Internal Coordination as an Internationalization Strategy of International Student Offices: A Case Study of Ontario Universities

Hiroyoshi Hiratsuka, Ph.D. Candidate
University of Toronto

Abstract

Managing cultural differences between international students and host university members is a significant challenge for international student office (ISO) staff at Ontario universities. The current influx of incoming international students to the province of Ontario continues to stretch ISOs' limited resources and support functions. This study focused on understanding these Ontario universities' international student offices and their strategic initiatives to remedy the existing challenge of assisting international students more effectively. This qualitative study applied the case study approach for its collection and analysis of data from several data sources: staff member interviews, public documents, and notes taken during field visits. The study found that the international student offices functioned as coordinating units to work with other appropriate offices to provide services to their international students while they shared their expertise with other units. The study also found the international student offices extended their coordination functions to external entities.

Keywords: internationalization of higher education, Canadian universities, organizational analysis

In the context of global student mobility, economic and academic drivers force many countries to accept an increasing number of international students to their universities and other post-secondary institutions. Canada is no exception to the global competition of international student recruitment. The Canadian federal government uses highly skilled labor recruitment through higher education as an immigration strategy and notes its positive economic impacts as shown by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DAFIT, 2012, 2014) and (Guo & Jamal, 2007). In Canada, at the federal level, admitting international students is perceived as an integral part of university internationalization effort, and is mainly "…driven by a combination of skilled migration and revenue-generating approaches, and international branding" (Gürüz, 2011, p. 279). One of the most recent reports by Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) explained that Canada saw the international student population increase between 2008 and 2015 by 92% (CBIE, 2016). Canadian universities enroll five percent of the total international students in the world, and are classified, along with Japan, Russia, and Spain, as one of the emerging "new players in the international student market in the past few years" (OECD, 2013, p. 2). Should the current trends continue, Canada will see a progressive increase in international students in the future (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

Not only has university internationalization become important federal policy rhetoric, but international student recruitment has also been a strategic goal among Canadian universities in the past decade as shown in Association of Canadian Colleges and Universities (AUCC, 2007, 2014; CBIE, 2016; Stephenson, 2018). At the institutional level, however, one of today's most difficult challenges among Canadian universities is managing the student diversity represented on their campuses due to the international student population increase. The international student body represents great diversity by nationalities. As many as 187 national origins are represented in the international student population of Canadian universities (CBIE, 2016). Although the same report clarified that these international students come mainly from five countries (China, India, France, South Korea, and the United States), 187 different national origins in the international student body among Canadian universities may be seen as a potential source of considerable impact among the Canadian campuses when these compasses need to manage their diverse organizational diversity.

While the governmental policy discourse of inbound student mobility into Canadian universities emphasizes a continuous effort to increase the number of international students, the same policy discourse fails to emphasize providing quality services to these international students in these universities without increasing appropriate resources. Only recently, the governmental and institutional stakeholders recognized the importance of maintaining a high quality academic experience as an essential part of the long-term stability of Canada's inbound international students (Stephenson, 2018). A significant gap in the current academic and policy discourse is understanding international student offices' specific approaches to maintaining the quality of these international students' academic and social experience at Canadian higher education institutions when these offices have limited resources and functions, as pertaining to the economic and labor rationales noted above. Using an organizational perspective to describe their experience of assisting international students provides new understanding of internationalization of Canadian universities while maintaining the quality of students' academic and social experience. Due to the provincial mandate of the post-secondary sector in Canada, this study focused on five universities out of 20 publicly funded universities in province of Ontario. Ontario hosts the largest international student population in Canada (DAFIT, 2012, 2014; Clark, Moran, Skolnik, & Trick, 2009).

