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## Canada-global South two-way student mobility: challenges and inspiring practices

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### **Abstract**

Based on interviews with 32 respondents, including professors, university officials and students, representing a small subset of Canadian universities, this study explores two-way student exchange programs with developing countries. The research finds that programs that have developed long-term relations with Southern counterparts, effectively communicated the benefits of cross-border study experiences and have flexible program designs, have achieved greater success. Mobility experience closely connected to academic disciplines fostered better learning outcomes. Students' experiences outside of classrooms in developing country contexts as well as collaborative activities with Southern counterparts broadened and deepened their knowledge. The study suggests increasing reciprocal exchanges with the global South, initiating deliberate program planning processes and closely matching exchange programs to student profiles.

**Keywords:** Study abroad, Canadian universities, two-way exchange.

### **Background**

Student mobility in higher education institutions is growing at a dizzying pace, driven by enrollment of degree-seeking students pursuing studies outside of their home country. Comparatively, short-term student exchanges and study abroad programs offered to home students, typically lasting anywhere from two weeks to eight months, have received less attention. Bakalis and Joiner (2004) define study abroad as programs where students complete part of their studies in a tertiary institution outside of the student's home institution. The objectives of these programs include providing students with international

exposure, encouraging global thinking and promoting receptiveness to diverse values and beliefs.

Internationalization is a fairly recent phenomenon in Canadian higher education. The earliest university-based international office in Canada only dates back to 1967. Shute (1999) notes that the two major formative strands of internationalization that have emerged in Canada are international students and development cooperation. While a majority of Canadian universities articulate internationalization as a strategic priority, their emphasis has been more on attracting degree students. Barton (2014) notes that a “very significant” dimension of international education in Canada is the “inbound” side: attracting students from other countries to study at Canadian universities and colleges. In 2018, there were an estimated 494,525 international students in Canada; the number has increased by 119% between 2010-2017 (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2018). On the outbound side, participation rates in study abroad among full-time students have remained stable around 2% over the last decade. Trilokekar and Rasmi (2011) noted that the rate of Canadians students studying abroad increased from 1 percent in 2000 to over 2 percent in 2006. There has not been much increase thereafter. The Canadian Bureau of International Education (2018) reports that only 2.3% of Canadian university students went abroad in the 2014-15 academic year. Evidently, Canada has struggled to harness student interest in studying abroad and the numbers have remained “pathetically low”, especially when comparing with countries like Germany, where 30% of students go abroad as part of their studies (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2013).

### **Parameters and objectives of the study**

Three aspects of the current research are noteworthy. First, the study examines programs that have two-way student mobility. Second, this study examines student movements at the department or faculty level. The benefits of study programs in universities are well recognized and documented. They may include development of important life skills, including maturity and confidence; a global outlook; enhanced communication skills; cultural sensitivity and adaptability; and access to networks offering employment

opportunities (Bakalis & Joiner, 2004). But these benefits are often assessed at the level of the individuals, and not at the group. Focusing on the departmental level opens up the possibility to examine collaborative aspects of student mobility programs. Third, this research focuses on student mobility programs between global North and South. For the purposes of this study, “North” constitutes high-income Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries and “South” denotes low, lower-middle, and upper-middle economies, based on the gross national income per capita classification of the World Bank (The World Bank, 2016). A significant percentage of the current student movements from Canada are with OECD member countries. Growing cooperation with upper-middle (e.g. China, Brazil) and lower-middle (e.g. India) is observed, but exchange numbers with North far outweigh the South. The current study provides insights on the value added of having exchanges with Southern countries.

The broad objective of the research is to examine two-way exchange programs, focusing on a small subset of Canadian universities. The research explores both program design level and participant (student) level topics. Based on the examination, the research strives to identify innovative models and inspiring practices.

The article is structured as follows. First, I review the literature on student mobility programs. In the following section, I outline the methodology. Then, I discuss the findings in different themes that emerged from the data. I conclude the article with a discussion on steps and processes to improve mobility programs. In the course of the research, I identified a number of innovative practices; a small selection of which is featured in boxes.

### **Literature review**

The literature reviewed for this research primarily focuses on program design and program efficacy, and North-South exchange perspectives. Some literature suggests that participation in study abroad programs does not automatically result in students obtaining desired skills and competencies. Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) note that there is a continuum within study

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abroad programs that simply transfer academic credits from one traditional discipline-based institution to another, without intentionally utilizing the international experience as the basis for learning. Kolb and Kolb (2005) examine the experiential learning theory which posits that humans learn best from what they experience firsthand. However, there must be an intentionality and method for learning to take place. McLeod and Wainwright (2009) utilize social learning theory to demonstrate that “expectancies”, both met and unmet, are significantly related to how the students judged their experiences. Therefore, effectiveness of these programs depends on ongoing reflections and guided discussions with the participant students.

