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THE PREREQUISITES TO UKRAINIAN STUDENTS PARTICIPATION IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS AT THE CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

ABSTRACT

The problem of outbound mobility of Ukrainian students has been presented in the paper. The data regarding the number of Ukrainian students studying in Canada has been pointed out. This paper examines “push-pull” factors which motivate Ukrainian students to seek higher education overseas and factors which attract Ukrainian students to Canadian higher education establishments.

The research methodology comprises theoretical (descriptive, statistical, comparative) and practical (content analysis of interviews and feedbacks of Ukrainian youth and students studying at the Canadian universities and colleges) methods. Theoretical and practical results of the research focus on analysis of the educational, social, political, economic and cultural prerequisites to Ukrainian students studying abroad, in particular at the universities and colleges in Canada; the advantages of Canadian higher education system have also been suggested. Among the perspectives of further research, we define the analysis of governmental and institutional implications of international students' recruitment with the regard to development of inbound student mobility in Canada.

Key words: *prerequisites, Ukrainian students, student mobility, inbound and outbound mobility, “push-pull” factors theory, universities and colleges of Canada.*

INTRODUCTION

In the globalized world of the 21st century, well-educated, globally aware and internationally experienced professionals with intercultural skills and competences are increasingly valued by employers in Ukraine and abroad. Therefore, within growing tendencies of internationalization of higher education and integration of Ukraine into European and world education area, educational opportunities for post-secondary education around the globe have been increased by means of decentralization of higher education management, development of innovative information and communication technologies, increasing demands of the labor market, popularity of study abroad programs and opportunities to travel around the globe. Due to this, Ukrainian students are becoming increasingly interested in spending time in a foreign academic environment while pursuing education abroad.

Taking into account the importance of student mobility for internationalisation of higher education, in recent years Ukrainian government has made considerable efforts to



enhance international student mobility through legislative and regulatory framework. In this regard, the development of academic mobility of students is set to be of a importance with reference to the following laws and regulation, such as Provision of Academic Mobility of Students of Higher Educational Institutions in Ukraine (Decree № 635 of 29.05.2013) and Law on Higher Education in Ukraine (Decree № 1556-VII of 01.07.2014).

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the paper is to analyze educational, social, cultural, political, and economic prerequisites to Ukrainian students studying abroad, in particular at the universities and colleges of Canada, and to point out advantages of Canadian higher education system in terms of implication of “push-pull” factors theory, in order to illuminate brain-drain tendencies in Ukraine.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

In recent years, Ukrainian and foreign researchers have become increasingly interested in the problem of internationalisation of higher education, and especially, one of its forms such as student academic mobility (V. Andrushchenko, N. Avshenyuk, D. Blum, Sh. Bond, I. Fedorova, T. Finikov, N. Huliaieva, J.-P. Lemassen, O. Sahinova, S. Verbytska, L. Weber, and others). Many contemporary studies have focused on the problem of academic mobility of students in Ukraine and worldwide that are covered in works by A. Arkhipova, E. Astakhova, L. Hurch, I. Lapshina, A. Moky, N. Myronchuk, I. Pidkurkova, K. Podolsky, T. Zhyzhko, and others. The problem of international cooperation of Ukrainian universities found their coverage in studies of such scholars as V. Kremen, V. Luhovyi, V. Zhuravsky, M. Zhurovsky. The “push-pull” factors theory as a model of international education flows has been explored in the works of such scholars as S. Kemp, M. Kinnell, T. Mazzarol, M. McMahon, G. Soutar, and others. In our research, the scientific papers of Ukrainian scholars in the field of comparative pedagogics are very important, especially those concerning Canadian higher education (O. Elbrekht, L. Karpynska, V. Pavlyuk, I. Rusnak); multicultural education in Canada (V. Pohrebnyak, O. Slonyovska); academic migration (A. Hrudzunsky, V. Nikolaievsky, N. Prokhorenko, E. Stadnyi, I. Svitiaschuk, and others). However, the research of prerequisites to Ukrainian students studying abroad, especially in Canada, has not been conducted yet.

Over the last decade, the research on academic mobility of students has increasingly demonstrated that an enormous number of national, international and supranational organisations have contributed to research of particular aspects of international higher education within Ukraine and beyond. These are the following: World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, CIDA, CBIE, CEMI, IAU, IFEPR, CEDOS, etc.

Different theoretical and applied research methods have been used in our study. Such theoretical methods as descriptive, statistical and comparative have been used for studying the main prerequisites to Ukrainian students’ participation in study abroad programs. Among applied methods, we have used content analysis of interviews and feedbacks of Ukrainian youth and students studying at the Canadian universities and colleges on the subject of advantages of Canadian higher education in order to gather hands-in experiences of pedagogical value.