The research question for this study asks, "what specific organizational strategies do Ontario universities engage in for maintaining the quality of international students' academic and social experience despite an increasing number of international students at the host universities?" Designed as a qualitative study, this work uses a Case Study approach (Yin, 2014) as its main methodological framework. Scott's organizational theory (1992, 2003) was applied to conceptualize common strategies implemented by international student services offices at these Ontario universities. Specifically, the study investigated the function of international student offices and their strategic actions to collaborate with other departments in order to provide necessary services that maintained the quality of international students' academic and social experience during their degree programs. Although some findings might appear familiar to the

field practitioners and researchers of International Higher Education, integrating an organizational theory into studies of internationalization of higher education will contribute to articulating structural recommendations to the existing issues of international student services.

Theoretical framework: Internationalization of Ontario higher education from an organizational perspective

A need for an organizational focus in studies of internationalization of higher education.

      Contemporary universities are increasingly diverse organizations because of their members' backgrounds and heritages, so research into their operations requires finding effective ways of analyzing their complexity. Changing university demographics caused by cross-border faculty and student mobility is one of the significant organizational issues in higher education studies today. However, it was found that the current literature on the issue is somewhat limited to certain topical areas: i.e., conceptual frameworks (i.e., Knight, 2004, 2006; de Wit, 2002; Zha, 2003) and strategic planning and management (Childress, 2009; Rudzki, 1995). These studies in the internationalization of higher education institutions recognized the above organizational issues, but were unable to explicitly apply organizational frameworks in order address structural challenges and changes of higher education institutions in specific national contexts. For example, although Manning (2012) and Scott (2015) raised member diversity issues in higher education in their organizational analysis, their work focuses on the U.S. context. Their organizational analysis appears to lack a deliberate attention to the context of the international dimension of higher education institutions. Bolman and Deal (2013) also identified organizational diversity issues in their organizational leadership framework, but their work included no universities. Scott (2015) suggested greater advancement could be made to address the current complexity in the U.S. higher education institutions from the organizational studies perspectives. More importantly, greater numbers of organizational studies are needed in higher education which must be extended to include issues of managing organizational diversity within the context of internationalization studies.

      The conceptual design of this study aligns a theoretical framework of organizational studies to fit the study of internationalization in higher education. It is beneficial to articulate some of the differences between organizations and institutions of higher education. When they addressed the internationalization of higher education, scholars often define universities as both organizations and institutions, without much differentiation between the two concepts, (i.e., Altbach, 2004; Altbach & Forest, 2006; de Wit, Argarwal, Said, Sehoole, & Sirozi, 2008; Sato, 2003). However, differentiating an organization from an institution highlights the study of specific internal challenges and changes at individual universities. Scott (1992, 2003) defines an organization as a combination of four cross-classified systems models (Closed, Open, Rational, Natural) depending on their characteristics. These cross-classified systems models include Type I, Type II, Type III, and Type IV, and are also illustrated in the Chart 1. For example, Type II Systems Model is a Closed-Rational Systems Model organization which describes a perspective

of an organization as a cooperative system by focusing its analysis on internal processes including such a concept as "the mobilization of resources" (Scott, 1992, p.169). On the other hand, the Type IV Systems Model is an Open-Natural Systems Model organization which includes such characteristics as resource dependency and organizational learning. Scott also recognizes that his cross-classifications is not always clear cut in their analytical applications. In contrast, also according to Scott (2004), an institution is a governing process and mechanism that provides stability and meaning while guiding social actions through regulatory "structure, schemas, rules and routines" (p. 408). Furthermore, an institution includes "groups and organizations conforming to these rules [being] accorded legitimacy, a condition contributing to their survival" (p. 408). These distinctions were applied to a set of case studies of private liberal arts colleges in the United States (Hiratsuka, 2004) and in Japan (Hiratsuka, 2017). Borrowing from Scott's synthesis, this study defines a group of university organizations sharing a jurisdictional boundary as an institution, a clarification that focuses on individual university organizations. Therefore, this study addresses individual universities as university organizations, or simply, organizations.