There appears to be a gap in the literature in studying practical and operational aspects of study abroad programs. Wang et al. (2011) note that the majority of the studies focus on end results and the benefits of study abroad programs; only a small number of studies focus on how to start or manage a study abroad program. Berg (2007) claims that too many existing programs focus little on what it is that students are supposed to get out of them. Engle and Engle (2003) make the distinction between “culture-based” and “knowledge-transfer based” (scientific exchange and the study of technological applications) study abroad. They suggest using seven variables for classifying such programs: length of student sojourn, proficiency in target-language, language used in course work, context of academic work, types of student housing, provisions for guided/structured cultural interaction and experiential learning, and guided reflection on cultural experience. In the absence of a well-grounded classification model, the assessment of the programs remains a challenge. Scott and Richardson (2011) observe that in the study or work experience abroad programs, the roles and perspectives of the hosts are frequently overlooked.

Examples of student mobility programs in Canada include federal government-administered International Experience Canada (IEC), and provincial-level programs like the Ontario Maharashtra Goa (OMG) Student Exchange Program, which coordinates student exchanges between 10 Universities in Ontario and 13 in Maharashtra and Goa, India. Outside of Canada, there are numerous examples of such exchange programs especially in volunteering/youth context: the Erasmus program of the European

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Commission, Global Xchange, UK (2005-2012), DAAD (the German Academic Exchange Service), the Newton Research Collaboration Programme, Royal Academy of Engineering, UK, and the University Mobility in Asia-Pacific Program (UMAP). Literature on these programs shows that collaborative and reciprocal exchanges significantly contribute to increasing the quality of education/learning initiatives. Well-designed and supported student, volunteer and trainee programs with the global South can make a significant contribution to local and international development initiatives. Common setting of goals, mutual expectations and quality standards allow more students and researchers to gain shared experiences and thus strengthen the networking and future opportunities for the countries involved.

Overall, the literature suggests that study abroad programs hold great potential (including significant development outcomes in the global South) but in order to be effective, greater clarity is needed around conceptual frameworks, learning approaches and program design. There is a clear need to move beyond presentation of anecdotal information and usage of simplistic evaluative measures to being more intentional, analytical and nuanced.

## **Methodology**

This qualitative research used both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data included a range of articles, grey literature and information available on university websites. Primary data was collected through interviews. A snowball sampling method was used to identify the respondents. Emails were sent out to around 30 initial contacts, representing over a dozen institutions. Based on the response to the emails and web searches, a final list of around 60 individuals was made. Out of these 60, 32 participated in the research, representing 20 faculties/departments from 14 different institutions. Out of the participants, 24 were professors and administrators in international offices and eight were students. Six students were affiliated with Canadian institutions and two were from the Southern countries. The lines of questioning for the professors and administrators were mainly focused at the program design level, with inquiries about institutional approaches, program management and evaluation. Questions to the students were more open-ended

and personal in nature, focused on their general experiences, both at home and in the field. The intention was to distill respondents' insights from the design-level to the personal experience level (see the question guides in Appendices 2 and 3).

Out of the total 32 interviews, 22 were conducted in person, nine via telephone, and one via Skype. Nine out of the 32 participants chose to remain anonymous. The list of the other 23 participants is in Appendix 1. The interviews lasted around an hour on average. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee. Qualitative data was analyzed and common themes were identified. Some of the themes were predetermined, while others were added *a posteriori*.

It is acknowledged that due to time and resource constraints the number of respondents was limited. As a result, this study does not have a representative sample and does not claim to provide a system wide view. Rather it aims to complement certain notions that have already been observed and substantiated, and seeks to contribute to the literature.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the research are presented according to six themes outlined below, acknowledging that some ideas overlap across different themes.

### **1. Diminishing international development perspective in some institutions**

Promoting exchanges and collaboration with institutions in the global South requires a strong orientation and commitment to international development. Angeles and Boothroyd (2003) note that universities in Canada have gradually shifted away from the international development perspective that was so prominent in the previous decades. Two factors were found as contributing to this trend. The first relates to declining government support to study and research collaboration with Southern countries. The initial thrust of partnerships with developing country universities was supported by the (erstwhile) Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). However, funding from CIDA and other federal agencies has been declining. For

example, in 2013, the Canadian government stopped funding the Association of Universities and Colleges (AUCC) administered “Student for Development” (SFD) program, one of the largest student mobility programs to global South. Since the program was launched in 2005, over 1,500 Canadian students from over three-quarters of Canada’s universities have participated in internships in developing and emerging countries through this program. Secondly, in a fiercely competitive higher education sector that transcends international borders, the attention and interest of Canadian universities seem to be shifting away from development cooperation. Some authors (Angeles & Boothroyd, 2003; Knight, 1999; Shute, 1999) observe that Canadian universities are looking at new alternative interests in academic mobility: international students, offshore marketing of courses, distance education delivery, and curriculum change.

The above observations resonated with some of the respondents who participated in the current research, even if at a very general level. Specific points raised by the respondents include: an over-emphasis on recruiting international students for revenue generation; an instrumental approach to study abroad and exchanges (i.e. focused on obtaining academic credits and emphasizing the skills development of own student body); a lack of mechanism for discussion and reflection at philosophical level – on a moral responsibility towards South or practical level – i.e. community level changes. Even if not systemic, there were some indications that the perspectives of international development and community level changes in the global South do not feature prominently or consistently. One respondent made an insightful observation that the adoption of diverse revenue generating approaches and tools does not and should not necessarily lead to concomitant diffusion of moral responsibility towards the global South.

