Global Ambitions, Local Support: Understanding Faculty Influence on International Students' Career Development

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Abstract

International students' education and migration journeys have become more prominent in public discourse, often with stereotypes of students as low-wage workers rather than emerging professionals. When their own narratives are centred, however, international students emphasize their hopes for faculty and institutional support in reaching their career aspirations. These aspirations may also be linked to post-graduate work permits or migration plans. A student-centred faculty intercultural teaching taxonomy developed at a Western Canadian postsecondary institution highlights five faculty practices that support career development: (1) affirming students' skills, knowledge, and experience; (2) recognizing non-academic factors, including present work, in students' lives; (3) supporting transition to the labour market; (4) building connections with students; and (5) demonstrating cultural sensitivity. This web of practices highlights the faculty career influencer function. As career influencers, faculty can recognize the systemic barriers students face in their education and immigration journeys, guide students in questioning dominant narratives, provide support and advocacy in pursuing meaningful professional career paths, and serve as advocates. International students identify faculty as key career influencers. Institutional support and faculty development are required help faculty take a holistic view of students' career journeys and recognize their critical role as influencers, guides, and advocates.

The 2024 decision by Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to implement a 35% reduction of international student visa approvals generated a storm of public attention regarding international student immigration and career trajectories. In announcing the policy, Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship of Canada, stated, "through the decisive measures announced today, we are striking the right balance for Canada and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system while setting students up for the success they hope for." (IRCC, 2024). In the days following this announcement, national media stories frequently portrayed international students as those seeking "back door for entry into Canada, to work a low-skills and low-wage job" (Keller, 2024). In this context, a dominant narrative of international students seeking immigration by any means possible, rather than students as young global emerging professionals beginning their career trajectory, is shaping public perception.

For many international students, their choice to study in Canada is shaped by post-graduation work opportunities (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), 2018; Marom, 2023). Students who complete a two-year postsecondary program at a designated learning institution are eligible to apply for a post-graduation work permit (PGWP), which in turn can support application for permanent residency in Canada (IRCC, 2023). How should Canada and its postsecondary institutions define success for these learners? More importantly, how do international students define their own desired study and career trajectory? Often, the voices of government, institutions, academics, and business leaders shape public opinion, while voices of the students on their study and potential immigration journeys remain unheard.

Complex contextual realities cause many students to fill low-wage jobs with limited growth opportunities (Francis, 2023). However, students are also active agents with broader long-term goals that include professional pursuits. Postsecondary institutions typically offer career centres, experiential learning, and work-integrated learning opportunities. Faculty members, however, are the primary relational contact point for many students in their career journeys.

This paper seeks to add to current conversations about international student educational and career paths by listening to student voices. The literature review situates the study within current critical dialogues about international student education in neoliberal systems, including reflection on international student challenges in securing skilled pre-professional work. Next, the results of a mixed-methods study of internationally educated students perceptions of faculty intercultural teaching at a Western Canadian postsecondary institution are presented. We highlight students' perceptions about their career journeys and the role they believe faculty members play in assisting them in their journeys. We will then analyze these stories

Global Ambitions, Local Support

34

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
CAREER
DEVELOPMENT

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE

using two perspectives from the career development literature, namely Career Emancipation and the role of faculty as Career Influencers. Our discussion concludes by addressing the potential for faculty members to actively engage with students in career emancipation, challenging biased social narratives and unjust realities.

Literature Review

"Edugration", International Students and Canadian Career Paths

Brunner (2022) describes government policies with a strong link between education and future immigration as "edugration" (p. 79). "Edugration" may result in injustices arising from neoliberal education systems, such as students being viewed as institutional "cash cows" (Stein & Andreotti, 2016), students experiencing exploitation through agent-based recruitment systems (Marom, 2023), and the neocolonial positioning of Canadian education as "superior" to other global postsecondary systems (Brunner, 2022; Gyamera & Burke, 2018; Stein & Andreotti, 2017).

At the end of 2023, more than one million international students were studying in Canada, representing a 29% increase from the previous year (Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 2024). Federal government policy links this growth to broader national labour market goals, stating that "international education can help Canada meet current and emerging labour-market challenges" (Global Affairs Canada, 2019, p. 5). In a 2018 study, more than half of international students in Canada planned to apply for permanent residency, while 61 percent hoped to work in Canada post-graduation (Esses et al., 2018). In 2021, 72.5% of international students stated an intention to apply for a PGWP, with 60% planning to apply for permanent residence (CBIE, 2024). With this growth, and explicit links between international students and the Canadian labour market, increasing attention has been given to the career trajectories of students as they progress from their postsecondary programs into their careers.

Marom (2023) notes that education-immigration trajectories are often followed by international students with lower socioeconomic status, which in turn can create a path to lower-tier institutions and less specialized programs. Marom postulates that these students, perceived as predominantly immigration focused, may be directed to less-demanding academic programs, such as general studies diplomas. As a result of less-specialized academic pathways, former international students holding PGWP may find themselves in lower-skilled employment. Additionally, in a recent study of international students in British Columbia, more than 80% of those surveyed were currently employed, with most earning minimum wage; those earning more than 20 dollars per hour represented just ten percent of the population surveyed (Francis, 2023). Thus, international students find themselves employed in low-wage, low-skill sectors that are unlikely to naturally lead to higher post-graduate employment outcomes.