RESULTS

International student mobility is defined as any academic mobility which refers to students studying in a country other than a student’s country of residence within post-secondary education study programs (degree program, non-degree program). Apart from this, it is implied that the international student must return to his or her home country after completing their study abroad program. The term “academic mobility” does not embrace



intellectual migration from one country to another. In spite of the fact that international student mobility is interrelated with such social phenomena as “brain drain” or “brain gain”, we understand student mobility as “brain exchange”.

Much attention has been paid to emphasize two main types of international student mobility: inbound student mobility and outbound student mobility. It is worth mentioning that inbound mobility rate is defined as a number of students from abroad studying in a particular country, and is expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrollment in that country. Based on study conducted by World Bank Education Statistics, it can be noted that Ukraine’s inbound mobility rate has been gradually increasing over the last decade, as in 2001 it was 0,7, in 2005 – 0,9, in 2010 – 1,4, and in 2012 – 1,8. On contrary, outbound mobility ratio, defined as number of students from a particular country studying abroad which is expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrollment in that particular country, has also showed positive dynamics. Accordingly, outbound mobility ratio in Ukraine in 2005 it was 1,0, in 2008 – 1,1, in 2010 – 1,4, and in 2012 – 1,7 (World Bank EdStats, 2014). As noted, in Ukraine outbound student mobility ratio predominates over inbound student mobility rate, which served to be a basic for this research.

It has been investigated that despite the fact that academic mobility has already become an integral part of internationalisation of higher education in Ukraine there is no state organization or agency that keeps the record of Ukrainian students who pursue their education abroad. Nevertheless, thanks to international governmental organisations, non-governmental institutions, international foundations, embassies and consulates of foreign countries, and dedicated researchers, it remains possible to assess the flow of Ukrainian students out of the country.

The number of Ukrainian students studying abroad is taken into consideration with the regard to this research. It has been noted that the number of students in Ukraine seeking to further their post-secondary education abroad continues to increase. According to the information provided by UNESCO Institute of Statistics, there were over 27,000 Ukrainian students studying abroad in 2007 (Global Education Digest, 2007). What is more, it has been stated in the following report by UNESCO Institute of Statistics that the number of Ukrainian students who continue their post-secondary education abroad was estimated up to 35,066 in 2012 (Global Education Digest, 2012).

While taking into consideration the analytical report of CEDOS, it has been defined that the number of Ukrainian students at foreign universities during 2013/2014 academic year was roughly 46,000 (Sviatashchuk, Stadnyi, 2014). Therefore, it can be seen that there is a positive tendency in dynamic grow of Ukrainian students abroad. Among top destination countries are Poland, Canada, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy, the USA, Spain, France, Australia, Great Britain, and others.

Thus, Canada as one of the major English-speaking destination countries (MESDC) remains among top ten countries, where Ukrainian students tend to take degree programs, non-degree programs, language summer schools, internships, exchange programs, etc. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the number of Ukrainian students who participate in academic mobility programs at the universities and colleges in Canada has an optimistic tendency.

In particular, as it can be seen from Table 1 that dating back to 2005–2006 academic year the number of Ukrainian who arrived in Canada to study amounted to 308 students; in 2009–2010 academic year there were 606 students; whereas in 2012–2013 academic year – 1097 students.



Table 1

The number of Ukrainian students studying in Canada (2005–2014)

Ukrainian students in Canada: the quantitative indicator (full-time students only)								
2005–2006 academic year	2006–2007 academic year	2007–2008 academic year	2008–2009 academic year	2009–2010 academic year	2010–2011 academic year	2011–2012 academic year	2012–2013 academic year	2013–2014 academic year
308	328	368	470	606	655	760	1097	2053

The pattern of international student mobility may be explained by ‘push-pull’ factors theory which was developed by Australian renowned scientists (Mazzarol, Soutar, 2002) in regard to the flow of international students worldwide. When analyzing the factors that motivate Ukrainian students to study abroad (push factors) and factors that attract Ukrainian students to study in Canadian universities and colleges (pull factors), we come to understanding that there is a range of various factors that influences student’s opinion to study abroad.

By means of critical and systematic analysis of scientific literature and recent publications, as well as content analysis of interviews and feedbacks of Ukrainian students studying at the Canadian universities and colleges enabled the following findings. The factors that initiate student’s decision to undertake studying in Canada and factors that encourage Ukrainian students to study overseas are compiled into list of “push” factors are the following: *economic and political instability in Ukraine caused by military conflict in Eastern Ukraine, high level of corruption of home universities, lack of qualified staff at home universities, insufficient use of innovation in research and education, discrepancy in qualifications provided and the market demand, a large number of recruitment agencies offering educational services abroad, growing popularity of educational exhibitions entitled ‘Education au/in Canada’, alumni as a means of promoting international education via social networks, and so on.*

Looking more closely at major “push” factors in details, it has been defined that most recent military-involved activities that take place in the East of Ukraine and economical instability caused by Ukrainian currency recession have made an impact on outbound and inbound mobility of Ukrainian students who seek better living conditions and educational environment abroad.

