

Cost and the craving for novelty: Exploring motivations and barriers for cooperative education and exchange students to go abroad

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Canadian universities aim to increase student participation in international learning experiences through mobility programs such as international co-op and academic exchange. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 97% of Canadian universities offer education abroad programs, reflecting a pervasive belief that international experiential learning is good for students as well as their home universities. Contrasting with this international orientation, a relatively small percentage of students actually complete international co-op and exchange. Research into what motivates or prevents students to undertake these somewhat risky ventures and knowledge of how to increase students' participation in these programs is limited. Business students at a single western Canadian university were surveyed to gain insight into what motivates or prevents them from participating in international co-op and exchange. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2016, 17(3), 279-294)

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This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of what engages cooperative education and exchange students to go international within a Canadian university context. Cooperative education (co-op) in Canada is accredited by the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education and is defined by specific criteria, including work terms that relate to the student's field of study, are full-time, paid, supervised, and temporary. The term "co-op" is widely used within the Canadian employer and post-secondary communities and in this paper is in place of cooperative education.

Internationalization is central to the strategic vision of Simon Fraser University (SFU). Branding itself the "engaged university," SFU's international engagement strategy encourages the development of students into global citizens through curricular offerings such as international course content, foreign language courses and experiential learning programs, including international co-op, exchanges, and field schools. This global outlook is replicated within the Faculty of Business, with the goal of increasing outbound international student engagement. In North America, "Faculty" written with a capital "F," refers to the administrative unit encompassing a distinct academic discipline, such as the Faculty of Business Administration. The word "faculty" written with a lower case "f" refers to individual professors and researchers.

BACKGROUND

The benefits stemming from international experiential learning on students' personal, professional, and academic futures is documented by students, institutions, employers, the media, and research literature (Altbach and Teichler 2001; Chalou and Gliozzo 2011; Coll and Chapman 2001; Fugate and Jefferson 2001; Guest, Livett and Stone 2006; Pagano, and Roselle 2009; Stronkhorst 2005; Tiessen 2007; Fairhead 2012; Simon 2013; Supiano 2013). Stronkhorst (2005, p. 292) states that:

The benefits of international mobility for students have been taken for granted.... Promotion of student mobility by institutions and policy makers was mainly based on

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the conviction that it would somehow be good for the future citizens and professionals in an increasingly internationalized society.

Ahn (2014) notes that institutions are undergoing “increasing pressure ... to further internationalize education in order to remain competitive” (p. 106).

Several studies look at specific outcomes of mobility programs (Reinhard, Satow and Sisco, 2007; Ward and Laslett, 2004; Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, de Wit, Vijić (2013), including the perceived benefits to students, universities and employers. Generally, outcomes for all three partners are perceived to be positive or at least neutral, although Stronkhorst (2005) identifies some negative outcomes following completion of mobility programs. Students’ motivations and rewards for engaging in mobility programs have been documented in several international and academic contexts (Souto-Otero et. al., 2013; Ward and Laslett, 2004; Reinhard et. al., 2007), which highlight the multifaceted nature of students’ decision-making processes concerning whether to participate in a mobility program or stay home. Students’ desire for novelty and a superior educational experience appear to dominate their motivations for undertaking international co-op or exchange. Like motivations, barriers appear multifaceted, and more complex than the obvious problems of cost or students’ fear of separation from family and friends. While cost is perceived to be a major barrier to students’ participation (Wintre, Kandasamy, Chavoshi, & Wright, 2015; Souto-Otero et. al., 2013), it is not the only barrier. Other barriers include students’ lack of language skills, uncertainty about the benefits of mobility programs and family relationships. Within the category of family relationships, parents play a significant role in influencing students’ educational pathways (Marat, Postlethwaite, Pelling, Qi, & Chand, 2008; Young, 2006; Behrisch, 1995; Behrisch, Hayter and Barnes, 2002).

