MANAGING A NEW DIVERSITY ON SMALL CAMPUSES

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we propose to explain the changing role of the university in the context of growing international mobility and demand for regional Francophone immigration through case studies of l'Université de Moncton (U de M), in New Brunswick, and the Collège universitaire Saint-Boniface (CUSB), in Winnipeg, Manitoba. These results are a part of a broader research project on the recent internationalization of Francophone universities, and their new role in attracting, integrating and retaining international students, which also includes l'Université de Sherbrooke and l'Université Laurentienne in Sudbury[1]. Through an analysis of federal, provincial and municipal policies concerning international students, interviews with city officials and university administrators, and focus groups with international students, we are interested in this topic in light the recent policy changes in Canada aiming for a greater attraction and retention of international graduates outside major urban centers.

Canada is one of the world's main post-secondary education destinations. In 2004-2005, it ranked sixth in the world in terms of the number of foreign students enrolled in its universities, behind the USA, the UK, France, Australia and Germany. Canada also ranked third during that same period for the highest percentage of international students per capita, and per total student enrolment (Suter and Jandl, 2006). These numbers have dramatically increased in the past decade or so. In 1996, the country counted a little over 200 000 international students. Ten years later, in 2006, that number had almost tripled, reaching over 700 000 (AUCC, 2007, p. 16). While nearly 25% of all international students come from either China or India, many also come from Francophone countries. French students represent 8% of all visa students in the country, and many also come from Morocco, Senegal, etc. (CBIE, 2007). International students are also starting to move to smaller provinces and enrol in smaller universities. Atlantic Canada is a good illustration with 17 universities and 4 colleges where almost 8 000 international students were enrolled in 2008-2009.

Indeed, universities now constitute an important attraction pole for potential immigrants, and as such, must redefine their role and their mission. Stressing the importance of offering an international education, universities must find ways to manage the diversity they are attracting (Suter and Jandl, 2008; Altbach and Knight, 2007). The economic and demographic factors behind the current internationalization of education have led to a global competition for international students, in both large and small universities. If "not all universities are (particularly) international, […] all are subject to the same processes of globalization – partly as objects, victims even, of these processes, but partly as subjects, or key agents, of globalization" (Scott, 1998, p. 122). Moreover, the presence of smaller universities in the global recruitment market is seen as a solution to the problem of regional immigration (Walton-Roberts, 2008).

FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION: RECENT POLICY SHIFTS

For the last ten years or so, Francophone minority communities have considered immigration to be critical to their economic, social and cultural development. The issue of immigration has had a large impact on the francophone community and in 2007, the *Sommet des communautés francophones du Canada* made immigration ad diversity one of its guiding themes. The organizers clearly stated the need for a more proactive approach to Francophone

immigration (Belkhodja, 2008). In 2006, The *Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities*, published by CIC, identified international students as potential key immigrants in communities outside of Quebec. Manitoba has been particularly proactive with international students, notably with their Provincial Nominee Program, which includes an international student category. New Brunswick has been less proactive, but the province has set a target of 5,000 new immigrants per year by 2015, and a report published in 2009 in collaboration with the Acadian Society of New Brunswick, the Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labor Department of New Brunswick and the Department of Canadian Heritage clearly states the importance of recruiting international students to help stop the Francophone demographic erosion.

ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Universities compete against each other to attract international students, though not all use the same strategies, nor cater to the same clientele. Much depends on their size, their reputation and their location. Their market is primarily undergraduate students. In this regard, even though l'U de M and the CUSB are in two very different cities, they attract a similar clientele and are facing a somewhat similar situation. Moncton has a population of 126,424. It was the first officially bilingual city, in the only bilingual province in the country, with approximately a third of its population speaking French. Immigrants are somewhat scarce and make up 3.42% of the city's population, a far cry from the national average of 19%.

Founded in 1963, l'Université de Moncton is the largest Francophone university outside of Quebec. It has a mainly undergraduate population of 4,118, 12.6% of which are international students. Since 2006, the proportion of international students enrolled at l'Université de Moncton has increased by 60%, making it the university with the most international students per capita in the province.

