

International Expectations for Higher Education

Submission from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) to the Ontario Post-Secondary Review

Introduction

Ontario has the opportunity to develop a comprehensive strategy to increase its number of international students. Currently there is a lack of international study opportunities for Ontario students and no province-wide marketing plan to recruit international students.

- Higher Expectations for Higher Education: A Discussion Paper, "Quality"

Let's be blunt. The Government of Ontario has been largely absent from the wide world of international education.

A few sporadic initiatives and a few employees scattered across different branches of the two education ministries comprise the Ontario approach.

Our Ontario membership was dismayed but not surprised in early 2003 when the federal Department of Immigration announced pilot projects – designed to improve international student access to study and work – with five provinces, not including Ontario. Apparently Ontario was aware of the pilot opportunity but, for whatever reason, declined it.

Where has Ontario been? Clearly international education has been a marginal interest.

To use a cliché, the sleeping giant seems to be waking up.

Recent statements by the Hon. Mary Anne Chambers show her keen understanding of international matters, notably of the need to integrate foreign-trained professional immigrants, but also of the value of hosting international students in our institutions. This new interest from Ontario is exciting and, for those of us who have long been advocating with the Province, tremendously gratifying.

Moreover the Discussion Paper refers several times to international students and study abroad. Appropriately these references are positioned under "Quality".

However the Paper takes a too narrow approach to international education.

Our submission will describe the broad vision of international education that prevails in the world and is shared by international education professionals across Ontario. It will make recommendations for an approach suited to this Province of scope, resources and influence.

What are CBIE and International Education?

CBIE is Canada's unique national organization representing the international education interest of public school boards, colleges, institutes and universities; training organizations; private education and training providers; and associations and agencies.

Our vision statement conveys our expansive approach:

“CBIE envisions a world open to the kind of education which nurtures and improves the human condition; has no borders or bounds; takes people both to and from Canada for international learning; and produces new generations of internationalists within a global learning culture. Committed to innovation, CBIE will be a catalyst in global transformation and development through education.”

In practical terms, international education comprises the following components and, in a rapidly evolving field, more are being added everyday:

- Student mobility in both directions, to and from Canada – mobility is an element of human resource development, preparing youth for global economy and interdependent societies, as well as creating international understanding and an avenue to a more peaceful world
- Connecting our educational institutions with counterparts across the globe
- Competition for top students from around the world
- Campus internationalization including:
 1. Curriculum that integrates international content and perspectives;
 2. Emphasis on foreign-language learning;
 3. Study abroad engaging a substantial percentage of students;
 4. International programs using information and communications technology (ICT), including team taught courses and projects integrating classrooms in Canada and abroad;
 5. International ethos including events and sensitization of staff, faculty and students to international issues/students;
 6. Recognition of international experience of faculty and provision of international research opportunities, etc.
- Technical assistance to developing and transitional countries
- Trade – not just student recruitment to our campuses, but also providing educational services internationally (“cross-border” or “transnational” education); for example, CBIE has established a school in Egypt that uses Ontario primary and secondary curriculum and plays a key role in a college in Qatar that uses Newfoundland's college curriculum
- Diplomacy: international education is the best international relations.

International education cuts across all levels of education, beginning in primary school. Students who begin to learn about other societies and perspectives at an early age gain the attitudes and knowledge to become internationalists in their higher education and careers.

There is a strong tendency in some quarters to focus on the economic impact of international education. In large measure this has been brought about by the need to find new funding sources following government reductions. International education yields immediate financial benefits – indeed it is estimated that the worldwide value of international education stands at US \$100B, and Merrill Lynch estimates go up to \$2.2 trillion. In terms of international students, a recent British/Australian report predicts the number of mobile students to increase from the current 1.8 million to 7.2 million in 2025.

However other benefits are vastly more important. CBIE believes that international education has to be approached in its entirety as an academic, scientific, cultural and diplomatic enterprise as much as an economic one.

World View

In 2004 some 85 countries declared an “International Education Week.” In Canada, CBIE along with 18 other national organizations, the Council of Ministers of Education and two federal departments announced this country’s first-ever International Education Week from November 15 to 19. We marked the occasion with a number of activities. CBIE declared its own International Students Day and launched an International Student of the Year Competition.

As a country and as individual Provinces, Canada has undertaken a number of promotional activities, most designed to capture a larger share of the international student market. Some efforts are being made to internationalize teaching and learning at home, for example, through the Canadian International Development Agency’s Global Classroom Initiative.

However our Canadian efforts pale alongside the comprehensive strategies put forward in February 2004 by the Australian Government and in November 2004 by the Department of Education and Skills in the United Kingdom.