Chart 1
Organizational Matrix based on Scott (1992, 2003)

	Rational	Natural
Closed	Type I Systems Model	Type II Systems Model
Open	Type III Systems Model	Type IV Systems Model

Canadian university systems. In addition to clarifying differences between organizations and institutions in this study, applying the above theoretical framework by Scott (1992, 2003) to the study also allows the analysis to focus on a set of university organizations within the Canadian jurisdiction: Ontario universities. One major consideration for studying universities in Canada is the decentralization of the nation's higher education mandate; Higher education in Canada falls under the jurisdiction of its provinces (i.e., Stephenson, 2018; Guruz, 2011; Kolasch, 2009). There is no federal ministry or agency responsible across Canada, although there are several voluntary organizations such as Universities Canada that hold no regulatory authority (Lang, 2001; Jones, 2009; Clark et al., 2009). While some general characteristics can be used to describe Canada's universities, such as that they are "almost universally public, secular, highly accessible, comprehensive, and binary" (Lang, 2001, p.2), no universal legal or policy classification exists in Canada. Canadian higher education is instead a diverse collection of institutional models, historical pathways of development that differ in different regions, and current conditions that vary geographically including the nation's bilingual and, in some ways, bicultural heritage (Lang, 2001). More recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) recognized Canada's indigenous heritage and the past violence to the First Nations committed by the Canadian government, including in the sector of Education (TRC Report, 2015). Although a set of common patterns is evident in the Canadian universities, a

diversity of models and heritages in Canada requires focusing at the provincial jurisdiction level to avoid over-generalizations
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The existing challenge of Ontario universities: Managing increasing organizational diversity.

In the case of Ontario, increasing student diversity among university organizations has become a significant organizational challenge. Ontario is one of the most accessible Canadian higher education sectors and Ontario universities play an essential role in providing access to the higher education sector (Clark et al., 2009). As a result of the high level of access to Ontario universities, these universities also have received diverse groups of non-traditional students in the domestic context. For example, these Ontario universities have already experienced an increasing number of students from newcomer families and from First Nations communities. These non-traditional students have increased demographic diversity in the domestic context (Clark et al., 2009). This new increase of domestic student diversity puts pressure on Ontario universities to provide additional services to meet the needs of these new students. In addition to the existing domestic pressure, internationalization and inbound student mobility to Canada increases the number of degree-seeking international students at Ontario universities. Individual Ontario universities also have to consider providing services to these new groups of international students to support their academic and social success throughout their academic programs. These universities, already under pressure to serve an increasing number of non-traditional domestic students, face the additional challenge of managing a diverse and growing international student population.

The central function of international student offices at Ontario universities.

International student offices at Ontario universities have played the central function in serving international students. These offices are the first contact for many international students and they provide culturally appropriate services and activities for maintaining the quality of these students' academic and social experience. There is an existing body of knowledge about international students' challenges, their cultural transition obstacles, and recent increases in Canadian universities' efforts to assist them (i.e., Arthur, 2012; Berry, 2004, Bond et al., 2007). Sometimes, the international student offices are these students' "only contact with the post-secondary institutions outside of their academic departments" (Bond et al., 2007, p. 25).

At the same time, these ISOs are inappropriately resourced to provide adequate services to their international students. Although more recent reports are available to describe Canadian universities' internationalization progresses (AUCC, 2007, 2014; CBIE, 2016), one study argued that consensus has not been reached on the level of adequate academic and social support for international students provided by Canadian universities (Anderson, 2015). Bond et al. (2007) has been one of the few studies that focused on the critical role of ISOs within the Canadian universities. Bond and others claim that ISOs and staff members are "…currently working 'well

over capacity', relying on the professional commitment of the staff…" (2007, p. 26) in order to perform their functions and meet the needs of international students. Inappropriate resource allocation to these ISO among Ontario universities "…appears due not to lack of will and expertise but rather shortage of staff and resources…" (Bond, et al., 2007, p. 26). Myles & Corrie (2004) advocates for improving the professional skills of international student services staff and their leadership on campus to improve organizational capacities for managing diversity. Author (2012) also suggested providing training and development for faculty and general administrative staff to improve their ability to interact with these international students. In any case, "a full-scale review of service requirements and current resourcing in this area is certainly due" (Bond et al., 2007, p. 26). Describing Ontario universities' ISOs and their engagements within their university structures will provide a better picture of ways that these offices currently engage in serving international students.