Choi (2021) highlights differential labour market outcomes between Canadian and international students, noting lower earnings for international students in the first five years post-graduation. Potential explanatory factors offered by Choi include fewer skilled work opportunities while studying, and more limited participation in work integrated learning. International students are ineligible to participate in government programs, such as the Canada Summer Jobs program. In summary, international students may experience limited access to professionally focused labour market experiences that contribute to more positive trajectories.

Many international students expect their postsecondary institutions to be key players in supporting their career and immigration journeys; Esses et al., (2018) found that 59% of international students expected support in making professional connections. However, international students in BC named a lack of career planning and direction, a lack of soft skills development, and difficulty finding work in their fields of study as significant challenges (Francis, 2023). The above challenges, while not exclusively within the purview of postsecondary institutions, may be significantly addressed through the work of faculty and the broader career support ecosystem during students' study programs.

Global Ambitions, Local Support

35

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
CAREER
DEVELOPMENT

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE

Career Guidance as Emancipation

The challenges inherent in neoliberalism, particularly in the realm of career guidance for international students, necessitate a paradigm shift towards social justice and emancipation. This approach requires a comprehensive, inclusive, and critically reflective strategy, aimed at empowering students to both navigate and actively contest the systemic obstacles they encounter.

Neoliberal policies have profoundly impacted the global educational landscape and labor market. Hooley et al. (2018) underscore the transformation of education into a commodity within neoliberal frameworks, where its primary value is often perceived solely in economic terms. This perspective marginalizes the broader, more holistic role of education in fostering personal growth and societal transformation. The susceptibility of international students to neoliberal dynamics is pronounced; their career paths are frequently dictated by policies that favor economic objectives over educational or social equity (Global Affairs Canada, 2019). As noted earlier, Marom (2023) highlights that many international students in Canada are channeled into academic programs with limited future career opportunities, indicative of a systemic bias inherent in the neoliberal approach.

Hooley et al. (2019) propose a reorientation of career guidance to focus on social justice. This shift entails moving beyond a narrow emphasis on employment and economic outcomes, towards a comprehensive approach that considers students' diverse backgrounds, identities, and goals. In the case of international students, this means providing guidance that accounts for cultural differences, immigration-related challenges, and specific barriers encountered in the job market. Embracing and valuing diversity is essential in transitioning towards a more equitable and just system of career guidance (Blustein & Flores, 2023). This includes recognizing the diverse experiences and obstacles faced by international students from different socio-economic backgrounds and addressing the systemic biases that restrict their opportunities (Arthur, 2023).

Moreover, Hooley et al. (2019) advocate for career guidance that aids students in understanding the intricate relationships between education, career pathways, and broader societal frameworks. This involves equipping students with the skills to critically evaluate their position and possibilities within the neoliberal structure and to make informed decisions regarding their educational and career choices. The role of critical reflection in career guidance is crucial, as it encourages students to contemplate their personal experiences and ambitions, and how these intersect with larger societal trends and policies (CERIC & OneLifeTools, 2022). For international students, this might entail reflecting on their motivations for studying in Canada (and how these motivations have evolved since their arrival), their experiences within the educational system, and their future aspirations (Ho, 2021).

Ultimately, career guidance should serve as a mechanism for emancipation, challenging and reshaping the neoliberal status quo and advocating for policies and practices centered on equity and social justice. For international students, this involves advocating for more inclusive and equitable educational and labor market policies, as well as supportive systems that recognize and cater to their unique needs, by them and for them by their institutions. While addressing structural injustices, it is equally important to acknowledge the agency of students. International students often choose to study in Canada for various reasons, including career advancement and immigration objectives. Recognizing this agency is vital in providing career guidance that is respectful, empowering, and congruent with the students' personal aspirations.

Faculty as Career Influencers through Advocacy

Available literature on faculty relationships with students in internationalizing universities largely focuses on teaching, curriculum development, and general intercultural development (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010; Dimitrov & Haque, 2016; Killick, 2018; Lee et al., 2017), with little focus on faculty roles in student career development. However, faculty members play a vital role in a student-centred, emancipatory career education paradigm. Since faculty members interact most frequently with international students in their post-secondary education journey, they stand as pivotal career influencers. Ho (2019) defines career influencers as "individuals who informally provide career-related advice, guidance, and/or counselling" (p. 2) and furthermore, articulates seven career influencing functions that post-secondary professionals can hold to

Global Ambitions, Local Support

36

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE

facilitate emancipation. These functions are advising, guiding, counselling, advocating, teaching, external liaising, and leading.

The relationship between faculty as career influencers and emancipation is profound. Faculty, through their multifaceted role, inadvertently or deliberately foster an environment of socially just career guidance. Their influence not only aids in the career development of international students but also contributes to their overall emancipation within the Canadian educational and professional context. Faculty members' commitment to these roles, whether accidental or intentional, plays a vital role in steering the narrative towards a more inclusive and equitable career pathway for international students, aligning with the broader goals of social justice in career guidance.

Methods

This paper reports and discusses perspectives on career development from internationally educated students at a postsecondary institution in Western Canada. This participant group includes both students on international student visas, and other students who completed secondary school outside of Canada, but who are institutionally classified as domestic students. Most (91%) of participants were international students, while 9% were domestic internationally educated students. The study received ethics board approval both at the institution where the study was conducted and institution to which the research was affiliated. Student perspectives shared in this paper are drawn from a broader qualitative-dominant, exploratory mixed methods study that aimed to develop a student-centred taxonomy of faculty intercultural teaching practices (Creswell, 2015; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). The primary research question asked was "what are faculty ways of being, knowing, and doing that effectively demonstrate faculty interculturality, as understood by internationally educated students?"

