

Education in the Context of Internationalization, Immigration, and Forced Migration: Introduction to the Special Issue

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This special issue of *Antistasis* focuses on internationalization, immigration and forced migration. Many Canadian universities and colleges pursue internationalization of higher education. The Government of Canada (2016a) has recently committed to increasing immigration rates and many regions actively pursue new immigrants as a tool for economic development. Furthermore, Canada has resettled approximately 33,723 Syrian refugees as of October 30, 2016 (Government of Canada, 2016b). This special issue, then, is a timely one. It addresses several issues and concerns that are often overlooked in the educational literature or have perhaps become somewhat more pressing in recent years.

Higher education institutions in many Western countries are actively engaged in internationalization exercises. In an era of dwindling government financial support for higher education, increased competition for research funding and decreasing domestic student enrolment, international students, as well as international research collaborations represent a potential market, to use the language of the day. At the same time, internationalization can serve as a means to engage domestic students with other cultures, to increase diversity on campus and to develop international teaching and research relationships. The articles by White, Rose and Liu address related areas of that process of internationalization.

Liu's article addresses the challenges for international students in the host country, including culture shock, learning in an unfamiliar culture and services provided to international students. Her research highlights the differences between students' expectations and the reality of studying in Canada. Liu's research concludes the need to focus on three particular areas of internationalization in higher education: the provision of workplace diversity training, increasing the number of multilingual employees in student services and engaging international students in the design and planning of campus activities.

White notes that higher education institutions in Canada have been engaged in internationalization for decades, though the focus of that internationalization has been on students rather than international or transnational faculty. She notes the potential for transnational faculty as a resource in the internationalization process and that they are very often overlooked when it comes internationalization but also to human resources management in general and the lack of policies and programs in place to support the transition of these academics to a new country and a new institution and to ensure their success.

In her article, Rose discusses an often-overlooked aspect of the international student experience, international student re-entry. She notes that the reentry of international students can be a difficult and important a process of adjustment yet remains virtually unexplored in the research. A key finding of Rose's research shows that while most of her 11 respondents noted they had a relatively smooth reentry experience, it was a process and

a more structured approach to reentry may be beneficial. Her findings confirmed those of previous research that shows reentry experiences are smoother for those with a strong cultural identity. Rose goes on to highlight that much of the support her participants received were from professors and on an ad hoc basis. She also describes the potential for international students who have returned home to help with the reentry of other students and to serve as ‘ambassadors’ for their Canadian institutions.

Similarly, Domene writes of the lack of counselling services for the spouses of international students and that many institutions have policies that exclude non-student spouses from accessing campus-based counselling. He notes this is problematic in light of research that shows this population can experience substantial mental health concerns. Domene’s article discusses vulnerability of accompanying spouses and the ethical responsibility of post-secondary institutions to provide both international students and their spouses and accompanying partners with adequate supports and services.

Hamm and colleagues present a comparative study of the ways in which increased newcomers and refugees impact educators and schools in New Brunswick and Alberta. Their research highlights the need for continuing professional development for teachers and school leaders in the areas of immigration, intercultural education and peace-building strategies. The findings also reveal that a lack of preparation and awareness of new comers can cause tension and anxiety in the school community if preparation is reactive as opposed to proactive.

The articles in this special issue have addressed a number of key themes arising in recent research on internationalization, immigration and forced migration, particularly in the area of education. Taken together, the articles in this special issue argue for a more holistic view of internationalization and migration. If educational institutions are to continue to pursue internationalization at all levels of education, increasing immigration and refugee settlement, we have an ethical responsibility to ensure that there are policies and programs in place that support not only the process, but the people. We need thoughtful, proactive, inclusive and holistic programs that support the transitions of these individuals and also support those who work with these groups to achieve that transition.

References

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Biography

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