The Australian program focuses on assuring quality in international student programming both in Australia and in offshore programs offered by the country’s institutions, as well as on providing study abroad opportunities for domestic students. It includes a branding campaign. Notably it features coordinated activity among key departments: education, foreign affairs, trade, immigration and multicultural and indigenous affairs, tourism and international development.

The UK strategy document, *Putting the World into World-Class Education: An international strategy for education, skills and children’s services*, is distinguished by its integration of all levels of education. At the same time, it includes development assistance and other cooperation activities alongside the more entrepreneurial kinds of international education activity. The UK program targets three overarching goals:

Goal 1: Equipping our children, young people and adults for life in a global society and work in a global economy.

Goal 2: Engaging with our international partners to achieve their goals and ours.

Goal 3: Maximizing the contribution of our education and training sector and university research to overseas trade and inward investment.

Australia and the UK have education governance at the federal level. The strategies alluded to above are central government strategies. In Canada, the Provinces hold responsibility for education. However, in certain of its aspects, international education is part of the international relations responsibility of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs.

The reality is that in Canada international education is a shared domain and requires concerted action, but not to the exclusion of individual action by each partner.

Ontario's Role

What does this mean for Ontario?

Ontario must act to become a serious player in international education. The Discussion Paper points out that international education is an essential feature of quality. Inattention to this fact would inevitably lead the Province to a serious erosion of its relevance and position in the world of education.

Ontario must also recognize that in some aspects it cannot "go it alone". Internationally Ontario education is viewed, at first blush, as Canadian education. Students – and foreign governments seeking partners – choose Canada first, then a specific Province and institution in which to enroll or with which to work.

There is an opportunity here for Ontario to take the lead in recognizing the huge advantages to cooperative action and encouraging other Provinces to join in.

The Ontario strategy should undertake to support – and galvanize – a Task Force on International Education for Canada. This is being promoted by CBIE to the Ministers through the Council of Ministers of Education and to key federal ministries. Some interest has been expressed but without Ontario's support it will be hard to mobilize. With Ontario's support, it will be hard to stop.

The advantages of a Task Force include understanding Canada's and the Provinces' current level of participation in international education and their potential for participation in future. If Ontarians want to participate in this sphere, they need to get a clear picture of what is happening now, what the potential is, and how to realize that potential.

For example, in terms of international student enrolment at all levels, Ontario is in top position among the provinces. However, Quebec now enrolls more university students than Ontario and British Columbia enrolls more college students. Ontario's position is linked to its elementary/secondary enrolment, by far the highest among the provinces and higher than its own university enrolment (year 2000 data). What does the relative decline in its position as a host for international university and college students on the Canadian scene portend for Ontario's future attractiveness and quality at postsecondary level?

What are some of the challenges faced by Canada and Ontario in promoting our education services? Perhaps the most salient challenge is that our education image abroad is "*high quality, but bland*". We are up against some very exciting locales and marketers with nationally coordinated "branded" marketing plans.

The Task Force can also examine these questions:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a coordinated strategy?
- How can a coordinated strategy work to benefit Ontario?
- If Ontario stays out of international education, or takes a piecemeal approach, what is the likely result over the coming decade?

At the same time, Ontario needs its own strategy for international education to:

- Provide an overarching vision for an internationalized system, from Kindergarten to Post-graduate, as well as lifelong learning
- Provide a framework for measuring achievement in international education under a range of categories, from curriculum internationalization to vital support services for international students in Ontario and Ontario students on exchange abroad
- Commit to providing internationalized curriculum and resources for institutions seeking to attract top international students, notably but not exclusively graduate students
- Support a multilevel branding program to promote Ontario education, including school boards, colleges, institutes and universities
- Connect Ontario initiatives with Canadian initiatives for maximum visibility and impact
- Aim to make Ontario a leader in online learning that works across borders and links students internationally in meaningful ways to achieve cross-cultural, cross-border learning
- Achieve substantial articulation between colleges and universities, and expand applied degree programs – both of which provide attractive options both nationally and internationally
- Connect northern and francophone institutions internationally through initiatives identified by them, potentially using ICT, and by providing incentives to draw international students and activity to their campuses.

Choices

So where will Ontario go in international education? Will the Province initiate a patchwork of minimal approaches? Will it take a dual track as implied in the Discussion Paper, one track aimed at bringing in more international students here and the other at sending more of our students abroad? Or will the Province devise a comprehensive strategy that sees international education as much more than recruitment and exchanges, but a multi-layered activity that cuts across education levels as well as borders and builds connections to business and industry?

CBIE urges the Province to take the comprehensive approach, best suited to its scope, resources and influence – and to ensuring its future educational achievement and overall prosperity.

CBIE is a national non-governmental organization comprising 200 member educational institutions and organizations. More information about CBIE can be found at www.cbie.ca and www.destineducation.ca.