Mixed-methods methodology followed the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2007), which focuses on centering participant perspectives throughout a research process that uses insights from both qualitative and quantitative data to facilitate social change. The transformative paradigm was also chosen for its potential to facilitate cultural relevance in research (Chilisa & Tsheko, 2014) by ensuring that participants' voices inform all phases of the study. The study began with qualitative interviews that formed the basis for a subsequent quantitative survey.

In the first phase of the research, qualitative data were drawn from interviews with 12 internationally educated students conducted via Zoom videoconferencing and using Appreciative Inquiry methods (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010) (see Table 1). Appreciative Inquiry engages participants in change process by sharing stories that represent the best of what is, and visions of desired future outcomes. In this study, the definition of appreciation was extended to include appreciation of challenges and negative experiences when shared by participants (Grant & Humphries, 2006).

Sessions began with an introduction to interculturality, designed to provide participants with shared knowledge of key concepts (Liamputtong, 2011). This discussion included the definition of interculturality and statements from the institutions' academic plan about internationalization. Next, participants were provided with an opening generative lead-in to stimulate recall of stories on three topics: appreciation of cultural diversity, developing intercultural relationships, and providing equitable learning opportunities. Participants shared examples of faculty interactions and behaviours in each of these three areas. Participants then were asked to share a story of a challenging faculty interaction with their hopes for what might be different in the future. Next, participants shared their description of an ideal learning environment. The interview ended with an invitation to create a visual representation (typically a mind map) on the theme of faculty intercultural teaching.

Following the interviews, transcripts were shared with participants, and an inductive, eclectic coding process (Saldaña, 2021) was undertaken to generate a preliminary list of codes. Transcripts were initially hand-coded with marginal notes, and QSR Nvivo software was later used to further refine the coding framework. For example, discussions of provisions of references for student employment and internship support, each with single mentions, were later grouped together under the code "support student transition to the labour market". Additionally, positive and negative mentions of a similar faculty behaviour (e.g., demonstrates knowledge

Global Ambitions, Local Support

37

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
**DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE**

about cultures/ does not demonstrate knowledge of culture) were merged into a single code. This resulted in a provisional list of twenty-two themes. These themes formed the basis of a survey instrument co-created with three student participants to facilitate the creation of student-facing and culturally relevant questions. Survey questions emerged directly from qualitative interview themes, with at least one survey question generated for each theme. Most survey questions, co-written with interview participants, used Likert scales where students indicated their degree of agreement with statements about faculty teaching practice (e.g., I want my instructor to acknowledge the non-academic factors in my life (e.g., work, personal issues); I want my instructor to help me in easily transitioning from school to a full-time job/career). Following 44 Likert-scale questions, survey participants were provided with an open-ended prompt to share any other experiences or information.

Survey participants were recruited via emails sent from the International and Student Affairs units at the institution where the study was conducted. Data were cleaned to remove incomplete responses and those demonstrating inattention. Descriptive statistics were reviewed, including mean, median, and variances for each survey item, followed by an exploratory factor analysis to determine correlations between items using a multi-step procedure (Henson & Roberts, 2006)[1]. Initially, a principal component analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation was performed on 45 items to explore their correlations, but no factors showed correlations above 0.3. Additional data rotations offered 6-component and 4-component solutions as possible analyses. The 4-factor solution was chosen as the optimal representation of the data, confirmed both by a scree plot analysis and the fit of this solution with the qualitative data.

Mixed methods research creates opportunities to make meta-inferences and draw broader generalizations by integrating qualitative and quantitative findings (O'Cathain, 2010; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Data integration occurred at two key points in this study. First, qualitative interview data were used to inform the development of the quantitative survey instrument (Fetters et al., 2013). The second stage integration occurred as analyzing interview data, participant mind maps, and quantitative survey results confirmed the four-factor solution as a solid foundation for the student-centered faculty interculturality taxonomy.

Participants

Twelve internationally educated participants – all students or recent alumni of the institution where the study took place – participated in the qualitative phase of the study. Nine participants named India as their country of origin; The three other participants were from Saudi Arabia, Nepal, and Brazil. All participants were in their second year of study or above; seven were in diploma or baccalaureate programs, while five were in post-baccalaureate programs (see table 1). Participants are identified with pseudonyms.

193 participants were included in the quantitative phase of the study. Like the qualitative phase, the majority (62.9%) named India as their home country. Data from quantitative participants, including open-ended verbatim responses, is reported anonymously without names in the results.

