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Tracing Controversies in Internationalization: National Actors in Canadian Higher Education

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Research Summary

Knowledge Mobilization & Impact



Tracing Controversies in Internationalization: National Actors in Canadian Higher Education

The Research

What are the politics through which universities engage with national actors on internationalization? Contemporary internationalization involves increasing connections between university strategies and actors in international trade, industry, and corporate communities. As a result, the coordination of the multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-issue context of higher education is becoming increasingly more politicized (Chou, Jungblut, et al. 2017). Furthermore, the increasing dominance of neo-liberal rationalities in universities has created the conditions by which little space is made for any agenda outside of the economic gains of the knowledge economy (Brown 2015). What are the issues that drive university associations in internationalization, and in what ways do these issues constitute universities as actors in higher education? In this chapter, I explore the issues that bring three national-level actors into the internationalization of Canadian higher education: Mitacs for its Globalink program that supports researcher mobility, Universities Canada through its support for European-Canadian research partnerships, and an emerging innovation hub involved in the Canadian federal government's Innovation Superclusters Initiative. To do so, I draw on the concept of controversy mapping to examine the politics of association that take place between these actors. Controversy suggests there are "alternate efforts of competing networks of actors to 'frame' the reality and enroll others" (Jolivet and Heiskanen 2010, 6748). The notion of controversy mapping itself entails a necessary engagement with discussion, alternatives, possibilities, and conditions when such tensions are absent. Controversy mapping, then, becomes an important site for examining the politics of internationalization and how universities' roles and positions are constituted through their co-entanglement with these national actors through internationalization issues. In this chapter, I argue that although universities have formed tight relations with these national actors, university institutional engagement in challenging national agendas is quite limited. That is, the politics of their engagement involve very little controversy-making but rather focus their efforts on privileging federal government agendas.

Link to other research:

[Performing internationalization of higher education in Canadian national policy.](#)

[Internationalisation of Canadian higher education: Troubling the notion of autonomy through an examination of policy actors, knowledge and spaces.](#)

[Assembling and governing the higher education institution: Democracy, social justice and leadership in global higher education.](#)

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Key Points

What are the politics through which universities engage with national actors on internationalization? Although universities have formed tight relations with these national actors, university institutional engagement in challenging national agendas is quite limited. That is, the politics of their engagement involve very little controversy-making but rather focus their efforts on privileging federal government agendas.

Publication

Book chapter:
Tracing controversies in internationalization: National actors in Canadian higher education. In [International Education as Public Policy in Canada](#) *Winner of the Catalyst Award from the Canadian Bureau of International Education

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