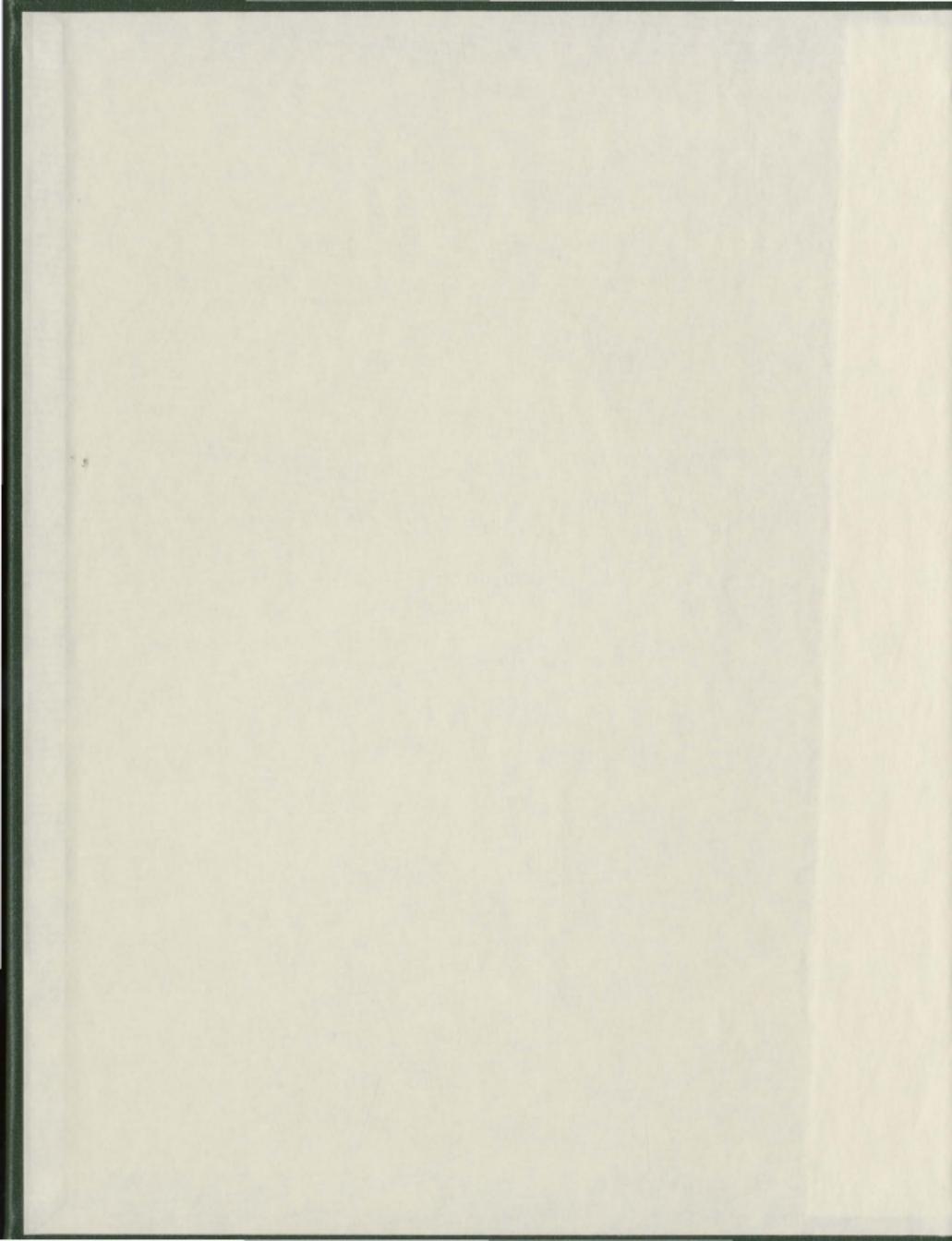


AN ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS'
SELF-IDENTIFIED COMPETENCIES GAINED
THROUGH A CO-CURRICULAR CAREER
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

YING ZHANG



**AN ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SELF-IDENTIFIED
COMPETENCIES GAINED THROUGH A CO-CURRICULAR CAREER
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

by

Ying Zhang

**A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Education**

**Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
July 2011**

St. John's

Newfoundland

ABSTRACT

International students form a potential pool of highly skilled immigrants in Canada. Literature shows that during their transition to employment international students encounter different barriers, including language barriers, cultural difficulties, policy barriers, and so on. Limited academic research had been conducted regarding how career development programs in post-secondary institutions help international students with transition to employment.

This study aimed to investigate how the Professional Skills Development Program (PSDP) at Memorial University helped international students with transition to employment. A case study approach with mixed methods was employed. The findings of this study confirmed the importance of providing job search techniques to international students. The major findings also revealed how networking and service learning play a significant role in helping international students gain essential career competencies to enhance their transition to employment. Understanding what competencies international students self-identified through their participation in the PSDP will facilitate future career development programs in providing better services for international students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people who have contributed to this study. Their support and help made the accomplishment of this undertaking less difficult and more fulfilling.

Special thanks to the international students who participated in my research. Thank you for having interviews with me at your busiest time during the semester. Your experience provided me an opportunity to reflect on my own and learn from yours.

Very heartfelt thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. Robert Shea. Thank you so much for taking me as a student when you are so busy with your own work. I will always remember and appreciate your taking your lunch break for our meetings. Thank you for your very kind support and encouragement. Your navigation, meticulous review and your insightful comments directed me on the right path to the completion of my research. I am greatly inspired by your expertise and your attitudes towards work.

I am also extremely grateful to Ms. Jennifer Browne. Without you I wouldn't be able to begin my research. Thank you for the many meetings and discussions with me in preparation for this study. Thank you for your continuous support which encouraged me to go on with my research. Your help meant a lot to me.

I would also like to give special appreciation to Ms. Jennifer White and Ms.

Lynn Walsh. Thank you for answering my questions over and over again. Thank you for providing me with the resources and data when I needed them. Your timely help made the research process smooth.

Many thanks to Mr. Gerry White who helped me with data analysis. Your comments and guidance greatly inspired me.

A heartfelt thanks also to Ms. Diana Leadbeater. Thank you so much for your kind help with my thesis proposal and revision of the formats.

I'm also extremely grateful to Mrs. Phyllis Browne. Because of your encouragement and warm-heartedness, I had the opportunity to get to know so many wonderful people and eventually began my thesis. I owed all these to you.

Very special thanks to Mr. Kevin Bennett and to all your brothers and sisters. To me you are my family. I feel extremely fortunate to have met you. Your kindness and generosity made my experience in Canada amazing.

Lastly I would like to thank my mother for her understanding and encouragement, and my husband for his continuous support. You gave me the strength to go on with my studies at this special stage of my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Context of the Study	2
1.3 Memorial University’s Co-Curricular Career Programs.....	6
1.4 Statement of the Problem	9
1.5 Significance of the Study	13
1.6 Purpose of the Study	14
1.7 Research Questions.....	15
1.8 Definition of Key Terms	15
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW	18
2.1 Barriers to Employment.....	18
2.2 Career Counselling for International Students	23
2.3 Cultural Adjustment and Career Development	28
2.4 Studies on Programs Designed for International Students.....	31
2.5 International Students in Newfoundland and Labrador.....	35
2.6 Cultural Competences.....	37
2.7 Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory	42
2.8 Summary	46
CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY	49

3.1 Introduction	49
3.2 Overview of the Research Design	50
3.3 Recruitment and Participation of Sample	53
3.4 Informed Consent	54
3.5 Data Collection.....	54
3.6 Member Checking	58
3.7 Data Analysis.....	58
CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS	60
4.1 Demographic Profile of Students in the Survey	60
4.2 Results of the Survey	61
4.2.1 Job Search Techniques	62
4.2.2 Networking and Service Learning	63
4.2.3 Confidence.....	64
4.2.4 Overall Rating of Individual Sessions.....	65
4.2.5 Future Improvements of the Program	67
4.3 Demographic Profile of Participants in the Interviews.....	69
4.4 Results of the Interviews.....	71
4.4.1 Job Search Techniques	72
4.4.1.1 Résumé and Cover Letter Writing.....	72
4.4.1.2 Job Search Information.....	73
4.4.1.3 Interview Skills	74

4.4.1.4 Overall Appraisal of Job Search Sessions.....	75
4.4.2 Networking	77
4.4.2.1 Establishing Contacts for Transition to Employment.....	77
4.4.2.2 Communication Skills and Interpersonal Skills.....	79
4.4.2.3 Networking's Influence on Future Career Development.....	81
4.4.2.4 Cultural Differences in the Workplace	82
4.4.2.5 Overall Appraisal of Networking Sessions.....	83
4.4.3 Service Learning	86
4.4.3.1 Changes in Attitudes toward Service Learning.....	87
4.4.3.2 Competencies Gained through Service Learning.....	88
4.4.3.3 Influence of Service Learning on Transition to Employment....	90
4.4.3.4 Overall Appraisal of Service Learning Sessions.....	92
4.4.4 Cultural Adjustment	93
4.4.4.1 Cultural Competences.....	93
4.4.4.2 Adapting to Canadian Culture.....	96
4.4.4.3 Overall Appraisal.....	99
4.4.5 Confidence in Job Search	100
4.4.5.1 Gaining in Confidence.....	100
4.4.5.2 Participants' Needs to Be More Confident	102
4.4.6 Needs for Future Career Development.....	105
4.4.6.1 Difficulties in Seeking Employment	106

4.4.6.2 Participants' Career-Related Needs	110
4.5 Summary	113
CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	115
5.1 Introduction	115
5.2 Summary of Findings.....	115
5.2.1 First Research Question.....	116
5.2.2 Second Research Question	117
5.2.3 Third Research Question	121
5.2.4 Fourth Research Question	123
5.3 Limitations of the Study.....	125
5.4 Recommendations	126
5.4.1 Reinforcement of Soft Skills	127
5.4.2 More Networking Opportunities.....	127
5.4.3 Culturally Focused Service Learning.....	128
5.4.4 Mentoring Sessions	129
5.4.5 Career Counselling for International Students	130
5.5 Implications of the Study	130
5.6 Conclusion.....	131
REFERENCES	133
Appendix A: ICEHR Approval	147
Appendix B: Letter of Invitation for Interviews	148

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form	149
Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire	151
Appendix E: Interview Questions	154

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Level of study.....	61
Table 2 Nationality of students in the survey.....	61
Table 3 Overall rating of individual sessions.....	67
Table 4 Nationality of participants.....	70
Table 5 Participants' area of study.....	71

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Job search techniques.....	62
Figure 2 Service learning and networking.....	64
Figure 3 Confidence.....	65
Figure 4 Participants' level of study.....	70

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In Canadian universities the number of international students is increasing. After graduation, some of these students will find jobs in Canada and become immigrants. International students form a potential pool of highly skilled immigrants. During their transition to employment, international students encounter different barriers, including language barriers, cultural difficulties, policy barriers, to name just a few. How to properly address the unique and complex needs of career development for international students is an issue of significance to many universities.