## **2. Low numbers of North-South mobility, relative to North-North**

Data on the numbers of Canadian study abroad and exchange students disaggregated by destination appears to be unavailable (CBIE 2013). However, based on empirical data available in the websites of several Canadian universities, it can be estimated that the numbers of Canadian students travelling to South are low compared to students travelling to North. Some

respondents stated that while the universities tend to have numerous exchange agreements, actual student flows (particularly to the South) are well below what the number of exchange agreements signed would suggest. Many of the agreements remain dormant. An analysis of the websites of three randomly chosen Canadian universities revealed that 8% of the agreements are with institutions located in low and lower-middle, 13% with upper-middle and 79% with high-income OECD economies. A few respondents stated that one of challenges in establishing exchange agreements is ensuring the equivalency of the courses between Canadian and Southern institutions. Universities need to

**Innovative practice box 1: Maintaining two-way flows**

A challenge in sustaining equilibrium in North-South student flows derives from an inability to recruit adequate numbers of Southern students to enroll in exchange programs in Canada. Dalhousie University's International Development Studies program uses study abroad fees charged to outgoing Canadian students to Cuba to finance a Cuban faculty's visit to Canada. The presence of Cuban faculty helps to maintain strong institutional relations and creates new opportunities for exchanges with Canadian students. Even if one-on-one exchanges cannot be maintained, two-way flows of students or faculty members with different financing mechanisms can go a long way in strengthening the relations.

be aware of the variances in education and pedagogical systems, as well as in the content of the courses. A few respondents noted that signing of exchange agreements is perceived to be a success in and of itself, because it entails significant work. However, not enough emphasis is put on following up and implementing each of these agreements.

One important factor is the relative high cost for Southern students to come to Canada for an exchange. Respondents noted that only the very well-off can afford airfare, tuition and living expenses in Canada. The study did demonstrate that with increasing purchasing power, students from India and China are participating in such exchanges. In the Ontario-Maharashtra-Goa (OMG) program, for example, the applications from Indian students greatly outnumber those from Canadian students. The OMG program is reported to



have received over 600 applications from Indian students, out of which only 25-35 were finally selected. In contrast, a high percentage of Canadian applicants are accepted. The number of students traveling to India varies year to year. In 2017-18, there were 15 Canadians travelling to India under the program.

The research was not able to come to a general conclusion whether travelling to the South involves more cost compared to North and whether it deters students from participating. Responses of Canadian students seem to indicate that this monetary consideration varies from individual to individual. Some respondents stated that cost was an important factor when joining the exchange or study abroad program. At the same time, the study found examples of students who studied abroad despite having very little financial support. This highlights the point that if students are interested, motivated and clearly see the benefits and value in participating in mobility programs, they will do so.

### **3. Culture valuing international skills and exposure**

The study found that a strong culture valuing international experience, global outlook and multi-cultural skills at faculty and departmental level can promote higher participation rates. Developing this kind of culture involves putting in motion a number of processes and activities. This corroborates the findings of Davis et al. (1999) who suggest that the absence of a strong culture that promotes international skills was the main hurdle to participation in study abroad programs. This research showed that business faculties, in general, have been successful in strongly inculcating such a culture, compared to other faculties.

#### ***Fostering relations with counterparts***

Respondents, especially officials who deal with counterparts in the South, noted that building relations based on mutual trust and cooperation is of utmost importance. There must also be an appreciation of the contextual challenges and constraints encountered by Southern institutions. Respondents stated that dealing with Southern institutions may come with occasional distractions, in terms of bureaucratic procedures, communication and coordination, but their experience is mostly positive. Several exchange

administrators stated that their trips to Southern institutions (sometimes accompanying the students) contributed to fostering stronger personal relations.

### *Flexibility*

It is useful to have flexibility in design and management of study abroad programs. A number of factors in student mobility programs are outside the locus of control of respective departments. These may include individual choices and decision of the students to participate (or not), interest from partner institutions to send students, contextual changes (natural disasters, political upheavals), and so on. For example, after a string of sexual violence incidences in India, applications from female Canadian students to study in India went down significantly. Programs should have the flexibility to accommodate such changes.

One institution that was part of this study adjusted the program design to maintain an equilibrium of inbound and outbound students. This particular department sends Canadian students to complete internships but in turn received Southern students in academic courses.

The research also shows that the presence of foreign students through programs, such as the Canadian government-funded “Emerging Leaders in the Americas Program” (ELAP) and “Science without Borders”, have resulted in linkages and research collaborations. These programs primarily invite Southern students to undertake courses or research in Canadian institutions. However, in turn, more Canadian students seem to be attending courses in those Southern universities. Thus, the exchange experiences of visiting students do not necessarily have to mirror each other.