Another prerequisite to Ukrainian students pursuing their post-secondary education abroad is high level of corruption at home universities. As the findings reveal, corruption at higher education establishments in Ukraine remains to be a growing concern. According to the results of all-Ukrainian survey conducted among university students in Ukraine by the NGO “Democratic initiatives” and “Ukrainian Sociology Services” in 2011 the overwhelming majority of students in Ukraine had to do with corruption on a university level. Only 38 % of respondents claimed that they didn’t face corruption at the universities. This data indicates that corruption in higher education institutions is widespread and it prevents some skilled students to continue their education in Ukrainian universities.

Moreover, the number of scientists in Ukraine has decreased critically over the last decades. As it was mentioned by Borys Paton, the president of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the number of intellectual emigration of professors from Ukrainian



universities has increased dramatically. According to the data presented by Statistics Ukraine, the number of professors holding Candidates of Science degree (PhD) who emigrated in 1996 was estimated to 187, in 2001 – 139, in 2012 – 51. The number of professors holding Doctor of Science degree was comparatively 90 in 1994, 51 in 1998, and 27 in 2002 (Statistics Ukraine). This has led to lack of qualified staff at Ukrainian universities.

Similarly, the estimated expenditure of Ukrainian government for higher education expenses in 2011 equaled to 18667.1 million UAH (€1683.24 million). On contrary, Government of Canada expenditure on post-secondary education only was \$59.6 billion in 2011. The lack of financial support and unsatisfactory funding of Ukrainian system of higher education resulted in not efficient quality of higher education and insufficient use of innovation in research and education. This fact is depriving some talented students from studying in home universities.

As noted, a large number of recruitment agencies, represented in Ukraine's biggest cities (Kyiv, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Lviv) which offer educational services abroad, is another important prerequisite to Ukrainian students participation in study abroad programs at the universities and colleges in Canada. Among most popular recruitment agencies are StudyUa, Studex, StartPlus, InfoStudy, Lemman, International House, Aspect, Anyway, AMES, Study Bridge, and many others. Such recruitment agencies provide explicit information to Ukrainian students regarding study programs in Canada (degree program, non-degree program, foreign language courses, internships, summer schools, etc.).

In addition, educational exhibitions entitled "Education au/in Canada" organized with the assistance of the Canadian Embassy are gaining popularity among Ukrainian students. The first exhibition "Education au/in Canada" was held in February 2012 in Kyiv, Lviv and Odesa, and there were representatives of 16 Canadian universities and colleges. The second time the exhibition "Education au/in Canada" was held in 2013 in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk, there were representatives of 25 Canadian universities and colleges (Canadian Embassy report, 2014). It is vital to mention that strong international alumni are another prerequisite to popularize higher educational institutions by means of spreading the word about studying in Canada via social networks, like VK, Facebook, Twitter, so on.

The factors that make Canadian higher education establishments more appealing to Ukrainian students ("pull" factors), along with the factors that influence student's decision in favour of Canada as a destination country, are being suggested. They are the following: *decentralization of higher education in Canada (no federal ministry of education, provincial government), Canadian higher education system has a reputation for quality and expertise of professors, a broad range of courses and programs offered at host universities and colleges, superior use of information and communication technologies, large campuses with excellent facilities for students, opportunity to improve foreign language skills (English or French), multicultural environment, huge Ukrainian Diaspora in Canada, a large number of international students enrolled (esp. Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, etc), employment opportunities, recognition of qualifications and credentials, availability of governmental and institutional grants and scholarships for international students, support services for international students, etc.*

Undeniably, Canada is one of the world's best providers of international educational services. Canadian universities are enlisted in top 20 world most prestigious universities (University of Toronto, McGill University). Despite the fact that there is no federal educational institution in Canada, unlike Ukraine's Ministry of Education, constitutional responsibilities for universities and colleges international education policies are due provinces and territories. What is more, Canadian higher education has an enduring



reputation for quality and expertise of its professors. Canadian universities and colleges provide a range of innovative courses and programs due to internationalization of curriculum, superior use of information and communication technologies, as well as video lectures, online conferences, virtual education platforms, latest software and educational applications, sophisticated science laboratories, elaborate research projects, etc.