For the purpose of this paper, references to “internship” in the literature are broadly interpreted as interchangeable with “co-op.” Roberts (1998) writes that participating in an international internship program gives interns “a marvelous exposure to a range of cultural experiences that they neither could anticipate prior to their placements nor could have learned in a classroom” (p. 69). Stronkhorst (2005) notes that “international orientation is appearing more frequently now in employability skills profiles” (p. 294). Reinhard et al. (2007) point to improved communication and interpersonal skills as prime outcomes stemming from international co-op placements. Exchange and international co-op students often have the opportunity to learn a new language and add to their skill set; a student’s network of contacts is broadened through the experience of going international. International co-op students gain connections with employers with whom they may work in the future. International co-op and outbound exchange provide students with opportunities to travel, experience foreign cultures on a personal level, and earn or study while completing academic credits towards their degree. Acquiring international experience has the added benefit of distinguishing a student’s resume against someone else’s who has only local and domestic experience.

The AUCC (p. 7, 2014) states that despite these myriad benefits, Canadian “outward student mobility is still low: just 3.1% of full-time undergraduates (about 25,000) had an international experience in 2012-13, and only 2.6% had a for-credit experience abroad Cost and inflexible curricular or credit transfer policies are perceived as major barriers to greater student participation.”

This paper aims to contribute to the literature on what distinguishes students who engage in mobility programs, namely international co-op and exchange, from students who do not. It also draws on research at a single western Canadian university in 2014, and provides a starting point to explore specific themes more in depth.

STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CO-OP AND EXCHANGE AT SFU

Within the Beedie School of Business, hereon referred to as “Beedie,” the International Experiential Learning Certificate was designed to increase student participation in international programs. In 2015, Beedie had 40 preferred business partnerships with international post-secondary institutions, leading to academic exchanges. Participation in international co-op and outbound academic exchange for the 2014/2015 academic year is reported in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Participation in international (int'l) programs within Beedie School of Business and Simon Fraser University (SFU) in 2014/2015 (as a percentage)

Admin- istrative unit	Total un- der- graduate population	% SFU population	Number students participating in int'l co-op	% total participation in int'l co-op	Number students participating in exchange	% total participation in exchange
Beedie	3,654	13	72	22	104	38
SFU	28,684	100	321	100	276	100

Source: Simon Fraser University Institutional Research and Planning, 2015.

While Beedie accounts for 13% of the university's undergraduate population, it contributes 22% of international co-ops and 38% of exchanges across all Faculties. Beedie aims to increase its students' engagement in both areas.

Within the Beedie, international co-op and outbound exchange programs are structured and resourced differently. Exchanges are managed centrally by one full-time staff member dedicated to marketing and facilitating exchanges exclusively for Beedie undergraduates with official school partners such as the University of Mannheim and Bocconi in Italy. These placements are highly standardized, with set costs and transferable credits back to SFU.

Conversely, international co-op operates as a mixed model, with both centralized and decentralized components. A co-op program for each Faculty (academic administrative unit) is physically situated amongst staff and faculty (teaching and research professionals) offices throughout the university. All program managers report to the Director of Work Integrated Learning (WIL), including the program manager of Business Co-op. One full time international co-op coordinator reports to the Director of WIL, working on behalf of all Faculties in job development, risk management, and curriculum, which covers pre-departure, work term support, and students' return to Canada. Due to the vast scope of this position, opportunities for intensive job development and engagement with students is limited. International job development is shared between this central role and co-op coordinators within eleven different Faculties, where an uneven distribution of international co-op “champions” exists. These “champions” are coordinators who undertake international job development on top of their generalist roles. Engagement in this area is dependent on a coordinator's personal interests, leading to the uneven distribution of international job development and promotion across Faculties. Within Business Co-op, three staff members

actively promote international co-op to students and employers alongside local job development and student engagement. With a disproportionately large percentage of the university's international co-op placements coming from Business (Table 1), this mixed administrative structure seems to be working well.

Another contrast with exchange is that a large percentage of international co-op placements are "one offs," often developed by students themselves, occurring only once. As with local placements, newly established employer relationships erode quickly without the infusion of an in-person site visit with a co-op coordinator and subsequent student placements. Ongoing relationships between co-op coordinators and recruiters at corporations such as HSBC, SAP and Adidas provide ongoing placements. Like all long-term relationships, regular follow-up is essential.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Four main questions emerged when designing the research:

1. What factors influence students to complete an international co-op or exchange?
2. What factors prevent students from completing an international co-op or exchange?
3. Are there similar characteristics between students completing international co-op and those completing exchange?
4. Are there ways to more effectively engage students in these experiences?

The researcher's vast involvement in international co-op led to four hypotheses regarding research outcomes, particularly around students' family background. For the purpose of this study, aspects of students' family background included parents' expectations, parents' and students' citizenship (visa status), number of languages spoken at home, and students' desire to return to their home country.