Methods

Design and setting

This study was designed as a qualitative research approach to generate and analyze the data. The Case Study strategy (Yin, 2014) was applied as the main methodological framework. The universities in the province of Ontario served as the basis for a set of cases and the analytical unit. The study also followed sampling, procedures, and analysis implemented by other case studies in higher education such as Clark, 1998, 2004; Yin, 2003. Data triangulation was implemented by collecting three data sources: key informant interviews, public documents, and field observation notes. This qualitative research design came with some methodological limitations and the study implemented the above data triangulation to maintain qualitative validity (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2008; Yin, 2014).

Moreover, the study's method required constant self-reflection and bias-checks in order to maintain qualitative methodological consistency and transparency. The primary approach was to position myself as a researcher-practitioner of higher education administration. At the time of this study, I was a faculty member and a program coordinator in a graduate program at a private university in Japan. In this role, I explored ways to improve the program's operational effectiveness under our limited resources by looking at different cases at various universities in Japan and abroad. I was funded by the Embassy of Canada in Tokyo to conduct a research project in Ontario. As I have been a researcher-practitioner of university administration in Germany, Japan and the U.S., my professional practice and training background in the field helped me contrast the characteristics of different university organizations in this study. At the same time, I had to be mindful of my prior experience shaping my affective and behavioral orientations in the study. My experience in university systems other than the one being studied became a source of reflection which helped check my assumptions and biases throughout this study and especially during the data collection and analysis phases.

Sample

Through a purposeful sampling (Patton, 2001, 2008), this study identified five universities in Ontario representing three classification types according to Maclean's Canadian University Ranking: Primarily Undergraduate (n=1), Comprehensive (n=3), Medical-Doctoral (n=1) (Orton, 2009). Although these three classifications are unique to Canadian universities and some scholars and policy analysts consider them inappropriate because of their popular publication origin, The classification was justified because no other alternatives were available in the Canadian post-secondary context.

Data collection

The data was through key informant interviews, public documents, and field observation notes. Among these three data collection methods, the key informant interviews were the primary method for collecting qualitative data. Initially, through professional contacts, seven individuals were identified who were involved in assisting international students in their professional capacities at six universities, one of those individuals was unavailable for this study. The key informants occupied administrative positions in their respective universities and were responsible for the overall operations that included international student services during this study in July and August 2012.

The data collection approach included either face-to-face or Skype interviews depending on these key informants' availability. The purpose of the interview was explained along with a copy of a grant acceptance letter from the Embassy of Canada in Tokyo as evidence for the study's credibility and transparency. Once the key informants agreed to an interview, a consent form was shared with them, explaining the purpose and procedures of my study. In my consent form, their roles in the study were explained, including their anonymity, their withdrawal options, and my contact information. Once explained, the form was then signed by both the researcher and the informant at the interview site. For Skype conferences, the consent form was distributed in advance and collected before the interview.

The key informant interviews were semi-structured. To guide the interview, a set of ten open-ended questions was developed. In order to elicit the participants' thoughts and opinions, these questions reflected the central research question of the study. The interview questions were shared with these key informants electronically in advance so they could prepare their thoughts and opinions. The interviews with these key informants lasted between one to two hours, depending on their availability and willingness to share information. The interview conversations were recorded by a digital recorder; once the data was collected, I transcribed the data for the analysis using McScribe software.

Collecting additional information to supplement the information gathered in my key informant interviews was essential. During the interviews, the key informants were requested to share their public documents relevant to these Ontario universities' international student services. These documents included pamphlets, handouts, newsletters, and other forms of physical and digital information about academic and social assistance available through key informants'

international offices and across these sample universities. Furthermore, about a half-day was spent observing these international student services units and their surrounding physical and social environments within the university campus boundaries before or after my interviews. In order to describe holistic pictures of these sample Ontario universities, I documented my thoughts and impressions of these sites with regard to their physical structures, office locations within their campus communities, and distances to the main municipal centers. Photographs were taken to use as memory aids during the analytical phase.