### *Information channels*

Wide dissemination of study abroad opportunities is critical. Programs and departments use different methods, means and occasions to share information and publicize study abroad programs. A number of departments engage the returning study abroad students by profiling them in websites, blogs and brochures or having them present during orientation sessions of new cohorts.

The research also demonstrates that information on programs gets effectively disseminated through word of mouth among peers and friend circles. Larger department and faculties have to take conscious steps and actions to ensure that information and news on exchanges are disseminated widely. Some faculties also have a prominent international 'look', through visibility tools, such as, posters.

**Innovative practice box 2: Accessible information for students**

Taking the decision to participate in an exchange program can sometimes be stressful. There are numerous factors that need to be taken into account. It always helps to have accessible information about the exchange options. York University's Schulich School of Business has a resource room where a file for each of its partner institutions is kept. These files contain all relevant information about the partner institutions as well as the reports prepared by previous participants. Interested students can easily and quickly go through all relevant information and reports, enabling them to make informed choices about study destinations.

**4. Student experiences**

Student mobility experiences vary significantly, across programs, disciplines and study destinations. Due to differences in personality traits, variations can be observed even among the cohort of students participating in the same program at the same time. As a result, the perceived benefits of participating in student exchange and study abroad programs vary, ranging from improved language proficiency to cultural aptitude. The research shows that participants have different notions of outcomes of exchange experience with the global South. Canadian students, who were part of the research, valued their experiences outside of course work or classrooms. Exposure to different cultures, norms, practices and language led to learning and adjustments skills. A study by Bakalis and Joiner (2004) reveals that "personal development" is an important benefit for exchange students. This research supports the view that participating in exchange programs in Southern countries, in perceived difficult contexts, allowed participants to discover their strengths and weaknesses, confronting fears and testing themselves in other settings.

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Southern students considered research opportunities, access to resources, such as library services, and dealing with a different system and culture of learning and pedagogy as most valuable.

The study found that the exchange programs often do not take intentional and deliberate efforts and initiatives to facilitate collaboration between Canadian and Southern students. In some two-way programs, the participating students are not able to interact due to different semester timings. While the administration has the list of visiting students in the department, this cannot be divulged due to Canadian privacy laws. Still, collaboration between and among students does occur in various forms and levels. One respondent noted that it is a challenge to identify common ground and interests among the exchange students. Thus the coordinators and professors dealing with the exchanges need to be vigilant in pointing out collaboration opportunities to students. The University of Manitoba's International Infectious Disease and Global Health training program pairs international and local students for academic presentations and other activities, which ensures that interactions and collaboration take place. These pairings lead to better understanding of differences in context and practices. A few programs studied in this research have introduced the "buddy" system, where an incoming exchange student is paired with a home student. The "buddy" provides important information and support, especially during the initial stages of the tenure. From an administrative point of view, providing ongoing support to all exchange students individually can be demanding. Also, some exchange students tend to be reluctant to openly approach and discuss issues with officials. This research found that some programs actively foster engagements of foreign students with local students through social events, such as dinners, movie nights, and cultural events. Wang et al. (2011) argued that the effectiveness of study abroad program depends on the presence and quality of experiential learning activities such as company visits, cultural tours, opportunities of meeting local people and participating in local events, and engagement in daily local activities. This research re-affirms this point by finding that organizing sharing and social events can go a long way in improving and diversifying the experiences of visiting students.

**Innovative practice box 3: Engaging students in study abroad activities**

Involving returned study abroad participants in various stages of the exchange programs can have a significant positive impact. It is quite common for returning students to present their experiences and provide tips during pre-departure sessions for new cohorts of outgoing students. Students relate to other peers' experiences; initial contacts lead to further discussions, queries and exchanges. Despite the availability of relevant information on websites, students appear to rely on personal exchanges. Dalhousie University's International Development Studies program (exchange with the University of Havana) sends a returning student for one week to Cuba with the new group of students. Carleton University's Sprott School of Business engages returning exchange students in a range of activities, including undergraduate recruitment sessions aimed at 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**5. Profiling students interested to travel to the global South**

If students with the required credentials and characteristics are not willing or able to participate in exchange programs, the entire process is futile, regardless of how well-designed the program is. Thus profiling interested students is a necessary, albeit challenging, task. Findings of this research show that there can be numerous external factors, scenarios and situations, and various personal characteristics or traits of students that determine whether they participate or not. External factors may include financial conditions, availability of scholarships, and program requirements (in some programs, study abroad is mandatory). Balakis and Joiner (2004) deploy two personality characteristics, "openness" and "tolerance of ambiguity", to assess students' receptivity to study abroad programs. Their research shows that more non-exchange students revealed low openness scores while more exchange students revealed high openness scores. Similarly, a larger number of exchange students revealed a high tolerance of ambiguity, while a larger number of non-exchange students revealed a low tolerance of ambiguity.