HYPOTHESES

1. Family background influences students' choices to go abroad for co-op or exchange.
2. Family background influences students' choices to opt out of going aboard for co-op or exchange.
3. Students who complete an international co-op or exchange are influenced by the same factors in choosing to participate in these programs.
4. Students who have not completed an international co-op or exchange are prevented from doing so by the same barriers.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This was an exploratory quantitative study of a new topic involving both research questions and hypotheses. The sample population was drawn from the SFU Beedie School of Business in which the researcher works directly with undergraduates. All further references to students here are to undergraduate students within the SFU Beedie School of Business, which is synonymous with the Faculty of Business.

Like Stronkhorst's (2005) research into learning outcomes following internship and exchange programs, this study examined both international co-op and exchange as mobility programs of interest. While Beedie produces a disproportionately large share of the university's international placements in both co-op and exchange (Table 1), actual numbers of students

going abroad is small. Combining international co-op and exchange in this study enabled the researcher to increase the sample size, and increased the likelihood of statistical significance of results.

Since this research involved a survey of human participants, a full ethics review was undertaken. Following approval by the SFU Department of Research Ethics, a survey containing 40 questions was sent as an electronic link to all 3821 students taking an undergraduate business course in October 2014. The survey assured students that their participation was voluntary, anonymous and would not affect their grades. Participants were invited to voluntarily enter their names in a draw for a Starbucks gift card.

By February 2015, 232 respondents had participated in the survey. Of these, 163 fully completed the survey and indicated they were approved Business majors. Findings were based on this sample of 163 respondents. Statistics were based on a 95% confidence interval (P values of less than 0.05) using the chi square test for all analyses. This is a measure of statistical significance, indicating whether the relationship between two variables is consistent enough that it is unlikely to be a coincidence (Boudah, 2011).

RESULTS

The sample was categorized into three distinct groups: students who completed at least one international co-op, students who completed at least one outbound academic exchange and students who completed neither program. These distinct cohorts will be referred to as “international co-op completers,” “exchange completers” and “neither-completers.” Basic demographic data about each group is shown in Table 2.

The number of credit hours required to graduate with an undergraduate degree at SFU is 120. Credit hour completion was divided into three categories: high (≥ 90), intermediate (66-89) and low (≤ 45). Students’ grades were reported as a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), ranging from 0.00 to 4.33, with the highest attainable CGPA at SFU being 4.33, an A+.

TABLE 2: Demographic data of sample population expressed as a percentage (n=163)

Group	Full sample population	International co-op completers	Exchange completers	Neither-completers
Female	65	53	68	65
Male	35	47	32	35
High credit hours completed (≥ 90)	50	88	68	41
Intermediate credit hours completed (66-89)	34	12	29	38
Low credit hours completed (≤ 45)	16	0	3	21
Possessed student visa (not Canadian or Permanent Resident)	12	18	9	14
At least one parent immigrated to Canada	76	71	74	76
High cumulative grade point average (≥ 3.00)	69	82	82	64

Completed at least one international co-op work term & no exchange	7	100	0	0
Completed at least one exchange & no international co-op	17	0	100	0
Completed at least one international co-op <i>and</i> one exchange	4	39	29	0
Completed neither international co-op nor exchange	72	0	0	100

Risk Tolerance

Risk tolerance has been explored through entrepreneurial, internship and academic lenses by Brockhaus (1980), Moghaddam (2009) and Reimers-Hild et. al., (2005). Moghaddam (2009) applies Brockhaus' (1980) definition of a person's propensity for risk taking as "the perceived probability of receiving rewards associated with the success of a situation that is required by the individual before he will subject himself to the consequences associated with failure, the alternative situation providing less reward as well as less severe consequences than the proposed situation" (p. 2). Moghaddam examines how the personality trait of risk tolerance influences expectations for future internship experiences. Research on international mobility programs has looked at the connection between students' risk tolerance and perception of risk to their decisions about whether to participate or not (Souto-Otero et. al., 2013; Wintre et al. 2015; Moghaddam, 2009; Reimers-Hild et al., 2005). Reimers-Hild et. al., (2005) propose that students' risk taking and entrepreneurial propensities can impact their success at goal attainment.