A review of the literature shows that there is limited academic research regarding how career development programs in post-secondary institutions help international students with transition to employment. To fill the research gap, this study aims to explore how a co-curricular career development program at Memorial University helps international students to develop their professional skills to facilitate a successful transition to employment in Canada.

This chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance and purpose of the study, and the four research questions. Definitions of key terms are also provided in this chapter.

1.2 Context of the Study

As a country with rich educational resources and policies to welcome immigrants, Canada attracts more and more international students to pursue further studies every year. According to an annual report (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009), in 2008 Canadian academic institutions admitted 79,509 international students. This was an increase of 7% compared to the previous year's total of 74,000. In Newfoundland and Labrador the number of international students has doubled since 2001 (Coombs-Thorne & Warren, 2007). In 2010 Memorial University of Newfoundland recruited 1,273 international students in total, including 530 graduate students and 743 undergraduate students. International students come from various parts of the world—Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America and the United States (Fowler, 2010).

Upon graduation, some international students may stay in Newfoundland for work; others may move to other cities in Canada, while some may go back to their own countries. Many factors decide where they will settle after graduation. These factors may include availability of jobs, local weather conditions, local environment, size of the city and population, family and friends, as well as economic conditions of the city. A survey by Memorial University indicated that work/employment opportunities are a major factor that international students will consider when they decide where to settle in the future (Graduate Student Survey, 2010).

As far as the Canadian government is concerned, international students are considered to be “an important source of future immigrants since they are well-prepared for the Canadian labor market” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010a, para. 9). International students also form a potential pool of highly skilled immigrants. Therefore, the Canadian government has formulated policies to attract and retain international students after their graduation. According to Citizenship and Immigration of Canada (2010b), the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has adopted various immigration strategies to support “the efforts of post-secondary institutions and K-12 schools in attracting an increasing number of international students. Memorial University of Newfoundland is a key partner in that strategy” (para. 7).

One of the strategies entitled *Diversity—Opportunity and Growth* places the emphasis on international student immigration, pointing out that it helps to maintain “a high-quality, comprehensive post-secondary education system in our Province, despite declining domestic demographics” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007, p. 17). It is evident that helping international students find employment and hence immigrate to Canada will benefit both the students and the Canadian economy.

In 2008–2009, Citizenship and Immigration Canada issued over 16,400 off-campus work permits and more than 18,300 post-graduation permits (Citizenship

and Immigration Canada, 2009). This not only demonstrates how widely used these permit programs are, but also indicates international students' needs to obtain work experience while studying in Canada and their intentions of using these experiences to assist in developing career transition competencies. As Knutson and Lovatt (2005) contend in their research, many international students hope to get employment opportunities while they are studying, because these opportunities provide financial support and valuable Canadian work experience. Through these employment opportunities students can also network with potential employers in the host communities.

Transition to work is a process that students need to be well prepared for, and “those who have accumulated prior job experiences, acquired career development skills, have established networking contacts and references, and who exhibit employability skills and traits, along with technical and academic qualifications, are more likely to be successful” (Sharpe, Dwyer, & Pidgeon, 2001, p. 7). The literature indicates that international students intend to find jobs upon their graduation. However, they indeed encounter various difficulties and barriers in seeking employment. Stolte (2006) found in his study that “Non-Western ethnicities are experiencing systemic barriers while trying to integrate into Canadian society” (p. 107). Coombs-Thorne and Warren (2007) conducted a survey report for the Association for New Canadians in Newfoundland and Labrador and found that international students faced such barriers as lack of previous work experience in

Canada; a reduced network of contacts to display and market their skills and abilities; little networking in order to get to know future potential employers, and lack of easy access to comprehensive information on labor market trends as well as employment opportunities. Besides, international students lack the knowledge of the Canadian workplace practices and procedures. They do not have readily available mentoring, internships and apprenticeships. They further experience different cultural values and workplace etiquette. Current living conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador can also make things more difficult for them (Coombs-Thorne & Warren, 2007). It is evident that international students need to develop an understanding of Canadian cultural norms, social interactions and work attitudes in order to successfully obtain employment (Yik, Bond, & Paulhus, 1998). If these barriers are properly addressed, it will be easier for international students to find employment in Canada.

As far as Newfoundland and Labrador is concerned, international students are “arguably the best immigration pool for this Province” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007, p. 17). Although there is a steady inflow of new immigrants in the Province every year, Newfoundland and Labrador experiences low retention rate as immigrants “relocate elsewhere in Canada, often in search of meaningful employment”(Coombs-Thorne et al., 2007, p.76). Coombs-Thorne & Warren’s (2007) report indicated that since Newfoundland is experiencing a decrease of population due to continued out-migration and low birth rate. One way to cope with this is to address immigrant employment barriers in order to “attract new

immigrants and increase the retention rate” (p. 76). Once obtaining secure employment within their fields of study, international students will be qualified to apply for immigration. Therefore, it is important that barriers to employment be properly and proactively addressed for retention and for the development of the provincial economy.

1.3 Memorial University’s Co-Curricular Career Programs

Memorial University has been offering opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students in order to help them gain work experience and develop their professional skills outside of their academic programs. These programs include:

Student Work and Service Program (SWASP). Funded by the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the program is designed to reduce the debt load of student parents, and to offer a valuable work opportunity where learned skills could be put to use and new ones strengthened. SWASP program offers participants a valuable work experience, applicable to their program of study and career objectives, a tuition credit, an opportunity to network, and to strengthen and develop skills and personal and professional development through workshops.

SWASP program is offered to non-parent students, student parents and non-student parents. Student parents receive priority and are eligible to apply for all options. In Fall semesters and Winter semesters funding is available to student

parents enrolled at Memorial University. In the meantime, if there should be additional funding, this program will be available to non-parent students as well. In Spring semester funding is available to all Memorial students.

Memorial's Undergraduate Career Experience Program (MUCEP) is an on-campus employment program for undergraduate students aimed at providing job experience. This program is offered to undergraduate students exclusively. To be eligible, students must be registered in at least one credit course during the semester. Eligible students must have a 60% above cumulative average or a 60% above average in their last ten courses. Students in the program will work no more than 80 MUCEP hours in one semester. They can choose one of the three options:

- one 80 hour position (\$874)
- one 40 hour position (\$437)
- two 40 hour positions (\$437 each)

International Student Work Experience Program (ISWEP) is an on-campus part-time employment program for international undergraduate students aimed at providing job experience. To be eligible, international students studying at Memorial University must:

- Be an undergraduate international student and registered full time (minimum of 3 credit courses) or enrolled in ESL and have a valid study permit.
- Have at least a 60% cumulative average or a 60% average in the last 10 courses.
- Agree to hold no more than one ISWEP position at 80 hours at \$874 or two 40 hours ISWEPS at \$437 each (student can work two 40-hour ISWEPS if interested).

Graduate Program in Teaching (GPT) is a one-semester, non-credit program that provides graduate students with training and practice in teaching at the undergraduate level. The program is offered by the School of Graduate Studies in cooperation with the Instructional Development Office of the Department of Distance Education, Learning and Teaching Support during the Fall and Winter semesters at no cost to participants. It is a multi-disciplinary program and welcomes graduate students from all faculties and schools at Memorial University.

The goals of the program are to introduce some of the theories related to adult teaching and learning; to present practical strategies for teaching at the undergraduate level; to provide opportunities to practice teaching skills; to stimulate dialogue about the rewards and challenges of teaching, and to support participants in their program-related teaching activities.

Teaching Opportunities for Graduate Students (TOGA) is a program designed to enhance the teaching knowledge and skills of graduate teaching assistants. The School of Graduate Studies, the Instructional Development Office, and academic units collaborate to support teaching assistants in their teaching roles.

Graduate Student Work Experience Program (GradSWEP) provides currently registered full-time graduate students in Memorial University with the opportunity to participate in 75-hour job placements that provide relevant career experience in the student's area of study, connect the student with a community organization for all or part of their hours worked and are overseen by a Memorial faculty or staff supervisor. The purpose of this program is to provide the student with relevant career experience and to connect the student with an outside community organization for all or part of their hours worked.

All these efforts at Memorial University aim to provide opportunities for both domestic and international students, so that they can gain some work experience and find some financial support at the same time.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

As an international student, I have always had a keen interest in career development, not only because through career programs students can obtain help in preparing themselves for future jobs and career planning, but they can also develop

career-related skills through personal experience in the programs. As Watts (2009)

stated:

Career development is the lifelong process of managing progression in learning and work. The quality of this process significantly determines the nature and quality of individuals' lives: the kind of people they become, the sense of purpose they have, the income at their disposal. It also determines the social and economic contribution they make to the communities and societies of which they are part. (p. 1)

In 2010 an online survey of graduate students was conducted by the School of Graduate Studies together with the office of Student Affairs and Services at Memorial University. The survey results demonstrated that international graduate students had career development needs. The survey also indicated that respondents rated career development as highest on their level of need in terms of career development skills. They considered it paramount to develop necessary skills for future employment. Such skills included learning more about Canadian workplace procedures and etiquette, preparing personal résumés/CVs and cover letters, job search skills and job interview tips, as well as career planning. These needs suggest that international students consider it important to learn how to market themselves to potential employers.

In May 2010 Career Development and Experiential Learning at Memorial University launched the Professional Skill Development Program (PSDP). It is an initiative specifically designed for international students. This co-curricular career development program aims to help prepare international students for transition to

employment in Newfoundland and Labrador and throughout Canada. The purpose of the PSDP program is to help international students develop such professional skills as effective communication, cross-cultural awareness, and job search techniques. Through this program international students can obtain job search information, develop awareness of cultural differences in Canadian workplace, workplace procedures and etiquette, networking techniques, and get service learning experience.

The PSDP program lasts ten weeks, consisting of seven workshops focusing on different topics, two sessions with networking activities and one service learning opportunity. To get the PSDP certificate, student participants of the program are required to participate in both networking and service learning sessions, as well as taking the workshops. What makes this co-curricular career program unique from other universities' programs is the networking and service learning sessions. The combination of in-class workshops with networking and service learning experience makes this career program different from others offered in many universities.