Results

Integration of the qualitative and quantitative data generated a four-domain framework of faculty intercultural teaching practice:

1. Develop an atmosphere of safety and respect;
2. Facilitate connectedness;
3. Create equitable opportunities for academic success, and
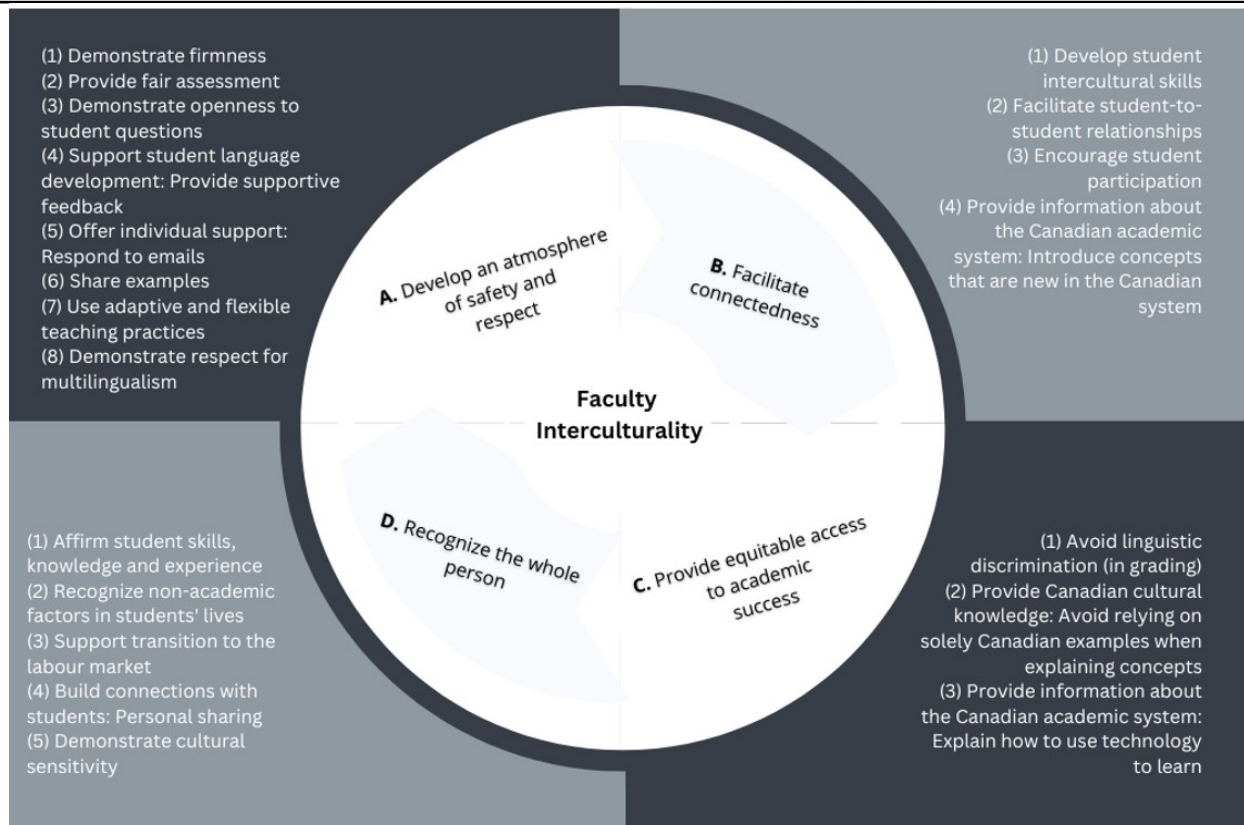4. Recognize the whole person.

The four domains, along with the correlated items, are presented in Figure 1.

Within the context of career development, the recognize the whole person domain included many student stories that relate their educational journeys and relationships with instructors to their current career transitions and overall career development hopes. Therefore, this domain is the primary focus of this article

1   We would like to thank our colleague Dr. Chris Giles for his support in conducting the exploratory factor analysis.

Table 1

List of Participants in the Qualitative Phase

Pseudonym	Level of Study at Time of Interview	Program	Country of Origin
Agam	Undergraduate (Year 2)	Psychology/ General Studies	India
Harseerat	Undergraduate (Year 2)	Biology/ General Studies	India
Isha	Undergraduate (Year 2)	Psychology	India
Loveen	Undergraduate (Year 4)	Math/Psychology	India
Tavleen	Undergraduate (Year 5)	Health Sciences	India
Jasveen	Post-Baccalaureate	Accounting	India
Matthias	Post-Baccalaureate	Human Resources	Brazil
Sadia	Alumni (Undergraduate)	Psychology/ Counselling	Saudi Arabia
Ranveet	Alumni (Post-Baccalaureate)	Accounting	India
Ashi	Alumni (Post-Baccalaureate)	Operations and Supply Chain Management	Sri Lanka
Ikbir	Alumni (Post-Baccalaureate)	Accounting	India

Figure 1

Student-Centred Faculty Intercultural Teaching Taxonomy

as it yields the most implications to inform career development practices when working with international students. The results below will first present descriptive statistics for each item in the *recognize the whole person domain*, followed by student stories that highlight their hopes for relationships with instructors in the context of career development.

Recognize Non-Academic Factors in Students' Lives

As outlined previously, many international students are engaged in an "edugration" journey, where completing academic programs is connected to overall immigration plans, and where part- or full-time work is necessary to meet the expenses of living and high tuition fees. As seen in Table 2 below, most participants expressed a desire for faculty members to acknowledge the complexities involved in this journey.

Table 2

Recognize Non-academic Factors in Students' Lives Survey Data

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
I want my instructor to acknowledge the non-academic factors in my life (e.g., work, personal issues	1.00	5.00	3.99	1.13	1.27
I want my instructor to recognize the challenges international students face when they transition to a new country.	2.00	5.00	4.57	0.66	0.43

Karampreet, an interview participant, shared the complexities facing many international students, including the many who transition directly from secondary school to more complex responsibilities. These students often take on postsecondary studies, work responsibilities, and independent living in a significant life transition on arriving to Canada. Karampreet explains, "international students are usually working because they have to arrange so much money for their fees and everything. And they are alone here. They have to do everything by themselves." She later expressed gratitude to faculty members who appreciated these challenges.