Research for this paper examined Beedie students' tolerance for risk through self-reporting. No specific risk analysis tool or framework was used to measure or qualify students' risk tolerance. Students reported their risk tolerance and perceived risk of international co-op and exchange based on their own personal definition of risk. Following Brockhaus' (1980) definition of risk tolerance, for this paper, students with a "high" or "very high" risk tolerance would be those more comfortable with the consequences of failing to reach their goal than those with neutral, low or very low tolerance for risk.

Three questions relating to risk were included in the survey:

1. What is your tolerance level for risk in trying new things?
2. What level of risk does international co-op represent to you?
3. What level of risk does exchange represent to you?

The range of possible answers included: *very high, high, neutral, low, very low, and not sure*. Students' risk tolerance is reported in Table 3.

International co-op completers reported the highest proportion with a "very high" risk tolerance, followed by exchange completers, followed by the full sample population. Neither-completers reported the lowest proportion with a "very high" risk tolerance.

TABLE 3: Risk tolerance of sample expressed as a percentage (n=163)

Risk tolerance	Sample population	International co-op completers	Exchange completers	Neither-completers
Very high	20	47	21	18
High	38	35	45	36
Neutral	30	6	28	32
Low	9	12	6	10
Very low	2	0	0	2
Unsure	1	0	0	2

Perceived Risk of International Co-op and Exchange

Tables 4 and 5 compare the risk perceptions of international co-op and exchange completers with non-completers.

TABLE 4: Students' perceived risk of international co-op expressed as a percentage (n=163)

Perceived risk	International co-op completers	Did not complete international co-op
High to very high	41	48
Neutral	53	32
Low to very low	6	17
Unsure	0	3

Overall, non-completers of international co-op were more likely to perceive the risk of international co-op to be "high" or "very high." The majority of international co-op completers, having undergone the actual experience, were more likely to perceive the risk as neutral.

TABLE 5: Students' perceived risk of exchange expressed as a percentage (n=163)

Perceived risk	Exchange completers	Did not complete exchange
High to very high	15	34
Neutral	40	37
Low to very low	45	27
Unsure	0	2

Alternately, exchange was perceived to be a neutral to very low risk, especially by exchange completers. Non-completers of exchange were more likely to perceive exchange as "high" to "very high" risk than exchange completers (Table 5).

Overall, international co-op was perceived to be riskier than exchange. One probable explanation for this may be the embedded nature of exchange in the undergraduate business curriculum and its highly regulated partnerships with other schools. This regulation lends exchanges a more controlled image than international co-ops, many of which are unique. A statistically significant relationship was found between *perceived* risk of international co-op and *perceived* risk of exchange (Table 6).

TABLE 6: Perceived risk of international co-op versus perceived risk of exchange expressed as a percentage

Perceived risk of international co-op	Perceived risk of exchange very high	Perceived risk of exchange high	Perceived risk of exchange neutral	Perceived risk of exchange low	Perceived risk of exchange very low	Not Sure
Very high	29*	50	14	7	0	0
High	7	43*	40	10	0	0
Neutral	2	10	49	25	14	0
Low	0	0	29	50*	14	7
Very low	0	0	17	17	66*	0
Not sure	0	0	50	25	0	25

$\chi^2(25, N=153)=121, p < 0.001$. Data points with the * symbol are statistically significantly higher than expected in a randomly selected sample.

Findings suggest that the sample population perceived risk level associated with international co-op to be the same as exchange. A significant relationship exists between students' risk tolerance and their *perceived* risk of international co-op. A statistically high percentage of students who rated their risk tolerance as "low" perceive the risk of international co-op to be "very high". A striking 100% of respondents who have a "very low" tolerance for risk perceive the risk of international co-op to be "high." This relationship was not replicated for exchanges (Table 7).

TABLE 7: Risk tolerance versus perceived risk of international co-op expressed as a percentage

Student's risk tolerance	Perceived risk very high	Perceived risk high	Perceived risk neutral	Perceived risk low	Perceived risk very low	Not Sure
Very high	9	24	46	6	15	0
High	7	37	37	8	10	1
Neutral	4	50	30	9	0	7
Low	33*	40	13	13	0	0
Very low	0	100	0	0	0	0
Not sure	0	0	0	50	50	0

$\chi^2(25, N=160)=44.8, p < 0.01$. The data point with the * symbol is statistically significantly higher than expected in a randomly selected sample.