Winnipeg has a population of 686,040. Approximately 18% of its residents are immigrants, and approximately 4% of its population is Francophone. The CUSB, which combines university and college programs, has a total population of 1,337 students, 16% of which are international students. The proportion of international students has doubled between 2006 and 2010.[2]

As we see in Table 1, in spite of their small size, these two Francophone universities are considerably more international than the average Canadian campus. Whereas in Moncton the campus is almost three times more international than the city, this isn't the case in Winnipeg, though if we only consider the Francophone population in the city, the campus does become a beacon of diversity.

TABLE 1: Immigrants and International Students Per Capita

	IMMIGRANTS PER CAPITA (%)	INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (%)
Moncton (U de M)	3.4%	10.2%
Winnipeg (CUSB)	17.7%	16.0%
Canada	19.8%	5.9%

Source: Université de Moncton; Association of Atlantic Universities; CUSB; Statistics Canada

Small universities don't naturally attract international students. Yet, with many Francophone communities facing a demographic decline, which in turn affects student enrolment, turning abroad is the only way to guarantee their growth, or merely their stability. In 2002, l'Université de Moncton therefore hired a full-time employee in charge of international promotion and recruitment. That same year, the CUSB identified international recruitment as a priority for the first time.

More or less the same strategy was put in place in both universities: recruitment. Recruiters were hired to visit high schools, meet with families and attend various events to scout for new students, mostly in West Africa and the Maghreb. These employees work for commission.

L'U de M has seventeen official representatives, mostly former students, in as many countries. The international student body profile therefore greatly depends on the recruiters' work. For instance, the number of students from Guinea grew from 12 to 70 between 2006 and 2010, whereas the number of students from Senegal only grew from 15 to 25 during that same period. This innovative, yet controversial method was put in place to recruit a greater number of international students. Recruiters, or "Ambassadors" as they are now officially called are usually international graduates from Moncton who recruit future students in their home country. This in itself is not new: most universities practice recruitment at home and abroad, but l'Université de Moncton's recruiters are paid a certain amount for each student enrolled with a possible bonus if a quota is reached. This is part of a proximity approach, where the university guarantees a personalized service to its international students, even abroad.

Recruitment at the CUSB is more centralized. Three recruiters cover eight countries in Africa and have permanent offices in Morocco, Senegal and Mali. Even though there are less recruiters at the CUSB, their work is comparable. For instance, between 2005 and 2010, the number of students from Morocco grew from 8 to 65, Mali from 22 to 43, Senegal from 23 to 61, whereas the number of French students decreased from 26 to 10 (the CUSB doesn't have a permanent presence in France).

Both universities have been proactive in their recruitment strategies, more or less for the same reasons. The situation is nevertheless more drastic at the CUSB. For instance, 75% of the students enrolled in the business administration program at the college level are visa students. Some programs could not be offered were it not for international students. Further research is still needed to have a better overview of the role of recruiters, and a better understanding of the new consequences brought on by this privatization of recruitment. Nevertheless, l'Université de Moncton and the CUSB approaches are a good example of how universities now play a decisive role in immigration issues, namely through active or passive attraction of foreigners.

INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In so far as post-secondary education is an element of the tertiary sector of the economy, universities have a certain obligation towards their 'customers' and must provide adequate services, beyond education and a diploma.

Both U de M and the CUSB offer a personalized student integration, approach beginning with their presence in foreign countries, and extending for the length of the students' studies.

Upon their arrival in Moncton, students are picked up at the airport and are put in contact with the Association of International Students of the University of Moncton, and with their home country's association – there are nine national associations in total. These associations constitute vital social networks for international students in a city with a relatively small immigrant population, and they offer international students a political representation on campus. They also help new students with their housing needs, with their groceries, with orientation, etc. They also organize activities on campus, the most famous being the International Evening *(Soirée internationale)*, where international students showcase their countries' traditional dances, fashion and food, and which has become a very popular activity in the area over the past thirty-three years, attracting more than a thousand people each year.