> I would appreciate them a lot, because I think they know what kind of things we go through in our daily lives. Cause we have to think about our family too, our food too, our work too, our studies too.

In these early stages of Canadian career journeys, students may also be seeking support in gaining student leadership positions, such as work as peer mentors/tutors, student orientation leaders, or positions in student government. These may provide them with more relevant employment experience than they may be offered in the community. Such positions often require support of faculty via the provision of references. Agam, seeking support in gaining one such position, noted his disappointment with an instructor who did not provide such support after he missed an assignment deadline. He describes his instructor's words, including statements such as:

> "You didn't submit your assignments on time, so I don't think you are a responsible person". Agam went on to clarify that "I'd given him the valid reasons that I was not healthy. I was sick. I had given him proofs [sic] that I was sick."

Agam contested his instructor's assessment of his character, emphasizing that he was affected by extenuating circumstances.

In addition to the significant transitions faced by more traditionally aged students, many mature students undertake a career journey that requires the same academic and career transitions, while managing the complexities of family life. Matthias, a mature student, shared a challenging encounter on this journey:

But there was one instructor that always keeps saying always the grad students they do much more work than you guys. And that was like, okay, so and you know, we're coming from another country. We are studying. We are working. I have kids. So why are you saying that? It was a little frustrating.

Matthias' statement highlights the fact that student support from instructors should consider the full complexities of a life journey that may include family life, alongside work and study.

While participants often connected the recognition of life challenges to the need for support in succeeding academically, Karampreet noted that this support can create a broader sense of self-efficacy. She stated that such recognition "give[s] us confidence; it give[s] us the responsibility that yes, our professor did this for us, so we have to do much better than they expect from us." As Karampreet's comment illustrates, the desire for full recognition as persons with multifaced lives should not be interpreted as a request for undue leniency, but rather as an expression of how support promotes students' development and success in their journeys.

Affirm Student Knowledge, Skills and Experience

A persistent issue for all classes of new immigrants is a lack of recognition of prior learning and career experiences; this is also true of internationally educated students. As indicated in Table 3 below, internationally educated students value acknowledgment of the skills and experiences they bring to their Canadian education.

Table 3

Affirm Student Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Survey Data

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
I would like my instructor to acknowledge my previous work experience, life experience, and skills.	1.00	5.00	3.96	1.08	1.16

In the qualitative interview portion of the study, the desire for recognition of prior experience was particularly significant among post-baccalaureate students who were completing diploma programs having already earned prior bachelor's degrees, and often having prior work experience. In an open-ended question, a survey participant also clearly shared this sentiment:

Sometimes, even though I'm 25 years old, already completed a bachelor's degree in another country, and already have many years of work experience, I am treated as a child simply because I'm new to Canada and haven't worked here yet. I would like instructors and staff to recognize that my previous expertise and knowledge acquired abroad is valid, and to consider it as a base I can improve upon.

This participant's statement provides a clear call for faculty to become more familiar with students' life and career journeys, shaping the classroom environment to support recognition and further career development.

Global Ambitions, Local Support

41

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
**DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE**

Support Transition to the Labour Market

The deep integration of students' educational journeys, immigration pathways, and career journeys is reflected in the hopes they have for instructor support in making the transition from student life to post-graduation employment. Table 4, presented below, demonstrates high participant agreement with the desire for specific instructor guidance in this transition.

Table 4

Support Transition to the Labour Market Survey Data

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
I want my instructor to help me in easily transitioning from school to a full-time job/ career.	1.00	5.00	4.23	0.98	0.97

Interview participants shared a variety of ways that they positively experienced support from instructors, including mentorship, support in networking, provision of internships, and encouragement through the application process. Tavleen, a fifth-year undergraduate student with graduate school aspirations stated her appreciation for an instructor who provided support in understanding the academic pathway that would best support her intended goals.

She [the instructor] insisted me to go for health sciences, because health sciences is more about research. And she said, after when you're done with your bachelor's, there are people that may go over your thesis again and again, and that will help you . . . So that's the positive experience and that you appreciate this is my weak point and I'm coming from this country, and this was my background, but she also gave me some kind of directions. And I'm very happy with that.

Internationally educated students new to the Canadian system may lack specific knowledge about how to best connect academic choices to career paths, and instructor support can be vital to building this understanding. Support in networking was mentioned by several interview participants as a vital resource. Matthias viewed the relationships built with instructors as a key networking experience, explaining that he was able to build "a very professional relationship. A very good networking for us. I think, [this] was one of the best things that I found engaging." Participants also noted the availability of university networking as an additional source of support in building professional relationships. For example, Ikbir stated that "at the moment I think [the university] does have networking events which lead to career opportunities as well." At the same time, Ikbir went on to note that the provision of networking events by itself was not sufficient, and that students required additional instruction and guidance in order to effectively make use of the resources provided:

But again, for the first or second semester students when they try to do networking, they don't tend to do that great in it, because they don't know how to do networking or how it's done because again, to most of the international students, these networking events are pretty new.