**Table 1:** Profile of study abroad participants (8 student respondents of this study represented)

Risk propensity / Openness	Adventurist No. of respondents 1	Development activist No. of respondents 1
	Explorer-careerist No. of respondents 4	Developmentalist No. of respondents 2
	Development orientation	

Based on the interviews with eight students, the matrix above attempts to categorize four types of students who are interested to travel to the South, acknowledging that this matrix represents a small sub-group of student population who consider going to the global South as an option.

The matrix is designed with two criteria: international development orientation, and risk propensity/openness.

The *Explorer-Careerist* has a (comparatively) low development orientation and low risk propensity. Interest in development issues can emerge from a wide variety of sources: family, previous international travel, peers, disciplinary focus or research interest. This group of individuals factor their career ambitions into their decision to travel and they consider that travel to the South will help shape their career in a positive fashion. These individuals are more likely to choose an international experience close to their disciplinary area and relevant to own skills and expertise.

The *Developmentalist* has a strong development cooperation orientation. S/he displays the traits of the careerist-explorer but has a stronger interest in development issues. The individual in this category is a concerned thinker and has deep empathy for people in the Southern countries. While career development is an important factor for them, it is not the most important one. One respondent who falls in this matrix went back to the country s/he had visited to undertake further development-related activities.

The *Development activist* has a strong development disposition that already existed or that came about after the travel experience. This group of individuals are likely to take actions in life and career, based on their willingness to help people in the developing world in their capacity. The study found at least one example where an experience in a Southern country has completely transformed the individual's perspectives of development issues and her self-identity. The experience has moved the individual from a Developmentalist to being a Development Activist.

The *Adventurist* has a lower international development orientation but is willing to go to Southern countries to try out different things. This type of individual is outgoing and extrovert by nature. They value challenges, are interested to travel to both Southern and Northern countries and look to diversify their international experiences.

This study found that ethnic background can play a role in whether and where students go. A number of respondents observed that students tend to favor destinations where they have some ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic ties. Classrooms and programs/departments that have a multi-ethnic and international student representation tend to facilitate and encourage students to go abroad. Exchanges and interactions among students with different backgrounds and nationalities help to generate interest.

## **6. Follow-up and integration of learning and experiences**

Among the cases that were studied, follow-up activities of student exchange programs were identified as an area where gaps exist. In some cases, follow-up is not done in a consistent and systematic manner. Typically, students are

required to submit a report, complete a survey, or attend a debriefing session after returning from a study abroad program. Many graduate level students take their study abroad or exchange activity in their very last semester and often it can be a challenge to collect their feedback. Completion and submission of reports and surveys are sometimes not mandatory. Thus a wealth of information on student experiences is not captured. Even in instances where feedback is collected, it can be onerous for the international offices or respective departments to analyze the information and identify common trends. Certain departments make deliberate efforts to review and analyze the information provided by returning students. However, in general, across the cases studied, follow up activities were identified as an area needing improvement and streamlining. The study found that in addition to the formal and structured

#### **Innovative practice box 5: Student engagement in follow-up**

The Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ottawa organizes “Learning through Mobility Colloquium” where students who have studied abroad present their experiences. The sessions are organized in different themes: impacts on their personal life, academic and professional growth, and learning about the diverse experiences and knowledge. The second edition of the colloquium held in 2014 focused on the broad theme of the impact of international mobility on the academic goals and research interests of students. Having attended the event, I sensed that the opportunity to present the experience in a conference-style event was very rewarding for the students. In the process of preparing their presentation, the students had to reflect critically on their experience. Although these types of events are primarily designed as a stocktaking and reflective exercise, these are effective in generating interest amongst other students

feedback methods such as reports and survey, informal approaches can also be useful to gather information.

#### **Recommendations**

The research finds that programs that have developed long-term relations with Southern counterparts, have effectively communicated the benefits of cross-



border study experiences and have put in place flexible designs, have been more successful. The study reveals that mobility programs that are closely connected to academic disciplines are more effective. Students' experiences outside of classrooms in developing country contexts, as well as collaborative activities with Southern counterparts, play an important role in deepening their understanding and learning. The following ideas emerge from a relatively small sample of respondents and institutions. However, these can be relevant to practitioners involved in mobility program design and implementation.

### **1. Planning exchange activities**

As stated earlier, study abroad programs vary significantly depending on pedagogical objectives, program design, disciplinary focus, length of stay, partner location, and numerous other factors. In one instance, a Canadian student can be the only student from his/her institution attending a semester in a university in Bolivia with which the Canadian university has recently established relations. In another case, a department may have in place a stable program to take a group of 15-20 students each year to a partner institution in India. The dynamics of these two situations are completely different and pose different challenges to the administration. Nonetheless, this research posits that putting in place some basic steps and considerations across all types of mobility programs can go a long way in improving program management. These steps can and perhaps should be updated or modified periodically, based on changing contexts and shifting needs.