It should be indicated that the right to undertake part-time work is offered in Canada. Under such circumstances, international students in Canada may choose to work up to 20 hours per week without applying for an open work permit, and this definitely contributes attractively to international students (Canadian Embassy, 2014). As a matter of fact, international students tend to do part-time work on campuses.

It should be suggested that international students from developing countries find the physical and learning environment of Canadian campuses attractive. Universities and colleges in Canada thrive to provide not only study environment to be sophisticated and developed, but also attractive campuses due to ample study spots, enormous libraries that contain books, assorted cafeteria services, available sport facilities (gyms, pools, pitches, board games), art and craft clubs, free WiFi access, a range of free computers, available plug-ins to recharge modern gadgets and appliances students use for educational purposes (IPads, IPods, iPhones, etc.). These are the characteristics that contribute to international students' well-being.

As far as Canada is a bilingual country, a huge range of university or college courses are available both in English or French. Therefore, another factor influencing the selection of a country study destination has been the availability of foreign language skills improvement. Moreover, a lot of Canadian universities and colleges provide language courses for international students, along with presence of predeparture language programs at the world famous language schools, such as International Language Academy of Canada (ILAC), which is located two most popular international cities: Toronto and Vancouver.

Multiculturalism is another factor that, to a great extent, attracts Ukrainian students whose initial motivation while pursuing post-secondary education abroad is to gain understanding of Western countries through international education and to experience multicultural and diversified education environment. Overall, Canada is home to 70 ethnic groups who speak 60 languages. What is more, the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada is comprised of 1,2 million representatives; this provides Ukrainian students in Canada with increased confidence and cultural tolerance.

According to data published in "Canada's International Education Strategy" (2014), the overall number of international students in Canada in 2012 was 265,400 (international student population was majorly presented in the following provinces: Ontario (41,9 %), British Columbia (25,7 %), and Quebec (14,4 %). With regard to this, it is worth mentioning that the Embassy of Canada in Ukraine has processed 1490 long-term and 555 short-term study permit applications and issues 855 and 411 student visas respectively in 2013. Among most popular provinces of destination determined by location of educational institutions are Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Consequently, the provinces of destination chosen by Ukrainian students are cohered to most popular international students' destinations.

It should be highlighted that one of the most important issues regarding international students is whether their qualifications will be recognized in other countries. During the era when people around the globe are mobile, it remains crucial for foreign educational institutions and international employers to recognize qualifications and credentials. Therefore, in Canada there is a number of organizations which aim to offer expert credential evaluation services for international students who come to study in Canada. There are the following:



International Credential Assessment Service (ICAS), International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES), International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS), World Education Services (WES), Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC).

The factor that serves to be the key driver of international student mobility is believed to be the availability of governmental and institutional grants and scholarships provided for international students. Special attention is drawn to scholarships provided by Government of Canada and Canadian universities for international students, including Ukrainians, to study in Canada. For example, University of British Columbia Scholarships for International Students, Carleton University Entrance Scholarships for International Students, Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation Doctoral Scholarships, York University International Student Program, Humber International Entrance Scholarships, UBC International Leader of Tomorrow Award, University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowships, Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (Vanier CGS), University of Calgary Graduate Awards, United World Colleges (UWC) International Youth Scholarships, etc (Scholarships for Development, 2014).

From the viewpoint of international students in Canada, support services available for international students in Canada comprise a significant part of their overall study abroad experience and attract a vast number of international students to Canadian universities and colleges. For this instance, the Centre for International Students and Study Abroad (CISSA) at the University of Calgary promotes and administers international programs, develops and facilitates intercultural experiences, provides ongoing counselling for potential students, orientation program upon arrival, international student clubs, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The international academic mobility is believed to be a key component of internationalization of higher education and integration of higher education system into the world educational area. Despite the fact that outbound student mobility is prevailing inbound student mobility in Ukraine it is of a great significance for scientists to research and indicate prerequisites to Ukrainian students participation in study abroad programs, particularly in Canada as one of the most developed countries that attracts a lot of international students and has a positive tendency to academic mobility development.

While defining “push-pull” factors theory we came to conclusion that there is a number of factors that make Ukrainian youth pursue their post-secondary education at the Canadian universities and colleges (“push” factors) and the number of factors that attract Ukrainian students with regard to Canadian higher education institutions (“pull” factors).

Thus, with the help of regulatory framework Ukrainian government should encourage Ukrainian students to study abroad and gain an invaluable experience and knowledge, and return back to home country in order to enhance and develop educational environment at the Ukrainian universities and colleges.

Among the perspectives of further research, we define the analysis of governmental and institutional implications of international students’ recruitment with the regard to development of inbound student mobility in Canada.

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