As Ikbir's comments highlight, additional support from faculty may be needed, particularly for younger undergraduate students, to facilitate the process of professional networking. Participants also highlighted a range of supports that they view as helpful in transitioning to post-graduation employment. Ranveet shared that in her last semester of the program, her instructors provided consistent encouragement through the job application process. She stated, "I still remember I started applying for jobs and then it took me awhile. That time your instructor, they keep on motivating you. You have to do it." Ranveet also positively remembered a faculty member who "gave internship after studies to two or three

Global Ambitions, Local Support

42

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
**DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE**

students." Alongside these highlights of her experience, Ranveet also indicated that more support could be provided in the process of navigating a relatively unfamiliar job market. She hoped that faculty members could provide more information and support in mastering the interview process:

> I'll ask for market demand, what is required in the job, what kind of skillset or the mindset I would say. And then what qualities can make you a better person, because there are so many talented candidates outside. And especially with the interviewing skill, I think students need to [practice] at the first place. But I remember I went for so many interview[s], but then after a while I get to know how the thing have to go.

Considered together, participants' comments highlight both positive career development supports, and a desire that this support would be provided in greater depth by their instructors, particularly at key transition points, such as impending graduation, in their career journeys.

Build Connections and Cultural Sensitivity

The prior three items in the *recognize the whole person* domain have clear connections to career development. The exploratory factor analysis that shaped the development of the taxonomy indicated that demonstrating cultural sensitivity was correlated with the career-focused items discussed above. The practices named in this theme allow students to build enriching and satisfying relationships with instructors. Table 5 below presents students' responses to a question about instructors engaging in personal life sharing with students.

Table 5

Build Connections with Students: Personal Sharing Survey Data

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
I appreciate when my instructor shares about their personal life with me	1.00	5.00	3.93	1.10	1.20

Harseerat, an interview participant, shared a contrast between a class where she felt connected to her instructor, and one where she perceived personal connection as absent:

> Our instructor is really nice, my chemistry instructor, but she also kind of doesn't engage on a personal point with the students that much. I don't know how to put it to be honest. Whereas our microbiology teacher, whenever we meet in the halls we talk, and she keeps on asking us how is the day? Or we actually feel comfortable sharing things with her; we have a lot of study stuff going on, this test, that test.

Significantly, Harseerat's story illustrates that an instructor's outreach to share on a personal level with students can lead to reciprocal sharing, allowing faculty to understand their students' lives, experiences, and goals.

The desire for reciprocal relationship also extended to mutual intercultural learning in an atmosphere of cultural safety. Two practices, learning names and being sensitive towards culture, were viewed as desirable by most students, as illustrated in Table 6 below.

Several interview participants indicated a desire for mutuality in meaningful intercultural relationships. Sadia shared, "I'm just thinking from an intercultural lens, this awareness would work if it happens from both sides, from students and from teachers." Similarly, Agam, in a description of his preferred classroom environment, explains that "apart from what students are doing, the instructor also is from a different culture, and I am also from different culture. We also try to learn about each other's culture." Harseerat viewed learning student names as a key indicator of this relationship building, describing her ideal class as one where the "instructor is trying to remember all of their names of the students in one day." For study participants, cultural

Global Ambitions, Local Support

43

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
**DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE**

Table 6

Demonstrate Cultural Sensitivity Survey Data

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
I would like an instructor who is sensitive towards my culture.	1.00	5.00	3.81	1.03	1.05
I want my instructor to learn my name.	1.00	5.00	3.96	0.93	0.86

sensitivity and mutual cultural learning are key practices that facilitate strong relationship building between faculty and students.

Conversely, stereotyping and assimilative expectations weakened the potential for strong faculty-student connections. Loveen described her perception of how internationally educated students are stereotyped, sharing that:

> I have heard from one or two instructors that they have, in their introductory courses, they have lots of international students and then the international students, they don't tend to complete their assignments on time and stuff. And then, I don't want to name anyone, but I have heard them saying there's this negative perception around international students in Canada.

Significantly, the stereotype Loveen names has moved beyond faculty-to-faculty discussions and appeared clearly evident to her as a learner. Tavleen adds to this understanding of practices that inhibit effective relationships by illustrating the impact of assimilative activities. She shared:

> But some of it, they're very particular they see this is what we are looking for and we don't care which country you come from. This is your problem; you have to learn to live here in the way that Canadians live.

While Tavleen's understanding of the negative impact of negation of cultural identity is situated within the classroom, links with career expectations for newcomers to Canada can be discerned, particularly when international work experience is devalued.

Recognize the Whole Person: Career and Relationship

The *recognize the whole person* domain allows educators to grasp the connection between strong, culturally sensitive relationships and supporting students in their career development. While much interaction with students is situated within the classroom context, most internationally educated students' lives are not solely focused on academic development. Rather, when building relationships with students, instructors may consider that these learners are not simply pre-career, but already involved in the full complexity of career development combining work and studies that often have a clear employment goal on a desired immigration pathway. This relationship allows consideration of the role of faculty as Career Influencers, as well as guides towards Career Emancipation.

Discussion

This study's findings shed light on the critical role faculty members play as career influencers for international students in Canada, aligning with the current literature emphasizing the intertwined relationship between international students' educational pursuits and their career trajectories. The findings reflect the significant challenges international students face, including navigating a new educational system, cultural barriers, and often a dual focus on academic success and future employment – a concept encapsulated in the term "edugration."