#### ***Objectives/guiding principles/values/conceptual basis***

It is important to set clear goals, objectives and guiding principles for study abroad programs. While it is perhaps sensible to set numerical targets, it can come with potential pitfalls. Notwithstanding the fact that there is pressure for increasing student mobility numbers across Canadian universities, this research clearly demonstrates that quality rather than quantity should be a guiding principle of the programs. Stories of bad experiences create doubt and uncertainty among potential participants. Therefore, it is worth taking the time and effort to make each and every exchange experience as fruitful as possible, through careful selection, fit, preparations and ongoing support. A higher quality of experience will eventually lead to larger number of participants.

While it may not be always necessary to adopt or stick to a conceptual framework for the exchange programs, considering and discussing relevant guiding concepts can help program design and benefit the students. Faculties can explore their respective program's connections to concepts of global citizenship, cosmopolitanism, intercultural development as well as different approaches to pedagogical or experiential learning. These discussions can lend the exchange program a stronger theoretical basis. Insights on human rights, gender equality, global governance and international trade can also be relevant, depending on the focus of the exchange or study abroad program. Some of these discussions can take place in pre-departure sessions.

### *Information and accessibility*

While information and opportunities of study abroad programs must be disseminated widely, caution must be used in presenting what the students can expect to get out of the exchange. The information must be realistic. Thus, publicity materials and texts should be prepared and advertised in a prudent manner, sometimes playing down expectations, if necessary. Programs must decide the correct balance between touristic and academic foci. Travelling is an important motivation for many students and presenting study abroad as a travel opportunity has certain benefits. Information material should ideally avoid messages and stories that overplay the notions of "giving", "doing good", and "solving problems", and rather focus on shared understanding and joint resolution of problems in the global South.

In presenting the information about the exchange programs, it must be emphasized that individual experiences vary quite significantly, even in group settings. In terms of accessibility, this study stresses that departments and administration should be as facilitative as possible in allowing all interested students to travel. As one respondent noted, "If a student is good enough to get into my program, s/he is qualified enough to go on an exchange." Indeed, Wang et al. (2011) noted that since study abroad programs are a non-traditional academic arrangement or format, the traditional criterion of measuring student's success in the classroom, such as Grade Point Average (GPA), perhaps should not be used as a criterion to reject study abroad requests. Interviews are commonly used for assessing the suitability of candidates.

However, rather than using these to screen out candidates, these exchanges can be used to give the opportunity to students to reflect on their expectations as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

### *Pre-departure resources*

A crucial part of student's preparation for a study abroad or exchange placement is knowing oneself. The participants can be given guidance as to how they can self-assess and analyze their strengths and weaknesses with regard to study abroad programs. Some programs have introduced self-assessment tools; however, these exercises and practices need to be closely monitored and followed up. The most common forms of pre-departure courses contain discussions on administrative procedures, visa, health, security and safety issues. The other elements of the training may contain context specific information, country profiles, and sometimes discussions of intercultural communication and competency. Quite often training on cultural understanding is too short and does not go deep in the issues. Furthermore, understanding the nuances and complexities of cultural differences cannot be expected with a two-hour or even a day-long session. Participants must be made aware of limitations of such training. The length, style and format (e.g. on-line or workshop) of the training must be determined by the institutions. In this research, I came across several examples where returning exchange students were used as resource persons at pre-departure session.

### *On-site program features*

The important aspects and features of the program must ideally be determined in the first stage, after defining the objectives and guiding principles. However, some room for flexibility must be kept on how the actual time in the field is organized or structured. Some customization is advisable and perhaps recommended, based on the formation of the cohort of students.

### *Learning environment*

On-going opportunities and avenues for self-reflection during the exchange keep students motivated and focused. This can be done through periodic assignments and discussions around a common theme (relating to discipline/academic learning with realities on the ground, for example).

Student exchanges often take place at different times. If the same sets of students are participating, they should ideally be able to collaborate both in home and host environments. If at all possible, the exchange visits should not be too far apart. Two-way exchanges with close intervals from one another facilitate stronger relations and possibilities of collaboration among the students.

### *Follow-up*

Each university or faculty must come up with their own set of follow-up procedures, activities and events, based on needs. Officials must determine the balance of qualitative (narrative) and quantitative information that is sought from the students. A finding of this research is that while collecting evaluation data is often a challenge, more can be done in terms of assessing and analyzing the data. Undertaking small-scale research projects, using the collected data and following up with sub-groups of participants can reveal important issues and trends, and potentially inform program designs and practices.

In the follow-up and learning activities, there is a tendency to focus only on those who have participated. But it is also important to involve those who have not participated and understand why they were not willing or able to participate. These insights can help identify obstacles and ways of addressing those. The following diagram summarizes the discussion above. Although the stages are displayed in a linear fashion, the processes are iterative.

