

Comments on Karine Tremblay's paper

I have a very tough job, since I think this is an excellent paper and encourage you to read it. It is a very balanced analysis of the issues facing sending and receiving countries, the costs and benefits and a nice tight summary of immigration programs and policies in a number of countries – which are designed to attract skilled migrants – including foreign students.

What I would like to do is to raise a number of questions which I think merit further research (a different paper – not an extension of Karine's) and then provide you with a few pieces of information which characterize the Canadian situation, with respect to foreign university students and those who elect to remain in Canada.

Dr. Tremblay's paper focuses mainly on receiving countries. I think that the ethical issues merit further discussion. This is a dilemma for all countries – are foreign students motivated to stay by pull or by push factors? How do push and pull vary for the source or sending countries? Do foreign students study abroad in fields which are key to their countries' development, only to stay because of changing political situations or opportunities for their children? Linked to this is an examination of infrastructure in sending countries – or more correctly, the absence of it – which would allow foreign students to use their education.

Dr. Tremblay's study relies mainly on quantitative and economic analysis – citing only one survey of Chinese students in Australia (post-Tianamen). It would be very helpful to have a more comprehensive understanding of the motivation of individual students and how these may vary by sending country. And finally, although the paper doesn't distinguish between the OECD countries it examines – Canada, US, Australia, New Zealand, UK, France and Germany – it would be interesting to understand whether the potential pool of foreign students varies by country. My guess is that Canada is well placed, being attractive to both English and French speaking students (but Australia has attracted far higher numbers).

One question I have is how long we can expect the growth of foreign students to continue. Very recently we have seen a decline in the number of Chinese students coming to Canada. The reasons are not obvious – although I am sure that many of you have at least one explanation. Will improving educational facilities, exponential “new” growth and emerging middle classes temper the exodus of students?