Global Ambitions, Local Support

44

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
**DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE**

The study highlights ways faculty can mitigate these challenges, as the results underscore the multifaceted role faculty have in influencing the career paths of international students. This is in line with the literature that identifies faculty as pivotal in helping international students navigate the complexities of academic and career choices in the Canadian context.

To address these complexities, Hooley's (2019) framework of five signposts toward socially just career guidance offers a valuable lens for understanding the ways faculty can support international students' career development and success. By working to advance these signposts and also empowering students to do so themselves – building critical consciousness, naming oppression, questioning what is normal, encouraging people to work together, and working at a range of levels – faculty can mitigate the challenges international students face and foster more equitable career development.

Recognize Non-Academic Factors in Students' Lives

The study findings highlight the importance of faculty recognizing the intricate web of non-academic factors impacting students' lives. This recognition is crucial for supporting students' career and mental health (Ho et al., 2023), and for understanding their shifting priorities and aspirations, thus contributing to a more holistic approach to career guidance. The literature emphasizes the need for social justice and emancipation in career guidance, in particular aligning with Hooley's (2019) signpost to build critical consciousness. Faculty play a role as career influencers through the advocating function by encouraging international students to critically consider societal and organizational structures, and their relationships to these structures, so that they are not merely seen as economic contributors but as individuals with diverse backgrounds and aspirations.

Affirm Student Knowledge, Skills and Experience

A significant finding of this study is the importance of faculty recognizing and affirming previous learning, skills, and experiences of international students. Such recognitions and affirmations are pivotal in fostering a sense of belonging and respect, contributing to a more equitable educational experience. They are also important steps towards social justice and emancipation, challenging the often Eurocentric norms and power dynamics prevalent in post-secondary education. This resonates with Hooley's (2019) signpost to question what is normal, and echoes Stebleton & Ho's (2023) emphasis on purpose narratives, allowing students to integrate their past experiences into their current and future career trajectories. Institutions can better recognize and affirm students' previous experiences by providing training and resources that help faculty understand and appreciate the diverse backgrounds of their students, and how this understanding can inform their pedagogical and student engagement approaches.

Support Transition to the Labour Market

The study highlights the need for faculty to support students in transitioning from academic environments to the labour market. However, it also highlights that faculty members may not feel equipped to assume this responsibility, as many are not trained in career development topics and practices. To accomplish this, faculty can consult with their campus career centres, who can provide specialized support to international students, and connect faculty members with appropriate resources and referrals, thereby enacting the signpost of encouraging people to work together (Hooley et al., 2019). For instance, networking and relationship building are essential components of career support. Even if not all faculty members are adept at networking, they can still perform the career influencing function of external liaising by facilitating connections and mentoring students in building their professional networks.

Building Connections and Cultural Safety

Finally, an essential aspect of faculty influence is building meaningful connections with students, which involves more than academic instruction. Findings from this study suggests that teaching should be

Global Ambitions, Local Support

45

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
CAREER
DEVELOPMENT

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE

seen as relational and caring work, where the method of delivery enhances the content. Through teaching – their primary career influencing function – faculty members can model positive professional relationships through their interactions with students. Demonstrating reciprocity, learning about and respecting students' cultural backgrounds, and creating an inclusive classroom environment (e.g., knowing students' names and pronouncing them properly) are crucial for building trust and guiding students in their career journeys. These actions not only enrich the learning experience but can also equip students for professional environments. By demonstrating the characteristics of inclusive managers and workplaces, faculty can help international students become less vulnerable to unethical employment practices. Furthermore, they help students develop self-advocacy and critical thinking skills, enacting the signpost of naming and challenging potential oppression and discrimination in their future work environments.

Limitations

The data presented in this study are drawn from a single institution. While demographic profiles of participants broadly mirrored those of the institution where the study took place, students from India represent the majority of voices presented in this study. Additionally, the study took place during the emergency remote teaching environment of the COVID pandemic, which may have influenced students' relationships with faculty members and view of their career trajectories. While this limits the broader generalizability of the results, this study could be replicated in other contexts to broaden the demographic profile of respondents. This could include comparative research of undergraduate and graduate student views of their career trajectories. Perspectives of students in different institution types, including research institutions, primarily undergraduate teaching universities, and colleges could also be compared.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

Implications

The findings of this study have profound implications for pedagogical practices within higher education; they highlight the importance of fostering relational dynamics between faculty and international students to bolster engagement and learning outcomes, reinforcing that teaching is ultimately a relational activity. The narratives from the research participants underscore the necessity for faculty to recognize and affirm the diverse strengths and resilience international students bring from their life experiences. Given the challenges associated with adapting to new cultural and academic environments, faculty empathy and sensitivity are crucial. Furthermore, there is a need for faculty to engage in advocacy – a career influencing function – by role modeling how to challenge detrimental stereotypes and contribute to a narrative shift that values and leverages international students' contributions to academic and community settings. This advocacy becomes increasingly vital in light of recent governmental measures affecting international student undergraduate admissions, emphasizing the role of educational institutions in supporting these students amidst broader systemic pressures (Government of Canada, 2024).