Data analysis

        As a descriptive case study, the goal was to characterize the sample of Ontario universities as a set of cases by generating common themes and relationships among these themes (Yin, 2014). First themes were coded from the interview data to generate a list of common organizational approaches by these international student services units. In the interview data, participants were labeled as P1, P2, P3... to organize the data more clearly. The labels were used to refer directly to the findings. At the same time, public documents and field notes, collected during my site visits were reviewed. This was done in order to fill information gaps where the key informants were silent or unclear. Once the first coding generated a set of themes, these codes were used as a codebook to re-organize these common themes. The analytical procedure continued to shape and reshape these themes until three main themes were reached and a relationship among these themes led to the findings. Based on these common themes and relationships, the analysis aimed at identifying a set of organizational strategies that these international student services units apply to internationalize their campuses.

Findings

        The analysis found two major strategies used by the international student office units (ISOs) within their organizational structures across the cases: Expert functions and interdepartmental networks. These ISO units provided their expert functions as the primary support units for their international students while working with other university units to provide services when needed. The analysis uncovered an additional common theme: a coordination function beyond organizational boundaries. The first two themes were interdependent of each other. The third theme was an extension of an interdepartmental network beyond these universities' boundaries. These findings are illustrated in the Chart 2.

Chart 2
Organizational matrix applied to the Ontario case universities

	Rational	Natural	
Closed	Type I Systems Model	Type II Systems Model	Ontario Case Universities (Type II with IV)
Open	Type III Systems Model	Type IV Systems Model	

Expert functions

Needs-based services, asset-based programs, and intercultural interventions were ISOs' three main expert functions. The needs-based services are necessary to support services designed specifically for international students to sustain their academic and social lives. In order to assist these international students' academic and legal status in Canada, a range of services were provided by ISOs: The ISOs coordinated with the other units to provide necessary services that related to family issues such as healthcare, the schooling of their children, and dependents' immigration status (P1/P2/P3, 2012). Other issues included supporting international students on various academic disciplinary committees (P1/P2, 2012) and mediating conflict situations and cases (P1/P2/P3, 2012). Among these ISOs' need-based services, one most commonly identified was the initial international student orientation. Some universities organized international student orientations at the post-arrival stage to support these students' cross-cultural transitions (P1/P2/P3/P5, 2012). These orientations are developed as "Organizing an initial orientation (Undergrads & Grads) (P1, 2012), "Setting up pre-arrival preparation on cultural awareness about Canada (online and in-person) (P3, 2012) and "Assisting international students to transition into Canadian culture (P4, 2012). The above services aim to ease international students' transitional stresses when "their stresses become high depending on the academic schedule throughout the annual cycle" (P5, 2012). This characteristic is illustrated in the Chart 3.

Chart 3
Expert function: Needs-based services

Needs-based services	- The initial international student orientation
	- Family issues such as healthcare, the schooling of their children, and dependents' immigration status
	- Academic disciplinary committees
	- Mediating conflict situations and cases

The asset-based programs are educational activities to encourage international students and their involvement in the campus community. These activities are "celebration of nations" (P2, 2012), "language interchange programs" (P2, 2012) or "talk swaps" (P3, 2012), and "managing a mentorship program" (P3, 2012). Intending to help the international students interact effectively with host university members, these ISO programs were on-going and provided throughout the academic year (P1/P3/P4/P5, 2012). These programs were framed as "Profiling the international students as agents of internationalization at the university" (P3, 2012) or "Building an inclusive community for international students to be part of" (P4, 2012). This theme was illustrated in the Chart 4.