According to Career Development and Experiential Learning (2010-2011), the intended outcomes of the PSDP are as follows:

- Students will be educated about the career support resources on campus.
- Students will be aware of the skills they have to offer an employer and how to effectively demonstrate this in an interview or networking

setting.

- Students will learn how to effectively target their job applications and understand the importance of self marketing.
- Students will gain exposure to Canadian workplace etiquette, understand employer expectations and their rights as an employee.
- Students will see community partners and future involvement in the community as beneficial contacts to their career development.
- Students will begin to understand that effective intercultural awareness and communication in a professional setting is necessary for employment success in Canada.

A PSDP program was piloted in 2010 spring semester (from May to August, 2010). At the end of this program a survey was conducted asking participating students' opinions about the program. The survey results indicated that international students at Memorial University welcome the PSDP program and considered it very helpful. The piloted PSDP program was considered by administration to be successful. Therefore, Career Development and Experiential Learning decided to continue this endeavor. The second PSDP program was held from September to November in 2010.

A literature review indicates that there are only a few studies conducted on the impact of career programs for international students in a post-secondary context

(Bohonos, 2009; Chaparro, 2009; Ramsey, Ramsey, & Mason, 2007). Therefore there is a need to evaluate to what extent career programs exert influence on international students. Specifically what are the competencies international students self-identify through these programs, and how the programs help prepare international students for their transition from school to employment. Further research needs to be conducted to assess what career counsellors can do to assist international students, and what other career-related needs international students have.

At the end of the first PSDP program a program evaluation survey was administered which investigated international students' opinions about the program. In order to better understand international students' experience in the PSDP, there is a need to explore what, if any, are the self-identified competencies international students gained through their participation in the ten-week co-curricular career development program. This will provide an in-depth understanding of international students' needs and concerns in their transition to employment upon graduation. The present study seeks to address this need for research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Career development programs like the PSDP are rare in Canadian universities. A review of the literature indicates that there has been limited research conducted on this topic area. With the increasing growth of the international student population at

universities throughout Canada, and the limited academic research regarding this topic, more attention is required to understand whether career programs such as the PSDP help international students with their transition to employment and their career development. By exploring international students' experience in the PSDP program, we will have a better understanding of what self-identified competencies international students gained through this co-curricular career development program. This study will provide insight for Career Development and Experiential Learning on international students' career development needs, issues, concerns, and barriers the international students may experience in seeking employment in Newfoundland and other parts of Canada.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the Professional Skill Development Program (PSDP) on the development of career competencies of international students to enhance their transition to employment. Specifically, the study aims to 1) determine whether international students self-identify that the PSDP helps improve their career-related skills, such as their cultural competences, their skills in acculturating to Canadian workplaces, and other necessary skills in job search and interview techniques, and 2) explore international students' perspectives on whether they believe the PSDP program helps equip them with professional skills and prepare them for transition to employment. This study also intends to explore

whether networking and service learning sessions help international students to improve their career-related skills.

1.7 Research Questions

The research is supported by the following questions:

1. Do participants describe improvement in job-search skills, résumé and cover letter writing, and other career-related skills as a factor of their participation in the PSDP program?
2. Do the networking and service learning sessions incorporated within the PSDP help participants improve their skills?
3. Does the PSDP program help participants improve their cultural competences?
4. What other professional skills do participants self-identify as a need for transition to employment? How do they describe their experiences in this regard?

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined to ensure consistency in the research.

- **Career-related skills:**

In this study the phrase refers to several specific skills related to seeking employment, including job search skills, résumé and cover letter writing, interview

skills, and networking skills.

- **Cultural competence:**

This study embraces Terry Cross's (1988) definition of cultural competence, which is "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Cross, p.1).

- **Professional skills:**

This study embraces the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies' (2008) definition of professional skills. Skills refers to "behaviors that can be learned, that can be improved with practice, that require reflection, and that benefit from ongoing improvement" (p.3). The term professional skills is used in the broad sense "to describe skills that are complementary to disciplinary knowledge and that will enhance the graduate's ability to be successful in the transition from academic to work life" (Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, 2008, p.3). Professional skills in this study refer to some common skills for all professions, such as effective communication and interpersonal skills, time management, managing tasks and solving problems, and so on.

- **Job hunting/job search:**

Job search is also called job seeking, or job hunting. It is the act of looking for employment. The immediate goal of job seeking is usually to obtain a job interview with an employer which may lead to getting hired.

- **Co-curricular**

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, co-curricular programs are ones that complement, but are not a part of the regular curriculum.

- **Service learning**

This study embraces Jacoby's (1996) definition of service learning. Jacoby used "service-learning" to indicate that it is "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning" (p. 5).

1.9 Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction of the research. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature concerning factors that influence international students' transition to employment and career development, as well as programs in other universities for international students. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in conducting the research study, including an overview of the research design, recruitment and participant selection, data collection techniques and strategies used for data analysis. Chapter 4 provides the results of quantitative and qualitative research phases in this study. The final chapter presents interpretation and discussions of the self-identified competencies that international students gained through the PSDP program.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

International students encounter various difficulties and barriers in their study and work experience abroad, among which there are cultural differences, language barriers, lack of financial support, loneliness and homesickness (Chen, 1999; Lin & Yi, 1997; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Some of the difficulties may become obstacles to international students' transition to employment and have negative impact on their career development in the host countries.

In this chapter, a literature review of factors that influence international students' career development will be provided. The literature review consists of the following topics: barriers to employment for international students; international students' career development needs and concerns; cultural adjustment and career development; studies on programs and workshops designed for international students; international students in Newfoundland and Labrador; gaining cultural competences; service learning, and Kolb's experiential learning theory.

2.1 Barriers to Employment

In seeking employment, international students may encounter social, professional, cultural, language, policy barriers (Chen, 1999; Coombs-Thorne & Warren, 2007; Flores & Heppner, 2002). Lack of job-related information, lack of previous work experience in Canada, lack of support, as well as insufficiently

conveying expected employability skills to potential employers may also hinder international students from successfully gaining employment in their fields of study (Gien & Law, 2009; Sarma-Debnath & Kutty, 2006; Stolte, 2006; Van Ham, Mulder & Hooimeijer, 2001).

Sarma-Debnath and Kutty (2006) conducted a study in which they examined key issues that immigrants and refugees faced in entering the job market. The study reported the challenges and barriers for immigrants' integration to labor market in Newfoundland and Labrador. Sarma-Debnath and Kutty (2006) argued that lack of job-related information, policy deficiencies and insufficient proficiency in the English language, lack of the opportunity to gain Canadian experience, as well as "non-recognition of foreign credentials, linguistic difficulties, and limited networks" (p. 8) were all major barriers to employment. In recommendations for the provincial government and policy makers, the researchers suggested that programs and services leading to employment and career advancement be offered so that immigrants could better integrate into the labor market in the Province.

Language barrier is a major problem for international students in terms of acculturation, their career decision-making, and professional development. Chen (1999) found that language difficulty not only had a negative influence on international students with regard to the inconvenient and awkward situations in daily life, but it would also hinder their social interactions. Therefore, it influenced

their academic performance and professional development. He argued that language competence was a crucial factor that affected the work and study performance of international students.

Employers regard language competence as a significant barrier as well. A study conducted by the Association for New Canadians Newfoundland and Labrador reported that "Seventy-eight percent of employers consider English Language difficulty to be a very significant barrier to immigrant employment in Newfoundland. In fact, there is more agreement among employers on English Language as a barrier to employment than any other barrier" (Coombs-Thorne & Warren, 2007, p. 44).

In their study, Coombs-Thorne and Warren (2007) reported many barriers to international students' employment. They argued that social, professional and cultural barriers worked together and hindered international students from successfully integrating into the Newfoundland workforce. There were also such barriers as:

provincial economic conditions; Canadian workplace practices; Canadian work experience and lack of mentoring, internships and apprenticeships; information for employers; information for immigrants before arrival; access to labour market information, retraining costs and financial requirements; cultural differences; supportive community; service external to the workforce; current living conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador; family; and racism/discrimination. (p. 77)

In a quasi-experimental study, Stolte (2006) found that employers had identified core employability skills they desired when hiring employees, while job-seekers

seemed to have difficulty conveying those skills to employers. He also found that job-seekers who were not of western ethnicity encountered “systemic barriers when trying to integrate into Canadian society” (p. 107).

Flores and Heppner (2002) contended in their study that ethnic minority groups (international students belong to this category) encountered external and environmental barriers to career development, among which there was lack of mentors or role models and lack of support. They indicated that there were individual barriers, such as lower self-efficacy expectations and lower outcome expectations. This meant confidence and expectations played an important role in career development, which was especially true for international students.

International students also experience policy barriers. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011), in order to obtain a post-graduation work permit, international students must meet the following requirements: completion of full time study in Canada and completed a program of study that lasted at least eight months; graduating from a public post-secondary institution; applying for a work permit within 90 days of receiving written confirmation (for example, a transcript or an official letter); a valid study permit. The length of post-graduation work permit approximately equals the length of study, which means international students have to find employment within their fields of study as soon as possible.

International students encounter policy barriers if they want to gain work

experience during their study in Canada. According to regulations of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011), to be eligible to apply for off-campus work permits, international students must be enrolled full time at a participating publicly funded post-secondary educational institution or in an approved program at an eligible privately funded institution. The off-campus work permit allows international students to work a maximum of 20 hours per week off campus during regular academic sessions. Although they can work full time during scheduled breaks (for example, winter and summer holidays, and spring break), the length of time in these holidays is usually two to three weeks in Canada. These policy barriers make it more difficult for international students to find a job within their fields of study and get relevant work experience.

Gien and Law (2009) found that international students' report of their barriers to employment also included a lack of knowledge of Canadian business and workplace procedures. For these students, there was insufficient amount of expert advice and support available through mentoring programs, apprenticeships, and work terms.

The barriers identified, if not properly mitigated with the help of career development practitioners, could have negative impact on the experiences of international students.

2.2 Career Counselling for International Students

Studies indicate that international students have unique and complex career development needs and concerns. These concerns include obtaining work experience, developing job search techniques, overcoming cultural and language barriers in interviews, dealing with legal requirements, and building social networks. These unique factors and needs in the career development of international students, plus culture differences, are a challenge to career service providers (Bikos & Furry, 1999; Flores & Heppner, 2002; Spencer-Rodgers & Cortijo, 1998; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000; Yang, Wong, Hwang, & Heppner, 2002). Career counsellors should consider the intercultural needs and preferences of international students. Unique career counselling services and programs are required to increase the utilization of career counselling services of international students and to address the needs and concerns of international students (Arthur, 1997; Crockett & Hays, 2011; Yi, Lin & Kishimoto, 2003).