**Table 2:** Planning various stages of study abroad programs

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
Objectives, guiding principles, values, conceptual basis ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of programs to be offered (exchanges, practicums, internships, etc.)</li> <li>• Connection to academic discipline(s)</li> <li>• Locations</li> <li>• Setting numerical target, focusing on quality aspects</li> <li>• Outlining relevant concepts and themes</li> </ul>

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Information	↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminating information on study abroad/ exchange programs widely</li> <li>• Clearly stating program features</li> <li>• Setting realistic expectations</li> </ul>
Accessibility	↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting and making accessible program to a wide variety of applicants</li> <li>• Selection criteria – paying attention to personality traits, academic standing, economic conditions, ethnicity, disability issues, where relevant</li> </ul>
Pre-departure resources	↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting structured and semi-structured processes to prepare, making resources available on a continual basis</li> <li>• Destination, special resources for South-bound students</li> </ul>
Program features (in field)	↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention to length/ timing of the program,</li> <li>• Time allocations between class work/ field activities</li> <li>• Balancing structured and un-structured experience opportunities</li> <li>• Collaborative activities between/among exchange students</li> </ul>
Learning environment	↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance of academic learning (deeper understanding of course subjects, language acquisition) with personal/ social learning (personal growth, cross cultural competence, etc.)</li> </ul>
Follow-up		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative (narrative)/ quantitative data</li> <li>• Formal and informal mechanism for self-reflection, evaluation and feedback</li> <li>• Feeding evaluation into 'program objectives' and 'information' stages</li> </ul>

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## **2. Bringing stronger academic focus to the exchange experiences**

Sachau et al. (2009) state that the primary goal of most student mobility programs should be to increase students' knowledge by gaining deeper understanding of a course subject or a research area. This study vindicates this observation and calls for a more prominent role of the academic departments and faculties in the promotion of student mobility programs, while maintaining the central coordinating role of the international offices. When the benefits and value-added of participating in mobility programs is presented from an academic perspective, it generates greater interest among students and potentially higher participation rates. The closer the tie between exchange and academic program, the higher the likelihood of student enrollment. Some tasks, such as preparation of information materials (customized for each faculty), can be jointly done by departments and international offices. The onus of recruiting students for international mobility programs can fall partially on departments and faculties. At the implementation stage, close relations at the level of the academic units also facilitate coordination and communication with counterparts. Often this may necessitate additional human and financial resources at the academic unit level.

## **3. Involvement and pro-active role of faculty members**

This study has found that the level of engagement of professors in the student exchange activities varies quite a lot. In some instances, the exchange is fully coordinated and managed by the faculty member, sometimes with funding that s/he has received. But in other cases, faculty members were only marginally involved in the various stages of the process. Faculty members can play a more proactive role in discussing exchange options in class rooms and highlighting the academic/research relevance and benefits of participation in the programs. Berg (2007) contends that active intervention in the learning process is necessary for students to learn effectively while abroad. This research has shown that students get more out of their study abroad experience while accompanied by a professor. Furthermore, having mechanism for faculty exchanges as part of the program facilitates the collaboration at the level of the students.

#### **4. Involvement of students and student bodies**

This research has shown that involving students in the various stages of the exchange program can be very effective. Primarily students get involved in welcoming exchange students and setting up “buddies” with incoming exchange students. It is quite common for programs to invite returned exchange students to present their experiences to new students. Student bodies can be given the responsibility to organize social and cultural events involving exchange students. One department employs students in the international office reception and administration functions so that students are more encouraged to approach international offices and explore the exchange option. One of the departments studied in this research is planning to involve prominent alumni across the globe (using an on-line platform) in a campaign to promote exchange opportunities.

#### **Conclusion**

This study has examined North-South two-way student mobility in a limited number of Canadian institutions and identified some of the challenges and inspiring practices. Insights shared by the participants of this research show that, under certain circumstances and conditions, North-South (as opposed to North-North) exchanges can induce a deeper sense of self-interrogation and foster psychological development, solidify student’s awareness and knowledge about international development challenges, often compelling them to undertake further collaborative initiatives with Southern counterparts (students, researchers, institutions), and expose students to different approaches, practices and modes of learning. Building on some of the innovative practices that were observed, the research presents some ideas and insights for improving the program experiences. A key perspective that emerges from the research, albeit based on a non-representative sample, is that a lot more can be done by the respective universities and faculties to augment the numbers of participants as well as the efficacy of study abroad programs to the global South, but also study abroad programs generally. Clearly, more examination and empirical research is warranted to better understand such issues. These topics may include integrating study abroad and international student recruitment activities, deeper understanding of students’ motivations

and expectations from study abroad, offering students relevant and practical learning opportunities and experiences, and identifying appropriate indicators for tracking program performance. Greater intra- and inter-university sharing and consultation are also needed to collectively enhance student mobility practices in Canadian universities.

### **Acknowledgement**

The author wishes to thank Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for funding this research and Luc Mougeot, PhD, Senior Program Specialist at IDRC for his supervision and guidance.