Motivations

Completers of international co-op and exchange indicated what influenced them to undertake either program. Results are shown in Table 8.

"Opportunity to travel" and "meet new people" topped both international co-op and exchange completers lists of motivations (Table 8), both of which fall under the rubric of "novelty," rather than academic achievement or credentialism. The only notable divergence at the top of the list between completers of either program was the category "want an international career" where a significant 24% more international co-op completers than exchange completers rated this as having "high" to "great importance." Statistically, the 83% response rate of international co-op completers in this category was significantly higher than expected, suggesting that a student's completion of international co-op was correlated with

attaining an international career. This was not the case for exchange completers, suggesting that exchange was less associated with an international career than international co-op. “Changing my routine,” which ranked fifth on international co-op completers’ list and fourth for exchange completers, aligned with what appeared to be students’ hunger for novelty.

TABLE 8: Students’ motivations for completing international co-op or exchange, expressed as a percentage

Motivation to complete program	International co-op completers	Exchange completers
Opportunity to travel	89	91
Meet new people	89	82
Want international career	83	59
Get international experience on resume	78	77
Change my routine	67	68
Improve my language skills	50	44
Someone I know had a good experience	35	68
Want International Experience Certificate	17	27
Return to my home region	18	3
Other	20	13
Escape my parents	11	24
Meet my parents’ expectations	0	0

It was expected that students would be influenced by their parents and peers in choosing to complete either program. However, respondents reported a statistically significant *lower* than expected response to “someone I know had a good experience” as a reason to complete an international co-op. Peer influence showed no statistical relationship with exchange completion (Table 8). Other notable findings include the zero response rate among both groups to “meet my parents’ expectations.” Nearly a quarter of exchange completers reported wanting to escape their parents, whereas only 11% of international co-op completers reported being influenced by this. Parents appeared to be a relatively small influence on why international co-op and exchange completers undertake these programs. Rather, travel, meeting new people, forging an international career, and changing their routines were major motivations.

Barriers

Non-completers were asked to identify barriers preventing them from completing an international co-op or exchange. Respondents’ perceived barriers to each program were similar (Table 9).

Cost was the number one barrier in both groups. This finding aligns with the Canadian Bureau of International Education, which found that in going abroad for education, “the top barrier to participation for Canadian students remains financial” (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2015). The salary associated with an international co-op somewhat offsets this barrier, offering a possible explanation for the slightly lower response rate in this category than exchange (Table 9). However, substantial grants and bursaries available for both international co-op and exchange often go without applicants, indicating that students’ financial limitations may be more of a complex barrier than a dollar amount.

TABLE 9: Barriers preventing student from completing international co-op or exchange, expressed as a percentage

Barrier to completing program	International co-op	Exchange
Too expensive	62	70
Would extend my degree too much	34	36
Seems difficult to achieve	31	22
Other	18	21
Didn't want to leave home	15	12
Someone I know had a bad experience	12	12
Not interested in this experience	12	16
Meet my parents' expectations	8	4
Discouraged by staff or faculty	12	12
I applied but was not successful	7	5

The second biggest barrier for both programs was the perception that international co-op and exchange would extend a student's "degree by too much time." The reality is that exchange students receive the same credits for courses taken on exchange as they do for courses at home. An international co-op work term receives the same additive credit on a student's transcript as a domestic work term. Therefore, this perception may not be based on a full understanding of facts by students. Alarming, over 11% of neither-completers reported being discouraged by staff or faculty from completing either mobility program.

Student Seniority

Students' seniority, quantified by number of credit hours completed, showed the strongest statistical correlation with completion of either program than any other factor (Table 10).

TABLE 10: Number of credit hours completed versus completion of international co-op expressed as a percentage

Number of credit hours completed	Completed international co-op	Did not complete international co-op
90+	18*	82
46 - 89	4	96
≤ 45	0	100*

$\chi^2(2, N=163)=11.5, p < 0.01$ Data points with the * symbol are statistically significantly higher than expected in a randomly selected sample.

Higher than expected numbers of senior students (≥ 90 credit hours) completed international co-op and exchange (Tables 10 and 11). This suggests that both programs were the domain of senior students; this relationship was especially strong for international co-op completers (Table 10). One third of exchanges were completed by intermediate students (45 – 89 credit hours), whereas only 12% of international co-ops were completed by intermediate students (Table 2). For neither-completers, credit hours were more evenly distributed between junior,

intermediate and senior students, quantified by ≤ 45 , 46-89, ≥ 90 credit hours respectively (Table 2).