Yang, Wong, Hwang, and Heppner (2002) conducted a survey about development of career counselling for international students in University of Missouri-Columbia, where Asian students account for fifty-five percent of total international student enrolment. The study found that international students had numerous career needs that had not been met. They argued that there should be career services specifically designed for international students. Based on this statistic,

the study was targeted on Asian students to develop tailored career services. The study found that in order to better meet the needs of international students, it was necessary to develop proactive services such as workshops, structured group interventions, as well as access to resources on career opportunities and employment-related information. It was also crucial to equip international students with job search strategies.

Flores and Heppner (2002) argued that “the use of social networks and role models may be particularly important in increasing the self-efficacy of racial and ethnic minority clients” (p. 188). They believed that international students needed to build social networks to improve their own self-efficacy in career development.

International students are “a highly skilled, highly functioning population that has unique concerns related to employment” (Bikos & Furry, 1999, p. 32). In their study of a Job Search Club, Bikos and Furry contended that the most pressing career need for international students was to obtain work experience within their area of interests. They suggested:

[Career] interventions should encourage involvement in curricular and co-curricular activities, create social networks with national and international students, emphasize written and verbal communication skills (e.g. using colloquial English), and teach cross-cultural skills/issues (e.g. emphasizing the social and cultural mores of American society). (p. 33)

Crockett and Hays (2011) concluded three themes in their literature review concerning international students’ career counselling issues: career placement needs

regarding the general career planning process and needs to know about U.S. career opportunities specific to their field of study; individual factors mediating international students' career needs and barriers, in which difference in individual needs together with familial and community obligations and acculturation level made international students' career concerns more complicated; and help-seeking behaviors or patterns, which indicated that international students tended to be even more hesitant than their U.S. peers about seeking counselling assistance, and individual characteristics such as gender and lack of social support significantly affected the help-seeking behaviors. They contended that measures should be taken to facilitate international student help-seeking behaviors by using culturally relevant campus counselling services. Counsellors should shift their traditional views and models of counselling to accommodate the needs of international students and to increase utilization of counselling services. The researchers also contended that programming that met the unique vocational needs of international students should be provided. They argued that a collaborative effort among university offices could provide a one-stop service where international students could receive information regarding their career counselling needs.

Leong and Sedlacek (1989) conducted a needs assessment with two hundred and fifteen international and one thousand U.S. students. They compared the academic and career-development needs of international and American college students and reported that Asian international students had a greater need for career counselling

and career-related help. In addition, Spencer-Rodgers and Cortijo (1998) reported in their study that international students' career development needs centered on gaining work experience, developing job search skills, and the need of career planning activities. International students in the U.S. showed a greater need of American work experience, because practical training opportunities could provide them with "exposure to the American occupational system, enhancing the classroom experience, and acquiring specialized technical skills which can be readily transferred and marketed abroad" (p. 511). Their study reported that international students indicated "a lack of knowledge about American self-marketing techniques (e.g., résumé writing, interviewing skills, etc.), and the occupational system (e.g., American corporate culture, work practices and customs, etc.)" (p. 511).

In other research, Spencer-Rodgers (2000) further studied the vocational situations of international students and implications for cross-cultural counselling. She argued that international students had a multitude of unique career-development concerns. The research emphasized the lack of job search skills among international students.

Of the seven job-search skill needs, the greatest needs focused on an American-style résumé, American-style interviewing techniques, and the need to overcome language and cultural barriers in the American employment interview. In career planning international students concern about related regulations of international student employment, the need to talk about their career plans to advisors, and the need to learn about the American job market. (p. 39)

Lin (2008) suggested that in career intervention programs, cultural elements

should not be neglected. He believed that “developing culturally focused career intervention programs is the key to addressing the unique vocational needs of this target population” (p. 32). In addition, career counsellors should help East Asian international students in several ways to meet their career development needs:

(a) assist East Asian international graduate students to make connections between their job search skills developed from prior jobs and the desired jobs and help them demonstrate those connections in their résumé writing and interviews; (b) conduct job search-related presentations or workshops (e.g., résumé writing, interview, self-marketing strategies, work visa application process and timeline) that are helpful in building their sense of perceived mastery in job search skills and process; and (c) provide opportunities such as mock interviews for the international job seekers to practice what they have learned from the workshops/presentations to increase their sense of mastery in job search tasks. A multi-session program such as job-search focused support groups can be more instrumental for international job seekers than a one-time intervention (e.g., mock interview) in this aspect. (p. 32-33)

The School of Graduate Studies at Memorial University conducted an online survey called the *Graduate Student Survey* in 2010. The survey investigated international students' professional development needs and their settlement intentions after their graduation. One hundred and twenty-four international students responded to the survey. They expressed significant need of the six skills listed: job interview skills, job search skills, cover letter and CV writing, advice on career planning, and knowledge about professional workplace procedures and etiquette. This study's results indicated that international students at Memorial University had a greater need to develop professional skills concerning how to market themselves to potential employers.

2.3 Cultural Adjustment and Career Development

A review of the literature shows that there are many studies about the significance of cultural adjustment to international students, most of which are focused on issues and problems that international students have while adjusting and acculturating to the host countries (Cheng, Leong, & Geist, 1993; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994).

Because there are a large number of Asian students studying abroad, especially in the United States, many researchers focus their studies on Asian international students who pursue their study in America (Lin & Yi, 1997; Liu, 2009; Mahadevan, 2010; Wan, 2001). Numerous studies on cultural adjustment issues explore the association among language proficiency, cultural differences, social network, and career development. It has been established in the literature that the level of cultural adjustment has a positive influence on international students' career development, and that career counselling can effectively help international students better acculturate to host countries and to the workplace (Flores & Heppner, 2002; Liu, 2009; Yang et al., 2002; Zhang, 2000). The literature also indicates that multicultural competence is an indispensable skill for career counsellors in order for them to better assist international student (Flores & Heppner, 2002; Leong, 2010; Olivas & Li, 2006).

For example, Wan (2001) conducted a study which involved Chinese students in

a U.S. university. She found that what these students learned during their experience in cultural adjustment included learning about cultural differences and diverse perspectives. These perspectives and cultural awareness contributed to students' social interaction and future career development.

Liu (2009) found that international students might undergo substantial personal changes in the process of cultural adaptation, development of a bicultural identity, and the integration of new cultural aspects into their previous self-concept. She also found that international graduate students' cross-culture adjustment experiences might be an important variable in the development of confidence, which was essential in accomplishing their future career tasks and in making career relevant decisions.

Lin and Yi (1997) studied Asian international students and found these students had similar adjustment problems as international students from other parts of the world, such as language barriers, psychosocial stressors like loneliness or academic concerns, financial pressure, and difficulty in adapting to the American education system. Apart from this, Asian international students were "stereotyped as quiet, reserved and non-assertive" (p. 476). They "struggle between the balance of acculturation and maintaining their own culture" (p. 476). Thus they required special attention in career counselling services.

Mahadevan (2010) conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship(s)

between acculturation and the career beliefs of Indian, Chinese and Korean international students. Using an adapted version of the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA) and the Career Beliefs Inventory (CBI), the author found that Asian international students had acculturation and career beliefs patterns different from those of European and American students. Mahadevan (2010) found there was a connection between acculturation levels and career beliefs. He suggested that career counsellors, when dealing with Indian, Chinese and Korean students, should pay specially attention to such things as individual career development needs, occupational stereotyping, influence of factors such as age and length of U.S. residency on their career development behaviors, and to what extent these international students had acculturated.

Shen and Herr (2004) contended in their study that many international students came from countries where career counselling services were not available. This limited exposure to career services plus the language barriers and lack of familiarity with impersonal help resources hindered international students from gaining career counselling and related services, although their needs for these services were often greater than their American counterparts. Citing Zhang (2000), Shen and Herr also contended that there was a positive connection between seeking professional counselling and higher levels of acculturation for international students.

Rosenthal, Moore and Taylor (1983) argued that social network also influenced

cultural adjustment. This was especially true for international students who had language difficulties in the host country and therefore tended to communicate more with people of their own nationality.

Reynolds and Constantine (2007) investigated two hundred and sixty-one international college students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America in order to explore the degree to which cultural adjustment difficulties would predict the career aspirations and career outcome expectations. Their study found that the immediacy of acculturative distress concerns might distract international students from focusing on the career development and planning which could be essential to their success. The study also found that international students' concerns about their competences in social, academic, and career contexts, such as the lack of confidence and security, might significantly influence their future career goals and planning.

2.4 Studies on Programs Designed for International Students

An internet search in October 2010 on the ten official university websites in the Atlantic Region indicates that the career workshops and programs these universities provide for international students are short in length. Most of them range from a couple of hours to several sessions. Another feature of these workshops and programs is that they mainly focus on cultural adjustment or adaptation issues for international students. In some universities the career workshops and programs mainly target Asian students. This is probably because in those universities there are

a large number of Asian students who demonstrate career development needs. Most career development workshops and programs focus on job search techniques, career efficacy, and interview skills.

Bikos and Furry (1999) conducted a "Job Search Club" for international students, which consisted of a series of five to seven ninety-minute sessions for closed groups of up to fifteen members. They employed a quantitative study evaluating the impact and result of Job Search Club program and found that the intervention greatly helped international students to look for work in terms of understanding and being a part of the unique aspect of American workplace culture, more confidence, and gaining in some specific job search skills such as résumé and cover letter writing, as well as interview participation. Bikos and Furry (1999) found that more training and encouragement should be given to international students so they participate and gain more advanced job search skills. The study also found that students thought the most important topics were "résumé writing, interviewing, and drafting cover letters/job search correspondence" (p. 40).

Ilagan (1997) reported a peer support program called the Buddy Program which involved international students at the University of Manitoba. The Buddy Program was initiated by the International Centre for Students, and was designed to address the cross-cultural adjustment difficulties of international students at the University of Manitoba. In the Buddy Program Canadian students or returning international

students help new international students during their initial adjustment periods on campus in areas such as registration, accommodation, transportation, and so on. Using a qualitative research method, Ilagan (1997) reported that the support network could come from various sources, such as buddies, Canadian friends, the community, and so on. Those international students who had buddies either from the International Centre for Students or from other faculty and departments reported greater ease in adapting to the new culture. The study indicated that social networking helped international students with their level of cultural adjustment. This study also confirmed that services and assistance from the International Center for Students were of great help in terms of cultural adjustment.