The CUSB also has an international student association, as well as national and religious associations. These associations play a smaller role than in Moncton, essentially because of the fact that the CUSB is considerably smaller and is concentrated in a single building. Residences have been built essentially to accommodate an international clientele. The campus now has 150 rooms (there were none in 1997), mostly for first-year international students, and that number is constantly growing. In 2008, the CUSB opened its International Bureau, which hires two full-time employees and offers services ranging from orientation, to accommodations, to help with work permits and permanent residence.

LIFE BEYOND CAMPUS? RETAINING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Policy shifts concerning international students in the past decade have generally aimed to enable them to obtain Canadian work experience both during and after their studies. Since the Off-Campus Work Permit Program was launched in 2004, the number of international students who have applied for the permit and who have found employment in Moncton has risen drastically. Almost half of all international students enrolled at l'Université de Moncton applied for the permit in 2008, and 96% percent of those found a job, mostly in call centers.

Since the U de M and the CUSB recruit in French-speaking countries, English can be a professional barrier. The CUSB has a mandatory English test for all international students, and has developed English and computer classes specifically for this clientele. Moncton has yet to do so, but it is in the plans. Moncton also has a job counsellor for international students, and in 2009, they organized a reverse job fair, inviting local businesses to meet with international graduates.

A recent study suggests that approximately a third of all international students who graduate from a Canadian university plan to stay in the country (CBIE, 2007). To what extent are universities important actors in regional immigration and, moreover, to what extent do Francophone universities contribute to Francophone immigration outside of Quebec?

Both universities are without a doubt important centers of diversity in their respective Francophone communities, and offer a diverse environment for local students who aren't necessarily familiar with immigration. Yet, as we look at the numbers in Table 2, we see that none of the six most represented countries in Moncton's immigrant population correspond to those of l'Université de Moncton's international students.

TABLE 2: Countries of origin of international students and immigrants in Moncton in 2008

IS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN (2008)	IMMIGRANTS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN (2008)
Haïti 16.0%	South Korea 19.1%
Morocco 11.5%	China 7.3%
Tunisia 11.5%	USA 5.7%
Guinea 10.3%	UK 5.7%
Mali 8.4%	Senegal 4.6%
France 7.4%	Congo 2.7%

Source: Université de Moncton; Association of Atlantic Universities; CUSB; Statistics Canada

L'Université de Moncton is more successful in attracting international students than the city of Moncton is in retaining international graduates; it appears that student migration is a phenomenon distinct from labour migration. Indeed, not only do the numbers in Table 2 show a misrepresentation of Francophone immigrants, they indicate that the immigrant community is not contributing to attract international students, and vice versa, that the student population isn't having a lasting impact on the city's population.

Given the linguistic profile of Winnipeg (only 4% of the population is Francophone), the same comparison between international students' and immigrants' countries of origin would not be as telling. As of yet, we unfortunately do not have data on Winnipeg's retention rate of Francophone graduates.

CONCLUSION

Not only is there a global market for international students, there is provincial and local competition for graduates. But not all provinces and cities are playing on even grounds. Some regions offer obvious economic advantages, and Quebec manages to gather a considerable percentage of Francophone immigration in the country thanks to its demographics and its distinct immigration policies.

L'Université de Moncton and the College Universitaire Saint-Boniface do play a role in their respective regions' ethnic and cultural diversity by actively attracting approximately 200 and 80 new international students each year, respectively, but there isn't necessarily a direct correlation between student recruitment and graduate retention. Universities undoubtedly play a role in what could be called a transitory diversity in their communities, but their influence on actual immigration depends on a variety of factors which are largely out of their control, and exceed their mission. Whether Francophone communities will benefit from universities' efforts to attract Francophones will depend on their capacity to capitalize on this important human capital. Without concerted community efforts, campuses are bound to remain isolated grounds of diversity.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Chedly Belkhodja et Michèle Vatz-Laaroussi, *L'Université, l'intégration des étudiants internationaux et les politiques de l'immigration: études de cas dans quatre universités dans des milieux francophones*, SSHRC Standard Grant (2008-2011)

[2] http://www.ustboniface.mb.ca/cusbf/servicesetudiants/bureau_recrutement.shtml