The Role of Anti-Bias Education for Faculty

To recognize students holistically in support of their career journeys, faculty may benefit from bias awareness and anti-bias training. Bias arises from the basic brain-based process of dividing the world into categories, and thus should not be directly equated to prejudiced or racist behaviour (Eberhardt, 2020). However, awareness of the impacts of bias is needed. For example, recognition of facial and other differences across racial lines is weaker than in-group recognition, with lower levels of brain activity measured when viewing faces of individuals outside one's own racial group (Hughes et al., 2019). This can lead, for example, to faculty weakness in distinguishing fully between international students from the same racial or ethnic group. When this discrimination difficulty is paired with stereotyped perceptions about international students, failure to provide full recognition to each student can result. Awareness of this possibility can prompt faculty to

Global Ambitions, Local Support

46

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
CAREER
DEVELOPMENT

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE

consider ways of building fuller personal knowledge of their students, such as incorporating small assignments where students share personal identities and goals.

Additionally, students' performance may either rise or fall depending on the stereotypes they perceive about their groups: stereotype lift, where students internalize a positive bias about their ability to succeed can increase performance on academic tasks, where stereotype threat, resulting from the internalization of negative stereotypes, lowers performance (Hughes et al., 2019). Pervasive social narratives, conveyed via media or in faculty-to-faculty conversations that suggest international students are interested only in the immigration side of "edugration", rather than on their educational attainment, may develop into implicit biases subtly conveyed to students. As Marom (2023) highlights, students' perceived fear of academic failure, alongside potential implicit biases of institutional advising, may lead to choices of less rigorous academic programs, such as general studies diplomas, which may in turn limit future employment options.

Despite the brain-based nature of implicit bias, awareness of bias and implementation of bias-reduction practices can result in greater skill in challenging bias and recognizing individual difference more accurately. Practices to challenge and reduce bias include intentional intergroup contact, mindful reflection on gaps between intentions and behaviours, engaging in intentional counter-stereotype thought exercises, and participating in anti-bias education and training (Choudhury, 2021). Faculty members may reach greater effectiveness as emancipatory career guides by engaging in anti-bias training that broadens perspectives on the individuality of students and their journeys.

Networking and Role Modelling

While stereotype threat may challenge international students' vision of future success (Choudhury, 2021), one mitigating strategy may be connecting current students with opportunities to learn from successful alumni within the networking role of faculty career influence. Additionally, alumni can add their voice to career emancipation by naming instances of oppression and questioning the norm of lower-level service work faced by many international students. Additionally, building connections between faculty and alumni can create new ways for current students and those who are further on their journey to work together for more just and equitable futures.

Future Research

With respect to future research directions, the authors propose that a comprehensive examination of bias awareness training for faculty members, recognized as pivotal career influencers for international students, be undertaken. This initiative mirrors a typical intervention employed by human resources departments in post-secondary institutions aimed at mitigating hiring biases and discrimination. The research would entail conducting in-depth reflective interviews with faculty training participants to discern the key insights gained, the practical applications of these insights into their pedagogy, and the tangible short- and long-term effects on teaching practices. Such an analysis would provide a richer understanding of how bias awareness training influences faculty members' interactions with students, potentially transforming them into more effective career influencers.

Additionally, future studies can draw from Redekopp and Austen's (2015) pioneering work on the community helper model and apply it to post-secondary career influencers who work with international students. The model's premise, based on surveying high school students to identify trusted sources of career support and advice, lays the groundwork for nominating individuals for community helper training. Future research could replicate this model within a post-secondary context, assessing the impact of such training on career influencers' self-efficacy in providing career support to students and youth.

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT | REVUE CANADIENNE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE CARRIÈRE

Conclusion

The current political situation has raised public consciousness about the "edugration" journeys of many international students. Understanding of these journeys, and how to truly move "edugration" towards an emancipatory model requires a shift away from dominant narratives. Media frequently present international students as seeking immigration by any means, rather than as skilled immigrants seeking meaningful professional futures through Canadian education. While academics, seeking justice, may highlight areas of potential vulnerability and exploitation, these narratives, if not balanced with student agency and voice, may reinforce stereotypes of international students as less able to chart a meaningful career path.

The career emancipation paradigm offers a framework for addressing systemic inequities faced by international students throughout their career journeys (e.g., Choi et al., 2021; Francis, 2023). This framework recognizes the systemic social factors that limit international student trajectories, while at the same time facilitating students' consciousness, perspectives, and horizons to what might be possible. Such an emancipatory approach recognizes that international students' unsatisfactory career outcomes should not be attributed to lesser abilities. Rather, current outcomes should instead call attention to systemic failures to achieve the stated aim of inviting international students to our country, that is, to benefit Canada through increasing our skilled and educated workforce (Global Affairs Canada, 2019).

At present, most faculty development programs that aim to support educators in teaching international students do not address the role of faculty as career influencer. This likely reflects siloed institutional structures where career development is separated from other aspects of pedagogy. This paper demonstrates that students view faculty as career influencers and value their input. Listening to students' needs and perceptions points to a critical gap. If we listen to our international students, understand their preferred futures, and aim to challenge systemic injustices, equipping faculty to support student career journeys strategically and systematically from the beginning of studies to graduation and beyond is a critical priority.

"Edugration" need not be a negative experience, either for students or for the Canadian economy. Career emancipation recognizes when inequities hinder preferred outcomes and provides a pathway towards change. By highlighting the successes of many past international students, and the high aspirations of current learners, "edugration" can be reframed as a place of emancipation, rather than injustice.

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Global Ambitions, Local Support

48

CANADIAN
JOURNAL OF
**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

REVUE
CANADIENNE DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT
DE CARRIÈRE

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