One qualitative study was conducted by Chaparro (2009) on a project called Culture Corps at the University of Minnesota. It was a program designed to help the university community learn through the experience and knowledge of international students at the university. Sixty international students participated and had led the Culture Corps project. Chaparro (2009) found it very important to involve international students in programs like Culture Corps in that international students could benefit personally and academically, and in terms of future careers through the experience of having led a Culture Corps project.

Bohonos (2009) conducted a study at the University of Manitoba evaluating the effectiveness of a career program for international students. The career program was

eight weeks in length. The goal of the program was to provide an opportunity for international students to practice their interpersonal and communication skills so as to build their confidence. The program was also designed to equip international students with job search techniques in order to increase the potential for obtaining employment. Bohonos' study took a mixed method. In this study ninety-three percent of the participants were from China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong area). Data were collected by means of a survey, observations, process notes and participant feedbacks. By employing the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA) which was designed to provide independent measures of identification with mainstream and heritage cultures, the study investigated participants' level of acculturation, changes in confidence and knowledge level as well as career preparation needs. Bohonos (2009) reported that the program benefited participating international students in terms of cultural adjustment, self-confidence in seeking employment, and increase in job-searching knowledge. Ramsey, Ramsey and Mason (2007) reported a program for international students at Massey University in New Zealand. It was called the Kiwi Friend Program in which domestic students (Kiwi Friends) ran workshops for small groups of international students as part of a course on cross-cultural management. In this program a course on cross-cultural management was first offered to Kiwi students (students at Massey University). The Kiwi students later ran a series of six-week workshops for international students who participated on a voluntary basis. This innovative program was designed to help

international students with cultural adjustment apart from helping Kiwi students with their facilitating skills.

All the programs for international students referenced above aim to help international students understand the cultural differences, and to develop such basic job search techniques as résumé and cover letter writing.

2.5 International Students in Newfoundland and Labrador

In 2010, one thousand two hundred and seventy-three international students came to Newfoundland to pursue further studies (Memorial University, 2010a). Upon graduation, they can form a pool of highly skilled immigrants and contribute to the economic prosperity of the Province. The provincial government realizes the importance of this. It recognizes that diversity through increased immigration strengthens the social and economic life of the Province and contributes to a prosperous future for all Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans. Although there is governmental support in immigration policies, Newfoundland is still faced with the problem of how to retain international students after their graduation from post-secondary institutions.

Gien and Law (2009) reported that out of the eighty-three international students in their study, only thirteen percent (13%) planned to settle in Newfoundland. Fifty-two percent (52%) of international students surveyed in this study had already

made the decision to leave Newfoundland and settle elsewhere. Thirty-five percent (35%) of international students were undecided about whether to settle in or leave Newfoundland. Gien and Law (2009) reported that the reason for leaving Newfoundland was lack of information about the Province regarding its strengths, opportunities, and living conditions. With respect to reasons for low retention, work was cited as the single most important factor in influencing immigrants' decision to stay or leave (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, 2005). Similarly, in the *Graduate Student Survey* (2010), only 28.2% of the international graduate students indicated that they planned to settle in Newfoundland and Labrador after graduation.

For international students, one of the self-reported barriers for their career development in Newfoundland and Labrador is the amount of information available to them regarding job market conditions (i.e. what jobs are available). More than half of the international students in the survey thought one barrier was lack of support and information provided to international students in the Province. Another obstacle for international students is Canadian work experience. Coombs-Thorne et al. (2007) reported that not all international students participating in cooperative education could find work terms, and many academic programs did not offer such work terms or internships. If work terms are not provided as a part of their programs, international students are left with little opportunity to gain much needed Canadian work experience. Coombs-Thorne et al. also reported that international students in the study identified that while they were studying there were insufficient

opportunities to network, to market their skills and competencies, to meet with potential employers and to find out more about the local labour market.

Coombs-Thorne et al. argued that international students and immigrants needed the right information, and willingness to adjust their abilities to meet local needs in order to find employment that they desired.

2.6 Cultural Competences

Cultural competences attract the attention of researchers in such fields as education, psychology, rehabilitation, nursing, and public health (Balcazar, Suarez-Balcazar & Taylor-Ritzler, 2009). There is some confusion about this terminology and there are several definitions of cultural competence. Cultural competence and cultural competency are sometimes confused and used in the same article to refer to the same meaning. Longman Dictionary defines competence as “the ability to do something well”, while competency is defined as “the quality of being adequately or well qualified physically and intellectually”. These two words are synonyms in this sense. In this study I use the term “cultural competence” because Terry Cross’s definition of cultural competence is used here to refer to “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Cross, 1988, p.1).

Balcazar et al. (2009) conducted a literature review in which two hundred and

fifty-nine articles on cultural competence were reviewed. The results showed that the majority of the models of cultural competence are in the field of nursing or health care (72%), followed by counselling (22%) and social work (6%). The reason for this is that professionals in these fields often have contact with people from different cultural backgrounds, and cultural competences enable them to work better and more successfully in these professions.

Mio, Barker-Hackett, and Tumambing (2006) described cultural competence as “an interpersonal skill that is developed through education, training, experience and practice” (p. 284). Diversity Training University International (DTUI) describes cultural competence as an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. According to Martin and Vaughn (2007), cultural competence consists of four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) Attitude towards cultural differences, (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competences results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Burchum (2002) defines cultural competence as “a process of development that is built on the ongoing increase in knowledge and skill development related to the attributes of cultural awareness, knowledge, understanding, sensitivity, interaction, and skill. Cultural competence is manifested by the synthesis of these attributes and their respective dimensions in human interaction” (p. 10).

Cross (2010) argued that “cultural competency” was far more than knowing about ethnic foods and holidays. Cultural competence and awareness involve “developing knowledge, sensitivity and understanding of other ethnic, racial, gender identity, and religious groups” (p. 1). According to Cross, cultural competence, if done properly, can meet a critical need of different government agencies or non-government organizations to understand and be sensitive to cultural differences in terms of their clients’ ethnic languages, customs, alternative healing choices, religious practices, and so on. Cross concludes that cultural competence is a holistic process that begins with awareness, develops sensitivity and knowledge and ends with intelligence.

Some of the above definitions emphasize the knowledge and skills needed to work with people of different cultures, while others focus on attitudes toward people of different cultures (Martin & Vaughn, 2007). In this study, cultural competence is used in the sense that international students need to acquire not only cultural awareness, but also some skills, abilities and attitudes in order to better develop their career in a multicultural work environment.

Some researchers advocate that cultural competence can be gained through multicultural literature reading (Bartol & Richardson, 1998; Luckhardt, 2010). For example, Luckhardt (2010) believed that cultural competence is a more complex set of skills than basic categorization. She argued that simply being aware of individual

and cultural differences is not enough to successfully navigate interactions between cultures. Luckhardt proposed that “attaining cultural competence is made possible through reading multicultural literature that promotes cultural sensitivity through building awareness, holds a context that is immediately relevant to readers’ lives, and elicits an empathetic response by actively engaging its audience”(p. 15).

Cultural competence can be regarded as “a dynamic process in which we engage”, which makes it clear that the process doesn’t end with a collection of facts (Bartol & Richardson, 1998, p. 75). Bartol and Richardson (1998) stated:

It is not easy to gain cultural competence. We can read books that provide descriptions of another culture, but knowledge of facts is not sufficient for understanding. We can become immersed in another culture, and if we are open, gain an appreciation and understanding of that culture. However, such an opportunity is not always readily available. We cannot easily “walk in another’s shoes” or “get inside another’s skin”. (p.75)

Balcazar et al. (2009) argued that the process of becoming culturally competent can happen through “repetitive engagements with diverse groups, by increasing one’s critical awareness and knowledge, and/or by having opportunities for reflection and analysis about one’s professional performance” (p. 1153).

Other researchers propose that cultural competence can be gained through service learning (Amerson, 2010; Lai, 2009; Mbugua, 2010; Roche, Jones, Hinman, & Seoldo, 2007). For example, Lai (2009) reported how a co-curricular service learning program helped participants to develop their generic skills and cultural

competence. Seventeen pre-service teachers from the Hong Kong Institute of Education took part in a service education project called Service Exposure Attachment program in 2008. Through content analysis of participants' journals, day logs, and reflective writings, the researcher found that participants improved their generic skills, leadership abilities and cultural competencies through the 7-week service learning program. In this study, the culturally diverse learning environment helped participants improve their cultural competence. Another example is the study conducted by Mbugua (2010) in which pre-service teachers participated in an international service-learning course. This study found that participants considered the service learning experience "the most transformative experience of their lives that equipped them with the knowledge and skills to be culturally competent through first hand experiences with the 'other'" (p. 95). This experiential learning opportunity also enabled participants to be more culturally sensitive as well as gain critical thinking skills.

Through experiential programs and service learning experiences, international students may gain cultural awareness, obtain knowledge of cultural differences, and further develop cultural competences which help them with career development, especially when they choose to work in the Canadian work environment which features multicultural backgrounds of professionals.

2.7 Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory is the theoretical framework of this study. It defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). According to Kolb, learning is "best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcome" (1984, p. 26). He believes that "experiential learning occurs when individuals engage in some activity, reflect upon the activity critically, derive some useful insight from the analysis, and incorporate the result through a change in understanding and/or behavior" (p. 3).

Kolb (1984) stated:

The experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening and critical linkages among education, work and personal development. It offers a system of competencies for describing job linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the 'real world' with experiential learning methods. It pictures the workplace as a learning environment that can enhance and supplement formal education and can foster personal development through meaningful work and career-development opportunities. And it stresses the role of formal education in lifelong learning and the development of individuals to their full potential as citizens, family members, and human beings". (p. 3-4)

In Kolb's (1984) cyclical model, there are four distinct segments to learning: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (p. 30). He believes that to enhance learning in post-secondary institutions, educators could develop a particular or "concrete" experience, so that learners can get enough information and can reflect on their experiences. Then when

the experience is transformed from one situation to another, the learner should be able to make generalization about the event. Once generalization is made, the learner will be able to apply what they learn to other situations. The completion of this cycle leads to a new experience and sets a new cycle. Kolb's learning model is the basis from which numerous experiential learning programs have developed and been evaluated (Sharpe & Pidgeon, 2001). There is no starting point of the cycle, but in order to achieve better results, students need to go through the complete cycle (Petkus, 2000).

