

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Investment in international students pays global benefits

If you are in an industry which regularly needs to find the best and the brightest employees you are probably quite familiar with the words brain drain.

This term is often used by Canadian business, education and health leaders who feel the



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best and brightest Can-

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adian university and college graduates are lured away from Canada by the United States.

Most of this angst comes from Canadian taxpayers paying big dollars to train and educate Canadians only to see them move to the United States for higher wages

and in some cases, more rewarding work. We fund the resource but don't benefit from any return on our investment.

Now let's turn the table on this discussion.

There is an ethical issue beginning to arise on campuses across North America and Europe in-

volving international students.

Many colleges and universities in Europe, Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Australia regularly and aggressively recruit international students from poorer less developed countries.

For example, a high achieving academically-minded student from some poor African nation through a government scholarship and further funding from the University of Toronto is able to move to Canada and complete a Bachelor of Science degree in computer science—let's call this student Jim.

After spending four years living in Canada to complete his degree, Jim has become accustomed to the Canadian lifestyle and living in a highly developed nation. Plus his degree is leading edge and he really wants to work for a large corporation that utilizes sophisticated computer systems.

Low and behold, Canada Immigration wants people like Jim.

They need technically astute people with his kind of degree. Plus Jim is a great candidate, he

speaks and understands English, has been a model citizen for four years and can even tolerate Canadian winters.

Jim applies for landed immigrant status gets accepted and five years later becomes a Canadian citizen. He never returns to his native country.

Here lies the ethical issue. There are those who argue that Canada, the United States and Europe are attracting the best and brightest citizens from developing nations.

They are taking away some of the best opportunities for these countries to succeed and move forward.

By doing so planet Earth will continue to remain the same—where the rich become richer and more developed and the poor become poorer and remain underdeveloped.

Our standard of living increases, our life expectancies grow, where poor countries struggle to feed their people, provide basic medical care and are lucky if their citizens make it to age 50.

From a global perspective are we too contributing to a brain drain?

I can understand why

Jim would want to stay in Canada, especially if he wants to build a career, raise a family and probably live in a safer community. If you have ever visited or worked in a Third World country you can probably understand this as well.

I can also understand why a student from a poor nation would want to travel abroad to get their education if they don't see that same educational opportunity at home.

I also realize how much Canadian students can learn about different cultures by having international students on campus.

Bringing international students onto Canadian college and university campuses helps both international and Canadian students understand the importance of global citizenship.

So I really don't have a solid answer to this ethical question. But the next time complaints come to me about the Canadian brain drain to the U.S., I might come back with a different retort.

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