Chart 4

Expert function: Asset-based programs

Asset-based programs	- Celebration of nations
	- Language interchange programs or talk swaps
	- Managing a mentorship program

All cases conceived of intercultural interventions in different ways, depending on their organizational contexts. Sometimes, international students received these training activities: "Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Workshops for Canadian TAs at CPI / Canada 101" (P1, 2012), "Administering Intercultural Development Inventory"(P4, 2012) and "Assisting graduate international students with study skills, communicating with their supervisors, managing time, dealing with dept. politics" (P4, 2012). Other times, these interventions were organized for faculty and staff members at the host university to develop their skills, particularly as regards facilitating social relations with international students (P5, 2012). However, such offerings were infrequent. One university indicated this as an area for future improvement (P3, 2012). This theme is illustrated in the Chart 5.

Chart 5

Exert function: Intercultural intervention

Intercultural Interventions	- Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Workshops/Canada 101
	- Administering Intercultural Development Inventory
	- Assisting graduate international students with study skills
	- Communicating with their supervisors, managing time, dealing with dept. politics.

Interdepartmental networks

An interdepartmental network strategy allows different academic and student affairs units at my case universities to work together to assist the international students because these ISOs offered their expertise that benefited other departments. Expert functions were unique to ISOs because their staff members held specific knowledge, skills, and experience in intercultural relations to assist their international students that general student affairs units did not have. These services were characterized as "Coordinating with other units to provide optimal services" (P2, 2012) by "redirecting the person to the Student Services or other specialized units or persons" (P, 2012). For example, when the international students were about to graduate from their degree programs, these ISOs worked with their university's career departments to provide support services for their transition into the Canadian employment market. In this case, ISOs explained the meaning of these career services in ways that the international students could understand, better enabling them to seek employment in the Canadian labor market from both the legal and career education perspectives (P1/P2/P3/P4/P5, 2012). ISOs' career support collaboration with their respective career development services was characterized as "interview workshops" (P1,

2012), "Organizing workshop on off-campus work: Resume, interviews, and simulations" (P2, 2012), and "To organize workshops on resume writing, networking, and interviews in the Canadian job market" (P3, 2012). Because ensuring international students' successful retention and graduation was one of the primary objectives of ISOs, assisting international students' post-graduation transition was one of ISOs' primary functions that required them to coordinate with their universities' career offices.

Extended network across organizational boundaries

ISOs' extended their interdepartmental network beyond their university boundaries, and the unit sometimes reached out to coordinate with local, provincial, federal, or diplomatic entities to help their international students. As some international students live in a greater community outside of these university campuses, ISOs' coordination mechanism naturally extended to members outside of their university boundaries, although the mechanism mainly functioned within their universities. This included "Inviting officers from U.S. Consulates (in Canada), Provincial Ministry of Immigration, and Revenue Canada (from Ottawa)" (P1, 2012), "Policing and investigating criminal cases on campus (i.e. assault)"(P3, 2012), or "Working with the community and its members on newly arriving members of non-traditional cultures" (P3, 2012). One university ISO unit coordinated with a university unit called "Cap and Town" (P5, 2012) to mediate and facilitate relationships between international students and members of the community. These characteristics were summarized in the Chart 6.

Chart 6
Organizational model of Ontario case universities

Type II Systems Model Characteristics	Expertise functions
	- Need-based services
	- Asset-based programs
	- Intercultural interventions
	Interdepartmental network
Type IV Systems Model Characteristics	An extended network across organizational boundaries

Discussion

Understanding current international student office functions was the case study goal because bringing a new organizational perspective of internationalization of Canadian universities appeared to be a limitation of the current academic and policy discourse. My attempt to fill this existing conceptual gap involved understanding the current functions of international student offices at Ontario universities from an organizational perspective proposed by Scott (2003). I found that in addition to offering services within their areas of expertise, which was their main function, international student offices served as a coordinating mechanism within their

university structure. An unexpected finding was the extension of an interdepartmental network beyond these universities' organizational boundaries to collaborate with external entities.