As a branch of experiential education, service learning is rooted in Kolb's experiential learning theory. Robert Sigmon (1979) defined service learning as "the others coming together of many hearts and minds seeking to express compassion for and to enable a learning style to grow out of service" (p. 9). Wade and Saxe (1996) explained that "the service experience...becomes the motivation and central activity for connecting students' knowledge, attitudes, critical thinking, and civic behaviors" (p. 333). Jacoby (1996) used "service-learning" to indicate that it is "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning" (p. 5). Jacoby's definition focused on the importance of both service and learning and interrelationship between these two components. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (n. d.) defines service learning as a

teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. This definition, together with Jacoby's concept of service learning, is used in the present study.

Service learning brings students from classrooms into communities external to the university to be involved in the community and to learn during this process. By preparing students for practical community-based problem solving, service learning offers students an opportunity to explore the connections between what they learn in the classroom and the practical needs of the community (Heffernan, 2001). In this sense service learning is "a type of experiential education that combines and pursues both academic achievement and community service in a seamless weave, requiring the use of effective reflection exercises" (Mbugua, 2010, p. 89). Many studies have found that service learning can enhance students' cultural awareness, critical thinking ability, fostering citizenship and responsibility, establishing professional identity, interpersonal and personal development, change in attitude and beliefs toward the community, and increase in community engagement (Amerson, 2010; Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000; Eyles & Giles, 1999; Feen-Calligan, 2002; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Lai, 2009).

For example, Godfrey (1999) argued that when service learning pedagogies were used in business management courses, they helped enhance students' technical

capability and moral capability, by “offering a vehicle to instill a concern for justice, equity, beauty, and moral judgment into the hearts and minds of our students” (p. 376). Another example is the study conducted by Boyle-Baise and Kilbane (2000) in which twenty-five pre-service teaching students were involved in teaching children in the community for a semester. They had changes in their attitudes toward themselves and the community after the service learning experience.

Chupp and Joseph (2010) described a case study in an effort to seek more impact through service learning experience. In the service learning effort that lasted three years, the researchers reported impacts of the program on students, community and the university. Chupp and Joseph (2010) proposed that the key to making the most of any service-learning project lies in intentionally aiming for impact at three levels—on students, on the academic institution, and on the community. They advocated that for a service learning effort to work out well, there should be “well-designed activities for reflection on the experience, including individual reflection, group discussion, and intergroup discussion that ideally includes community members. Service activities should be designed, not just for modest, one-time contributions of assistance, but for more sustained and impactful change” (p. 206).

Kolb’s experiential learning model is the theoretical framework for some studies on service learning (Carver, 1997; Godfrey, 1999; Petkus, 2000). For example,

Petkus (2000) argued that service learning could be applied to each stage of the experiential learning cycle: the concrete experience begins when learners participate in the volunteer service; in the second stage, learners can either reflect on their own or participate in formal reflection with course instructors or other students; in the abstract conceptualization stage learners integrate the concrete experience with relevant theories and concepts; in the last stage students actively apply what they've experienced, reflected on, and generalized into further practice and experiment. According to Carver (1997), service learning addresses "the three major goals of experiential education: allowing students to become more effective change agents, developing students' sense of belonging in the communities of which they are members, and developing student competence" (p. 143).

2.8 Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature concerning factors that influence international students' career development. This literature review provides an understanding of international students' needs and concerns in terms of transition to employment upon graduation and future career development, especially if they want to stay and find employment in Newfoundland and Labrador. It presents the barriers international students encounter when seeking employment, among which there is lack of job information or information about the local labor market; lack of Canadian work experience; unfamiliarity with Canadian workplace culture and procedures;

need to develop cultural competence and cultural awareness; and few networks to display and market their skills and abilities. The literature review also provides an understanding of how service learning helps students to develop professional skills, professional identity, community engagement, cultural awareness, and personal development.

A review of current literature shows that numerous studies concerning international students are based on U.S. culture and job market. There are only a few studies oriented toward the Canadian labor market, and even less are focused on how co-curricular career development programs can best help international students seek employment within their fields of study. Many studies target only Asian students, who constitute the largest number of international student groups. It should be noted that as more and more students come from many other countries, more global, multi-cultural perspectives need to be integrated into career counselling services.

There is very limited research on how an effective career development program can inform international students and integrate these important career-related factors referenced above in order to develop international students' professional skills. In this sense, the present study will fill an important gap in the literature. It will give insight into how co-curricular career development programs in post-secondary institutions specially designed for international students can help them to obtain relevant job search information and job search skills, and to gain competencies and

develop career-related skills through the programs. As well, there is a paucity of literature on how service learning programs help international students with their career development and professional skills in Newfoundland and Labrador. In this regard the present study fills the gap in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study attempted to explore international students' experiences in the PSDP program of the 2010 Fall semester, specifically the self-identified competencies that international students gained through their participation in the co-curricular career development program.

The study employed a case study approach. Merriam (1988) contended that "A case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon, such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (p. 9). The literature review conducted in this study indicated there was a paucity of research on how co-curricular career development programs help international students with their career competencies. According to Stake (1995), in cases where there is a lack of previous research or exploration, qualitative research, especially a case study approach, is appropriate.

I used an explanatory mixed method (Creswell, 2007) in order to better answer the research questions and gain an in-depth understanding of international students' experiences in the program. In the quantitative phase of the research, I used the survey data collected by Career Development and Experiential Learning to analyze what international students identified with in the PSDP program. In the qualitative

phase, I designed interview questions to gain a rich understanding of how and why international students identified with the factors in the first phase, and what were their experiences during this program.

The research project was approved by Career Development and Experiential Learning and by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland (See Appendix A).

3.2 Overview of the Research Design

Reeves (2000) described six different goals for research in the field of educational technology: theoretical, predictive, interpretive, postmodern, development, and action. My goal was interpretive because in this research I “focused on portraying how education works by describing and interpreting phenomena related to human communication, learning, performance, and the use of technology” (Reeves, 2000, p. 23). Since my research questions aimed to yield a richer understanding of the participants’ experiences, qualitative research methods were appropriate as the primary framework for data collection (Crotty, 1998). The specific qualitative method I chose was the case study method.

Yin (1994) argued that a “case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 3). Since the purpose of my study was to describe and explore international students’ self-identified

competencies and perspectives on how the PSDP program impacted their transition to employment in Newfoundland, a case study method was appropriate. Stake (1995) described a case study as concentrating on one phenomenon, which possessed both “uniqueness and commonality” (p. 1). The present study was conducted with international students attending Memorial University of Newfoundland. Participants in this research came from different countries and they had different fields of study. However, they had all participated in the ten-week PSDP program, and they shared similar barriers and difficulties in their experiences in terms of transition to employment in Newfoundland. In this sense, there was both uniqueness and commonality. Further, Yin (2003) discussed how a case study was appropriate to address questions of how and why. The research questions that I attempted to answer were designed to understand how international students described their experiences in the PSDP program and their self-identified competencies, and a qualitative case study was the most appropriate methodology to serve this purpose.

The research design of this study falls into the category of explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) indicated that an explanatory mixed methods design consisted of two phases: first was to obtain quantitative data from a population, followed by collection of in-depth qualitative exploration, the data of which helped to refine or “elaborate on the quantitative findings” (p. 560). The rationale for this approach is that “the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; more analysis, specifically through

qualitative data collection, is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general picture” (Creswell, 2007, p.560).

This study specifically focused on the PSDP program in the 2010 Fall semester. The reason for choosing this semester was that some of the international students who participated in the PSDP in 2010 Spring semester (May-August, 2010) had already graduated in October 2010, while the 2011 Spring semester PSDP wasn't completed at the time of this study. The first stage of research was quantitative, which included a survey that was previously conducted at the end of the PSDP 2010 Fall semester by the Career Development and Experiential Learning (CDEL). In the survey, participating international students in PSDP 2010 Fall program were requested to complete a questionnaire about their opinions on such aspects of the program as skill identification session, résumé and cover letter writing session, job search session, interview skills session, mock interview, intercultural communication session, networking session and volunteer session. Permission was granted by the Career Development and Experiential Learning to use the raw data of the survey. The survey data were analyzed to provide a general picture of international students' opinions toward the PSDP program.

The analysis of survey data formed the basis for the qualitative stage of the research which included individual interviews with students. The mixed methods of combining quantitative and qualitative data provided a richer understanding of the

research questions as to how participants in the present study described their competencies gained through their participation in the PSDP program.

3.3 Recruitment and Participation of Sample

Participating students in the PSDP program were enrolled in Memorial University of Newfoundland as either undergraduate or graduate students. They came from different countries and had various fields of study. All of the participants registered in the PSDP program on a voluntary basis.

Altogether thirty-seven international students participated in the 2010 Fall semester PSDP program. Twenty-nine students participated in the required sessions and achieved the certificate of completion. At the end of the PSDP program, a survey was conducted to investigate participating international students' opinions of the program. Twenty-five students finished the survey questionnaire.

At the end of the questionnaire, each international student was asked whether they would like to be contacted for future research purposes. Twenty-four students agreed and left their email addresses for future contact. After securing ethics approval from ICEHR, a letter of invitation for interviews (See Appendix B) was sent through email to all these twenty-four students and asked for their consent to interview with the researcher. In the letter, the purpose of this study was described. Students who agreed to participate in the interviews were requested to reply to the

researcher by email or by telephone. Sixteen international students responded to the invitation for interviews and contacted the researcher. The researcher then set up individual interviews with each student.

3.4 Informed Consent

A review of the ethical issues was sent to all participants, which included: introduction of the study, participants' rights to privacy and non-participation, right to anonymity, and right to confidentiality, benefits and possible risks to participants, a comprehensive explanation of how data would be gathered and collected, as well as about data filing, storage and destruction. All of these were consistent with the requirements of Memorial University of Newfoundland. When these were done, participants were provided with letters of informed consent, asking them to think about, sign and return the forms to the researcher. All interview consent forms (See Appendix C) were signed by participating students before personal interviews. Participants were recruited on an informed, free and voluntary basis. No coercion or special inducement was made to them.

3.5 Data Collection

In the present study mixed methods were used for data collection. According to Creswell (2007), the definition of mixed methods is "a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and 'mixing' both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a

single study to understand a research problem” (p. 552). The reason for using mixed methods was that by combining quantitative and qualitative data richer understanding of the research questions would be yielded. Creswell also contended that mixed methods could be used “when one type of research method (qualitative or quantitative) is not enough to address the research problem or answer the research questions” (p. 552). Mixed methods are useful when more data are needed to “extend, elaborate on, or explain the first database... and to yield more detailed, specific information than can be gained from the results of statistical tests” (Creswell, 2007, p. 552).

