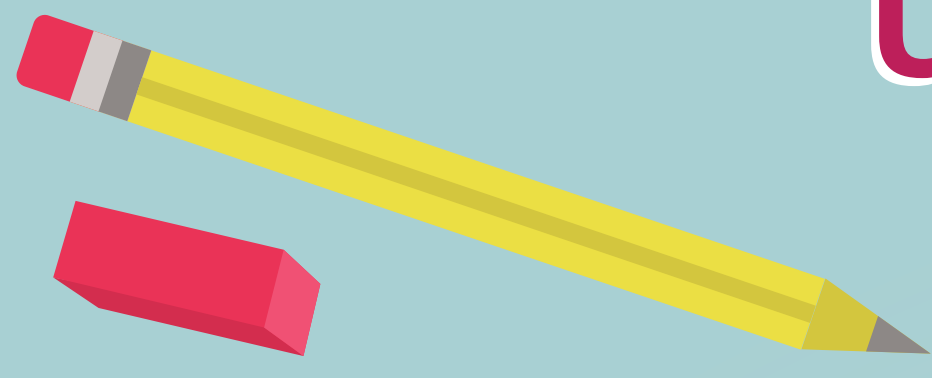


International Students' Perceptions of their University-to-Work Transitions



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Research Context

Declining birthrates in Canada have led to immigration policies seeking skilled workers; international students are ideal immigrants because of their Canadian experience (Chakma et al., 2012).

However, many face barriers for securing employment at their skill level (Arthur & Nunes, 2013).

Research has focused on their educational and personal adjustment (Vasilopoulos, 2016). My research will investigate their university-to-work transition.

Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 2014)

Process System

Across individual and contextual systems
(e.g., time and chance)

Contextual System

Social Subsystem (e.g., friends)
Environmental/Societal Subsystem
(e.g., country)

Individual System

Intrapsychic qualities
(e.g., individuals' age and gender)

Provides a conceptualization that is relevant to international students' particular situation.

Research Question

"How do former international students make sense of their university-to-work transition in Canada?"

Method

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) provides rich descriptions and interpretations of experiences, with an explicit focus on the individual.

Experience, in IPA, means a specific moment that was impactful or of significance to the individual.

Draws on philosophical underpinnings in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography.

Design

Participants: 15 former international students who graduated from a Canadian university > 2 but < 5 years ago and are working in Canada.

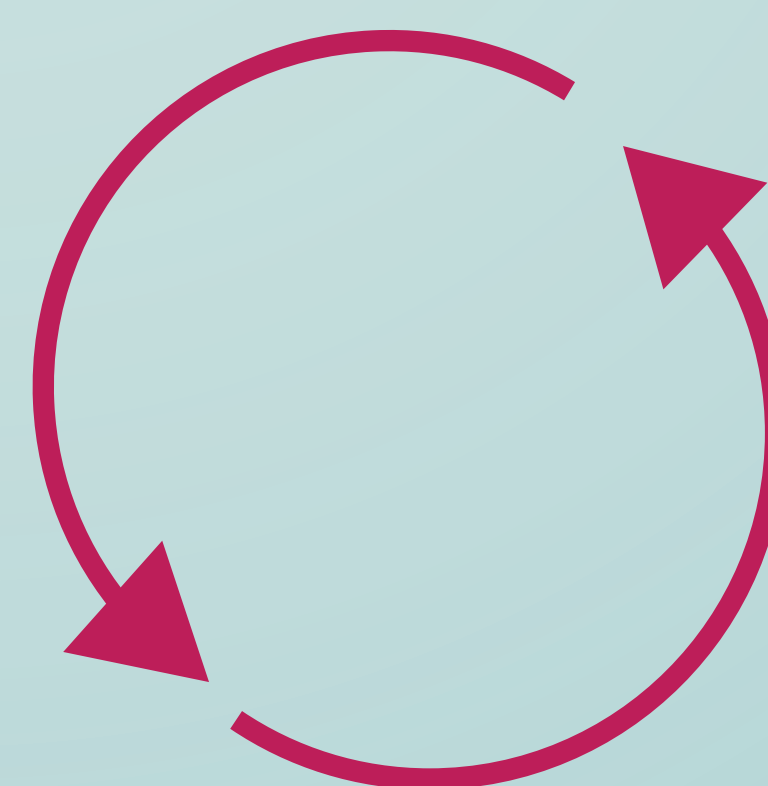
This period encompasses transition from the student work permit, which allows students to work in Canada up to three years post-graduation.

Recruitment: Emails from university alumni relations, career services, social media, and snowball sampling.

Data collection: Recorded and transcribed in-person, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews.

Analysis

Six Iterative Steps as outlined by Smith et al. (2009):



1. Read and Re-Read Transcripts
2. Create Initial Coding
3. Develop Emergent Themes
4. Search for Connections
5. Repeat with Next Case
6. Find Patterns Across Cases

Research Significance

As rates of international students rise, their need for appropriate and helpful career development services will also grow (Arthur, 2012; CBIE, 2014).

To avoid their un/under-employment, governmental and educational policy-makers, and career practitioners, need an in-depth understanding of their transition experience (She & Wotherspoon, 2013).

This understanding may encourage relevant reforms to education and workforce policies for a more inclusive and competitive Canadian workforce.