One of the most significant findings, is that international student offices at the Ontario case study function as an internal coordination mechanism. The findings exemplified Ontario university cases as a Type II Systems Model (Open-Rational) organization proposed by Scott (1992, 2003). A Type II Systems Model organization includes internal coordination mechanism as an organizational function (Scott, 1992, 2003). The interdepartmental network function became successful in my case universities because these ISOs had their expert function as a source to share with other units within and across the universities. Collaborating by sharing expertise contributed to solving issues related to serving their international students. In this sense, these two functions were complementary to each other. Establishing an active interdepartmental network based on expert function is an internal coordination mechanism of ISOs.

Among the Ontario case universities, the findings also identified some elements of Type IV Systems Model (Open-Natural) (Scott, 1992, 2003). Evidence appeared in the extended interdepartmental network with external entities. Community, municipal, provincial, federal, and diplomatic entities were collaborative partners of my Ontario cases when these universities found a need for working with these external units. Scott (1992, 2003) described this function as resource dependency in the Type IV Systems Model. He explains that resource dependency is a function of this systems model. Many organizations exchange resources with their surrounding environment for their survival. In the case of Ontario universities, they coordinated with external units for their student services. For these reasons, therefore, the findings suggest that Ontario universities in the case study do not fit one specific model, Type II. Instead, these universities are a combination of Type II and Type IV Systems Models in Scott's theoretical matrix as he explains in his publications (1992, 2003). Intercultural interventions and interdepartmental networks within and across organizational boundaries were an organizational strategy of international student offices at Ontario universities. These ISOs were proactively and consciously reaching out to other university units and external entities in order to serve their international students.

As possible evidence for the Type IV Systems Model, one unique finding deserves to be mentioned: Intercultural interventions. Although this study has not been able to determine whether this intervention belong to Type II or IV, intercultural interventions facilitated by the experts at the ISOs are the next step toward creating an inclusive organization, should ISOs continue to work with other units in the future. In fact, training and development of university members for intercultural effectiveness is a systematic way to contribute to solving structural problems among university organizations. This approach can be described in organizational learning within the Type IV Systems Model (Scott, 1992, 2003). In the International Higher Education literature, training and development of intercultural effectiveness are identified as a critical option for preparing university members' knowledge and skills to support international students effectively by further improving cooperative interactions among the university members

across cultures (Author, 2012; Deardorff, 2009; Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Knight, 2004; Myles & Corrie, 2004). However, the Ontario case universities placed different levels of emphasis on this particular function. One university had a well-developed a faculty/staff development training to improve their intercultural effectiveness (P5, 2012), while another university stressed the importance it is placing on developing intercultural effectiveness training in the future (P3, 2012). In the middle ground, some universities implemented intercultural interventions for their students to empower their effectiveness in their studies (P1/P4, 2012).

        This study came with conceptual and methodological limitations that could be improved in future studies. Even though qualitative data included possible common themes on conflict management issues, this study was unable to include them due to a need for a new theoretical framework to analyze the related data. In future studies, one could revisit the data from this study to examine it from an organizational conflict management perspective. A vital consideration of bridging cultural differences is managing conflicts across cultures. The qualitative case study also posed a methodological limitation for conceptual generalizability. Sampling was purposeful and data was qualitative; text-based evidence was unique to these case universities. Further research in order to generalize these findings could employ jurisdictional, sample, data and analytical diversities or design a study with a mixed method, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.

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About the Author

Hiroyoshi (Hiro) Hiratsuka is a specially appointed researcher at the Institute of Global Studies at Aoyama Gakuin University (AGU) and also a research fellow at the Institute of Education Research and Services at International Christian University (ICU) in Japan. He received his MA in International Education from SIT Graduate Institute in the United States in 2004. Hiro also received his MA in Peace Studies in 2010 in Japan from International Christian University (ICU) where he was a Rotary Peace Fellow from 2008 and 2010. Hiro is currently a Connaught scholar at Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, and is pursuing his PhD in Higher Education. His dissertation examines Japanese undergraduate students' intercultural competence development in Thailand and Malaysia as a part of their graduation requirements at the undergraduate level.