At the end of the PSDP in 2010 Fall semester, participating students were asked to complete a questionnaire containing nineteen questions. This stage of data collection in the present study provided a general picture of participating students’ opinions toward the PSDP program. In order to further explore rich descriptions of students’ experiences in the program, the researcher conducted an analysis of the survey. On the basis of the analysis, individual interviews were conducted, which was the second stage of data collection. The qualitative data (interviews) were used to refine and elaborate on the findings of the quantitative data (survey) so that in-depth understanding of international students’ experiences was yielded (Creswell, 2007).

According to Mishler (1986), interviews provide participants “a chance to say

things for which there had not been an appropriate audience” (p. 897). Interviews reveal “how people perceive what happened” (Bell, 1999, p. 11). In order to answer the research questions and to achieve the purpose of a richer description of student participants’ experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted, because they allowed the interviewer the ability to ask additional questions to clarify and expand on statements of interest made by participants. Besides, semi-structured interviews made it possible to use probes, a valuable tool for ensuring reliability because researchers could probe for clarification of interesting and relevant detailed information (Hutchinson & Skodal-Wilson, 1992). Participants were asked a specific set of eleven open-ended questions (see Appendix E). All interview questions were compiled in advance and submitted to Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for review and approval. In the interviews, necessary terms were explained to participants, including job search and job search techniques. All interviews revolved around the research questions and aimed to yield in-depth understanding of international students’ experiences in the PSDP and their self-identified competencies.

Three options were offered as the means of interviews. For students who were available on campus, personal interviews were conducted in a designated room in the Faculty of Education. For students who were not available on campus, face-to-face interviews were set up through SKYPE chat tool via webcam. For students who did not have access to personal computers or webcams, individual telephone interviews

were up. For the above three options, interviews would be conducted in the same way. Further, considering that language might be a barrier, for students whose native language was Chinese, an option of an interview in Chinese was also offered. No videotapes were used for data collection or storage. Voice recording was only used with participants' consent (specified in the consent form).

Interviews took place between March 7th to March 22nd, 2011. One interview was conducted via SKYPE chat took through webcam, while all the others were conducted face to face in a designated room in Education Building. Out of the sixteen interviews, thirteen were conducted in English. Three students chose Chinese as interview language and these three interviews were translated into English by the researcher. No multiple interviews were done with any participants. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Personal transcripts were sent to interviewees through email for verification. Interviewees were requested to return the verified transcripts back to the researcher through email. No interviewees requested to make changes in the transcripts. All finished transcripts were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office in the Department of Student Affairs and Services. In this paper, a pseudonym was assigned to each interviewee to ensure anonymity. All identifiable information was stored in a locked safe and encrypted in electronic form. The paper data were stored in a key-locked cabinet in the Department of Student Affairs and Services. Electronic data files were stored on a laptop under encrypted password lock, and then locked in the key-locked safe when

not in use.

3.6 Member Checking

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in a qualitative research project member checking is one method used to ensure trustworthiness of data collected from participants. Member checking can take the form of peer review or member check research. In this study, member checking took place about one week after all the data were collected. Copies of the transcripts were sent to participants for review and verification. Participants were requested to return the verified transcripts back to the researcher. Besides, during one-to-one interviews, participants were asked to make possible confirmations and explanations when needed.

3.7 Data Analysis

Creswell (2007) stated in explanatory mixed methods design that “the researcher does not have to converge or integrate two different forms of data” (p. 560). Quantitative results can be obtained from a population in the first phase, and then these findings are refined or elaborated through in-depth qualitative explorations in the second phase. In this study, the quantitative data were compiled and evaluated using frequency analysis before qualitative research was conducted. The results of the quantitative analysis, together with my research questions, guided the interview questions. On the other hand, the in-depth interviews refined and elaborated the

results of the quantitative survey. Both data analysis were guided by attempts to answer the four core research questions, which revolve around A) whether participants describe improvement in job search skills, résumé and cover letter writing, and other career-related skills as a factor of their participation in the PSDP program? B) whether the networking and service learning sessions incorporated within the PSDP help participants improve their skills? C) whether this program helps participants improve their cultural competences? D) what other professional skills do participants self-identify as a need for transition to employment?

After every interview was conducted in the qualitative phase, I transcribed the voice recording as soon as possible. The voice recordings were played many times to ensure that the transcription was accurate. While transcribing interviews I took my personal notes. These notes would remind me of important information mentioned in the interviews. Data analysis of this phase started during transcription process. All the interview transcriptions were categorized according to interview questions. Themes were generated within each category. I then compared and summarized the core themes to generate a list of self-identified competencies through the co-curricular career development program to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to explore international students' experiences in the Professional Skills Development Program (PSDP) 2010 Fall semester and to determine their self-identified competencies through their participation in the program. Data analysis in this chapter includes descriptions of demographic profiles of students in two stages of the research, results of the survey, and results of the personal interviews.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Students in the Survey

Twenty-nine international students completed the PSDP program in 2010 Fall semester. Twenty-five students (86.2%) responded to the survey. Among the respondents there were nine female students (36%) and sixteen male students (64%). The international students came from 12 different countries. Their levels of study were doctoral, masters, and undergraduate students (see Table 1). More Chinese students than other nationalities participated in this program (see Table 2). This was partly because of the increase in the number of Chinese students enrolled in Memorial University in recent years.

Table 1

Level of study

Level of study	Number	Percentage
Doctoral	3	12%
Master	14	32%
Undergraduate	8	56%

Table 2

Nationality of students in the survey

Nationality	Number	Percentage
China	9	36%
Bangladesh	1	4%
Iran	2	8%
Malaysia	1	4%
Nigeria	2	8%
Turkey	2	8%
Spain	1	4%
Libya	1	4%
Pakistan	1	4%
Palestine	1	4%
Zimbabwe	1	4%
USA	1	4%
No Response	2	8%

4.2 Results of the Survey

Frequency analysis was conducted on the data of the survey. There results are analyzed in such categories as job search techniques, service learning and networking, confidence, overall rating of individual sessions, and future improvement of the PSDP program. The results of the survey are as follows.

4.2.1 Job Search Techniques

When asked if they had improved their job search knowledge and information, an overwhelming majority of students agreed that they experienced improvement in job search skills. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of students self-identified that they increased their job search knowledge and information. Ninety-two percent (92%) of students identified improvement in résumé and cover letter writing techniques. Eighty-four percent (84%) of students considered the PSDP helped them with interview skills through mock interviews and skills development (see Figure 1).

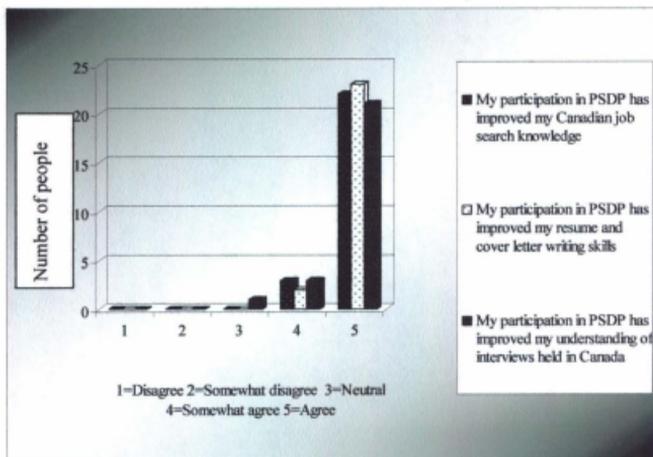


Figure 1 Job search techniques

4.2.2 Networking and Service Learning

In answer to whether participation in the networking sessions enhanced their networking skills, thirty-two percent (32%) somewhat agreed while sixty-eight percent (68%) agreed that there was improvement. Likewise, in response to whether their service learning experience helped them gain awareness of the importance of integration in the community, thirty-two percent (32%) somewhat agreed and sixty-eight percent (68%) agreed (see Figure 2). It will be interesting to explore why these thirty-two percent (32%) participants chose “somewhat agree”. Students may have different concepts of volunteering events, and they may have various purposes in mind when taking part in the networking events. Their narration of the experiences in these sessions may shed some light on it, which will be included in the qualitative stage of research.

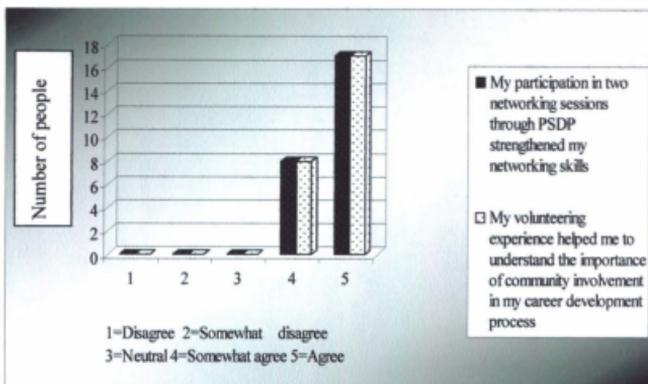


Figure 2 Service learning and networking

4.2.3 Confidence

In terms of confidence, three aspects were considered in the survey: confidence in interactions with professionals and employers; confidence in projecting a professional image; and confidence in dealing with people from different cultures. Eighty percent (80%) of students agreed they gained confidence in interactions with professionals and employers. The reason for this may be they learned some techniques from the mock interview session and networking session, such as what kinds of questions are asked in interviews and how to answer them. Or in the case of networking with potential employers perhaps they learned how to shake hands, how to keep eye contact, how to be dressed appropriately, and so on. The reasons will be better explained through personal experience of these students in the second stage of research. As for confidence in projecting a professional image, thirty-six percent

(36%) somewhat agreed that they gained confidence, while sixty-four percent (64%) agreed. Discrepancy appears when it comes to confidence in interactions with those from different cultures. Sixty-four percent (64%) of students agreed, twenty-four percent (24%) of students somewhat agreed, and twelve percent (12%) of participants chose “neutral” (see Figure 3). This may be because culture is a complicated notion, and it is very hard to teach a “one-fits-all” model of interacting with people from other cultures.