TABLE 11: Number of credit hours completed versus completion of exchange expressed as a percentage

Number of credit hours completed	Completed exchange	Did not complete exchange
90+	28*	72
46 - 89	18	82
≤ 45	4	96*

$\chi^2(2, N=163)=7.65$, $p < 0.05$. Data points with the * symbol are statistically significantly higher than expected in a randomly selected sample.

Three quarters (75%) of neither-completers wished they could complete international co-op or exchange. In addition, higher than expected numbers of respondents indicated the same wish about both programs, rather than different wishes regarding each program. Those who wished to complete one program were more likely to wish they could complete the other program. Conversely, those who indicated no wish to complete one program were more likely to indicate no wish to complete the other program (Table 12).

TABLE 12: Respondents wish to complete international co-op versus wish to complete exchange as a percentage

Wish to complete program	Wish to complete exchange	No wish to complete exchange
Wish to complete international co-op	88*	12
No wish to complete international co-op	44	53*

$\chi^2(1, N=124)=23.1$, $p < 0.001$. Data points with the * symbol are statistically significantly higher than expected in a randomly selected sample.

Looking more closely at the breakdown of students who wish to do either program, a statistically significant relationship was found between number of credit hours completed and respondents' wish to complete international co-op (Table 13).

TABLE 13: Credit hours completed versus students' wish complete international co-op

Number of credit hours completed	Wish to complete international co-op	No wish to complete international co-op
90+	67	33*
46 - 89	83	17
≤ 45	92*	8

$\chi^2(2, N=142)=8.43$, $p < 0.05$. Data points with the * symbol are statistically significantly higher than expected in a randomly selected sample.

There appeared to be an inverse relationship: the higher a student's credit hours, the less likely their wish to complete an international co-op. This suggests that the dream of international co-op was more alive in junior students (≤ 45 credit hours completed) whose academic futures were still forming. No such relationship was found with exchange.

STUDENTS RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

Respondents identified actions they felt would increase student engagement in both international co-op and exchange. Providing “more financial assistance” topped respondents’ lists for both programs (Table 14).

TABLE 14: Students’ recommend how to increase participation in international co-op and exchange as a percentage.

Recommended action	International co-op	Exchange
Provide more financial assistance	45	56
Increase number of opportunities	23	12
Promote opportunities to students earlier in degree	23	23
Promote international co-op & exchange together	3	2
Share student successes earlier in program	3	3
Increase number of staff in this area	1	1

Since financial awards often close with no applicants, more research is needed about what specific financial assistance is needed.

DISCUSSION

This research focused on one Faculty (Business) at a single western Canadian university. Therefore, findings have limited application to a wider context and cannot be extrapolated beyond the sample population that participated in this research. However, the results reveal some surprising trends within the undergraduate Business student population at SFU, and offer useful discussion points about how Co-op practitioners frame mobility programs when marketing to students.

Students’ desire for novelty, specified by “opportunity to travel,” “meet new people,” and to a lesser extent, “change my routine,” appeared to be an important motivator for going abroad. Students’ desire for novelty overshadowed the influence of family background and parents’ expectations. Family background included students’ and parents’ citizenship and immigration status, parents’ expectations, students’ desire to escape their parents, a desire to return to their home region, and the number of languages spoken in the home. No correlation appeared between these factors and students’ decisions to complete international co-op or exchange. These findings negated the researcher’s first two hypotheses about the role of family in students’ decision-making. Gender and grade point average also appeared to have no relationship with completion of international co-op or exchange.

Three statistically significant correlations with international co-op and exchange program completion emerged:

- a) number of credit hours completed
- b) students’ tolerance for risk, and
- c) students’ perceived risk of international co-op and exchange

Within Beedie, international co-op and exchange appeared to be the domain of senior students, those with 90+ credit hours completed, the equivalent of 75% of degree requirements. The data suggests that as Beedie students progress through their degrees and

complete more credit hours, they become less interested in completing an international co-op. The same trend was not found for exchange, which appeared to retain its appeal to students throughout their degrees. While completion of both international co-op and exchange was largely the domain of senior undergraduates, messaging and addressing students' perceived barriers should happen early in their degrees while students are still receptive and their undergraduate plans are still malleable.

