	2	5	3	2	2	3	1	0
TOTAL			9	23	7	24	3	4	14	9	7	14	11	5	3

RQ2: Student Services and Needs

SERV	INF	INF-A	INF-P	INF-F	INF-J	INF-N
5	7	2	2	2	1	6
6	2	0	0	2	3	3
3	4	1	0	2	0	3
7	4	2	1	2	1	2
21	17	5	3	8	5	14

RQ3: Improvement

IMPR	CHL-S	NEG	INF-N
6	4	0	6
5	3	0	3
7	1	9	3
3	5	6	2
21	13	15	14