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**Appendix 1: List of respondents**

		<b>Department/Faculty</b>	<b>University</b>
1.	Professor Jean-Paul Laforest	Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences	Université Laval
2.	Professor Dominic Roux	Faculty of Law	Université Laval
3.	Patrick Hurley	Director, International Activities Centre, Faculty of Business Administration	Université Laval
4.	Professor Annie Pilote	Vice Dean, Faculty of Education	Université Laval
5.	Marc-Antoine Désy	International Office	Université Laval
6.	Professor Keith R. Fowke	Faculty of Health Sciences	University of Manitoba
7.	Winnie Apidi	Doctoral candidate, Faculty of Health Sciences	University of Manitoba
8.	Professor Maryanne Crocket	Pediatrics & Child Health Department	University of Manitoba
9.	Rhonda Friesen	Manager, Office of International Relations	University of Manitoba
10.	Professor Chris M. Wood	Department of Biology	McMaster University
11.	Lindsay Hillcoat	Associate Director, International Relations, Schulich School of Business	York University
12.	Dr. Lalu Mansinha	Coordinator, Ontario-Maharashtra-Goa (OMG) Program	Ontario, Canada

13.	Leanne Dixon Perera	Student (graduated), School of International Development & Global Studies	University of Ottawa
14.	Julie Monast-Nadeau	Student (graduated), School of International Development & Global Studies	University of Ottawa
15.	Professor Jay Drydyk	Department of Philosophy	Carleton University
16.	Wanekia Dunn	Student (graduated), Department of Philosophy	Carleton University
17.	Lorna Unger	International Exchange Coordinator, Sprott School of Business	Carleton University
18.	Valérie Latreille	Student (graduated), Faculty of Law	University of Ottawa
19.	Julieta Murillas	Student (graduated) Faculty of Law	Universidad Nacional del Sur, Bahía Blanca, Argentina
20.	Line C. Bissonnette	Manager, International and Community Relations, Faculty of Law, Civil Law Section	University of Ottawa
21.	Robyn Fila	Program Manager, International Internship Program Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives	University of Victoria
22.	Veronica McGinn	International Initiatives Project Manager and Internship Coordinator	University of New Brunswick
23.	Marian MacKinnon	Coordinator, Cuba Programmes, Department of	Dalhousie University

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\*Nine participants chose to remain anonymous.

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**Appendix 2:** Question guide for study abroad administrators, professors, program coordinators

1. What are the most important purposes of two-way student mobility programs at your university?
2. Over the last 10 years, as far as you know, have two-way exchanges at your university with global South universities Increased or Diminished? Why?
3. How do two-way student exchange goals and objectives fit with university/ host department `s own goals and objectives?
4. On what level is reciprocity expected from such two-way exchanges?
5. On what level has reciprocity been achieved through such two-way exchanges?
6. How are the participants selected? What criteria were used? Why?
7. Was a pre-departure training organized? What were the key elements of the training? How was it received by students?
8. How long do exchange students stay in Canada and in the global South country?
9. Given their objectives, do you consider the duration of placements in such two-way exchanges to be sufficient or insufficient
10. Your reflections on group dynamics – interactions and collaboration between/among exchange participants (Canada-south)? What facilitates or constrains the exchanges?
11. What is your impression about the mix of academic (rigor) and non-academic activities (cultural immersion etc.) during those exchanges?
12. What follow up activities with exchange students (host and home) were undertaken?
13. Has any evaluation (internal or external) been done of two-way exchange programs at your university so far?
14. What would you consider to be the main learning from two-way exchanges carried out so far at your university (or in your department)?
15. Was this learning integrated into new program designs or in other planning processes?

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16. What have been some challenges, if any, (e.g.: program design, logistics, implementation, student experience, etc.) which this two-way exchange program has faced?
  17. How have these challenges been addressed?
  18. In your opinion, what makes this two-way program different from other student mobility programs? What element(s) of the program are different?
  19. Is there any practice in this program which you would consider to be particularly innovative/ novel, relative to other programs which you are aware of?

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### Appendix 3: Question guide for students

1. Your impression on the accessibility and selection criteria of the program? (in terms of Availability/accessibility of information about program/ Fees, costs/ Required academic standing (GPA)/ Others criteria/ considerations/ Accessibility, in general)
2. What were the key motivations to participate in this exchange?
3. Was any pre-departure orientation given to you?
4. If yes, how would you rate the usefulness of those pre-departure sessions?
5. What topics were most useful/ relevant?
6. Were there any collaborative activities expected from you (with students or faculty at other institution)? If so, which?
7. How do you assess the volume and quality of course work/ research work at your host institution?
8. Did you work with your exchange counterpart? In what did this collaboration consist of?
9. What kind of interactions/interchanges did you have with student counterparts?
10. What activities did you find most engaging during your visit?
11. Did you engage in any activities outside course/research work? What types (excursions, socializing, visits, etc.)?
12. What were the highlights of your exchange visit?
13. During your visit, did you face any unforeseen constraints or had experiences which you wish would have gone better than they did?
14. During your visit, did any issues arise, related to either gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic factors, which you had to address? Can you tell me how you addressed these?
15. How would you rate your overall exchange experience?
16. How do you think you have learned from your exchange experience?
17. For you, did this exchange visit have any influence in terms of your beliefs, attitudes, behavior, plans for the future?)
18. Has this exchange helped you improve your intercultural awareness/ language proficiency/ sense of global citizenship?

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19. Are you still in contact with your host institution/ student counterparts?  
Do you have any plans to undertake further collaborative activities with individuals at that institution?