Students' risk tolerance was explored using students' self-reporting of their tolerance for trying new things. International co-op appeared to attract students with a "very high" risk tolerance. Exchange appeared to attract students with a "high" risk tolerance. Neither-completers reported the largest percentage of "neutral" risk tolerance. International co-op was perceived to be riskier than exchange, which, given the embedded nature of exchange and students' early exposure to exchange opportunities in the undergraduate curriculum, is understandable. While the researchers' first two hypotheses were negated by findings, the third and fourth hypotheses were supported by students' responses: in reporting on their decisions to go abroad for co-op or exchange or to stay home, respondents indicated the same top motivations for both programs, as well as the same barriers.

This research led to some unexpected revelations about the roles of novelty and risk relating to mobility programs. "Risk" and "novelty" are not traditional program attributes marketed by SFU or other public post-secondary institutions in Canada. In fact, risk is usually something administrators strive to minimize and manage. Yet an element of risk may be the very thing that appeals to adventurous undergrads looking to break out of predictable and over-packed course timetables. Findings suggest that students with a higher risk tolerance could be a strategic target population to engage in international co-op and exchange. The majority of international co-op and exchange completers at Beedie rate their international learning experiences as having "much" or "extreme value" to their future career prospects. This could be useful in marketing to students.

This study raises questions such as, "could these findings be replicated at other universities and if so, what does it mean for co-op and exchange practitioners?" These insights invite Work Integrated Learning and Beedie professionals to look more deeply at how we frame our mobility programs as part of undergraduates' educational experience at SFU. Rather than marketing the benefits of career or academic spin-offs of either program, perhaps promoting novelty would gain more traction with students. In addition, how can practitioners identify students with a higher risk tolerance? This may yield greater uptake in either program.

Cost emerged as the primary barrier preventing students from completing either international co-op or exchange. However, awards often close with no applicants. Two complicating factors relating to cost may be low student awareness of awards and the limited range of eligible costs covered by awards. For example, paying the penalty for curtailing a rental lease in Vancouver early and paying a damage deposit upon returning to Canada are not eligible costs covered under the international co-op award. Students' decision-making around the cost of participating in either of these mobility programs was likely more complex than simply looking at the dollar amount of participating. Further research is needed to find out what specific costs are preventing students from participating in these programs.

Another area warranting further study is students' perception that these mobility programs would extend their degrees by too much time. Aside from the exceptions of a third year business communications course and accounting courses, all undergraduate exchange business courses transfer back to SFU and take the same time to complete as courses at Beedie. In addition, four, eight or twelve months of international co-op is equal in duration to four, eight or twelve months of co-op locally or elsewhere in Canada. Therefore, students' reservations about extending their degrees should be addressed early, when they are still receptive to either program.

Respondents reported that Beedie promotes exchange more effectively than international co-op but that both areas could be marketed more effectively. This finding offers an opportunity to improve how we position international co-op and exchange in students' educational experience at Beedie and SFU. Follow up at administrative level is needed to discover why some unidentified staff and faculty are actively discouraging students from participating in international co-op and exchange.

This research added new insights to literature looking at why some students go abroad for co-op and exchange and why many do not. Findings around students' risk tolerance and perception of risk build on existing literature in different international experiential learning contexts (Reimers-Hild et al., 2005; Souto-Otero et. al., 2013; Wintre et. al., 2015; Moghaddam, 2009).

CONCLUSION

This research highlights issues related to risk that require further inquiry. A deeper analysis of students' risk tolerance and perception of risk associated with international co-op and exchange may help illuminate what types of risks matter most to students when deciding to undertake an international learning experience. Risk can be broken down into categories such as health and safety, financial risk, and fear of the unknown. Research into risk categories would facilitate a finer understanding of what specific barriers hold students back from participating.. A retrospective study on whether perceived risks of an international experience actually manifest themselves would strengthen practitioners' understanding and ability to help students overcome reservations, some of which may not be grounded in reality. An evaluation of whether students assign more value to risky experiences than non-risky experiences would augment current research and literature on this topic. In conclusion, risk takers are key participants in international co-op and exchange. Identifying risk takers early in their degrees may facilitate greater uptake in both programs.

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