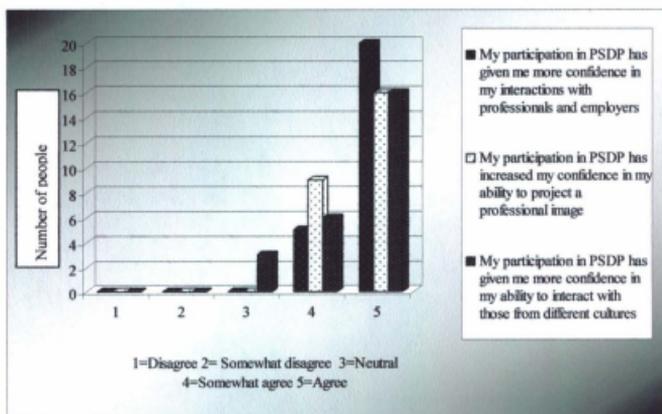


Figure 3 Confidence

4.2.4 Overall Rating of Individual Sessions

When asked to rate the different sessions of the program, most students expressed that they liked them. Only four percent (4%) of students disliked one networking event in which they participated in a career fair. Four percent (4%) of

students somewhat disliked the skill identification session. Some students chose neutral, which probably means they were not sure if they liked it or not (see Table 3). The results indicate that many students liked the job search sessions and résumé and cover letter writing sessions. This may be because they felt these two sessions are especially useful in looking for jobs—those are the solid skills they can immediately put into practice and identify the improvement.

Table 3

Overall rating of individual sessions

Individual sessions of the PSDP	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
Skill Identification Session	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%	8	32%	16	64%
Résumé and Cover Letter Writing Session	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	8	32%	17	68%
Job Search Session	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	8%	23	92%
Interview Skills Session	0	0%	0	0%	2	8%	8	32%	15	60%
Mock Interview	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	8	32%	16	64%
Intercultural Communication Session with Guest Speaker	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	11	44%	13	52%
Social Media in Job Search/Networking Session	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	8	32%	15	60%
Networking Opportunity---YMCA Career Fair/HR MUN	1	4%	0	0%	2	8%	6	24%	16	64%
Networking Opportunity--On Campus Networking Session	0	0%	0	0%	3	12%	6	24%	15	60%
Volunteer Opportunity	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	7	28%	17	68%

1=Dislike 2=Somewhat dislike 3=Neutral 4=Somewhat like 5=Like

N=Number P=Percentage

4.2.5 Future Improvements of the Program

When asked to make comments on future improvements of the program, seventeen students (68%) did not make any comments or suggestions on future improvements, while eight students (32%) responded and suggested that some

changes should be made to improve the PSDP. Of these eight responses, two students (25%) would like to see more mock interviews in the future. One student (12.5%) would like to have more networking opportunities. One student (12.5%) suggested setting a date convenient to everybody for such important events as networking so that they could all participate. One student (12.5%) commented there should be some limitations to enter the program. The student wrote: "perhaps some limitations to enter the program. It should be set as too many students in a session cannot reach a good point for all students to require what they need". One student (12.5%) would like more refreshments in every session. One comment (12.5%) was about providing internship opportunities for graduate students, while another one (12.5%) suggested having opportunities to visit companies off campus.

As far as overall skill improvement is concerned, eighty-eight percent (88%) chose agree and twelve percent (12%) of students somewhat agreed that their participation in the PSDP program helped them gain skills that will be valuable in future employment in Canada.

The survey results indicate an overwhelming majority of participating international students considered the PSDP program helped them improve their career-related skills. This lays the foundation of the qualitative research in which a richer description of what they experienced and how they improved their skills will be gained. Furthermore, the qualitative research will yield an understanding of

student-participants perspectives on their self-identified competencies through exploring their experiences in the program as well as their specific career development needs.

4.3 Demographic Profile of Participants in the Interviews

Sixteen students participated in the semi-structured interviews, among whom seven are female students and nine are male students, accounting for forty-four percent (44%) and fifty-six percent (56%) respectively. All participants are enrolled as fulltime international students at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Their ages range from 20 to 31 years old, with the average age of 25 years old. Some participants have stayed in Newfoundland for up to three years, while a few have been here for only six months. The average length of stay in Newfoundland is one year and ten months. Among all participants, there was one PhD candidate, five undergraduate students and ten master's students. Their levels of study are as illustrated in Figure 4.

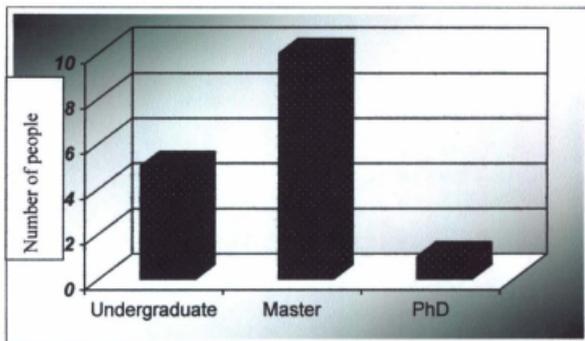


Figure 4 Participants' level of study

Of the sixteen participants, ten come from Asian countries, three are from European countries, and three come from African countries. Their nationalities are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Nationality of participants

Nationality	Number	Percentage
China	6	37.5%
Bangladesh	1	6.25%
Iran	1	6.25%
Malaysia	1	6.25%
Nigeria	2	6.25%
Turkey	2	12.5%
Spain	1	6.25%
Pakistan	1	6.25%
Zimbabwe	1	6.25%
Côte d'Ivoire	1	6.25%

Participants come from different faculties. Most are students with a science background. Only a few participants were studying Education or Business. Their

areas of study are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5

Participants' area of study

Area of study	Number	Percentage
Engineering	6	37.5%
Business	3	18.8%
Education	1	6.25%
Computer engineering	2	12.5%
Environmental engineering	1	6.25%
Chemistry	1	6.25%
Biology	2	12.5%

4.4 Results of the Interviews

In this study, the four research questions revolve around such aspects as job search techniques, networking and service learning, confidence and cultural adjustment, as well as international students' future career development needs. The semi-structured interview was designed to answer these research questions and to elaborate the results of the quantitative phase of the research. Analysis of the interview data will serve this purpose. Therefore, all interview data were categorized and analyzed according to the six interview questions. The six categories are 1) Job search techniques; 2) Networking; 3) Service learning; 4) Cultural adjustment; 5) Confidence in job search; 6) Future career-related needs. Different themes were generated within each category. The most important results of the interview study will be reported and discussed below.

4.4.1 Job Search Techniques

Job search techniques in the PSDP program covered such skills as résumé and cover letter writing, job search information and knowledge, and interview skills.

4.4.1.1 Résumé and Cover Letter Writing

When asked if they experienced any improvement in résumé and cover letter writing skills through the PSDP, all participants agreed that there was improvement in this regard. They learned how to write résumés and cover letters in the Canadian way and according to Canadian standards.

One participant said the emphasis of using “action words” was very helpful in résumé writing. Wendy told in detail that she learned what to include in the résumés, as well as how to organize and present them.

You prepare everything for that particular position. If you write whatever you want, whatever you have, whatever you did before, that doesn't benefit to their company or benefit to that specific position. They can't spend more than 5 minutes to search for those skills that are suitable for them. You would have to point out and bold it. And just give them key characters and key words to them and let them see that this person has the key points that I really want. Especially after this program, I know what I should put in the résumé—that just very clear and very condense.

With the help of the PSDP, many students rewrote their résumés and found a lot should be changed according to the Canadian standard. All participants reported that they found huge differences in résumé formats between Canada and their home

countries. Talking about the differences, Henry said:

I think I have gained a lot of improvement in the program, especially talking about making the CV and cover letters. Those are big things 'cause cover letters and CVs are totally different in my home country. And in Canada it's totally different. Just for example, we put up pictures and marital status on the CVs, but it's different here. They don't do it in Canada. Your marital status, like if you are married or not, you know it's important to put it on CV. In Canada you don't have to. I mean it's a negative thing if you do. So I learned a lot of things like this and the way your CV should be formatted, then writing cover letters should be included or not.

4.4.1.2 Job Search Information

All participants agreed they were equipped with a lot of information about job search, in terms of where to look for the information, where to begin, and what to begin with. Phoebe commented as follows:

I remembered clearly that I received an email and was told a website sponsored and funded by the Canadian government. When I logged in the website, with great surprise, I found that it provided almost all the companies with useful detailed information such as names of the companies, recruitment standard, positions offered and the contacts of HR. I think it's really useful. What's more, those companies are divided into different categories based on different trades. It also offers a comparison among companies in the same category.

Tom told how he learned to narrow down the scope of job search information as follows:

Because Canada is totally different from my home country, and I'm still a stranger since I'm not here long. I absolutely don't know where to begin and what to begin with. They told us from which websites we could narrow down the job search scope. At least I know where to begin to find a job.

Participants reported that in PSDP they were provided with many links to look for jobs, and they learned that social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter need to be professionalized for the purpose of job search. They also learned to use these social media to find job information and to market themselves. As Ryan said,

One session has to do with using the internet and social network. More Like LinkedIn, like Facebook, which people don't really know how to use it and positively when it comes to looking for jobs.

Participants also learned to sort out information from available opportunities. One participant said she learned that from volunteering experience she could also gain job information. Ben compared the differences of job sources in Canada with his home country as follows:

Like in my country you do not ask people for information of a job. You just go straight apply and ask for an interview. But we were told that in Canada it's important to have the important network. You tell people that you are looking for a job, if they are hiring, they might, like call you internally. The source is different, and also the methodology that you approach to get the job is different.

4.4.1.3 Interview Skills

None of the participants had taken any Canadian interviews before this program. Two participants (12.5%) said they tried to submit some résumés but never got a reply for an interview until they attended the PSDP and had their résumés revised according to the Canadian standard. All participants identified that they experienced some improvement in interview skills. They commented that the PSDP provided them with such information as to what interview questions would possibly be asked,

what qualities and skills that employers would be looking for in international students, what potential employers expected of international students, and they also learned a lot of terminology used in interviews. These are especially helpful and educative to international students, mainly because they are faced with language barriers when going through an interview. All participants agreed that mock interviews were especially helpful. When asked what skills they learned through interview sessions, participants identified that they learned a lot about the skill of answering the behavioral questions, how to approach to the answer, skills of impressing the interviewers, and non-verbal communication skills such as handshaking and keeping the eye contact. Yvonne commented as follows:

I was feeling really confident after the mock interview because I hadn't had any interviews before, especially in English.

Wendy talked about what she learned from the interview sessions as follows:

And also eye contact is very important and also be honest. Just don't say if you haven't done that before or you don't have that skills, employers will know. And just be honest. And prepare well, especially before you... if you apply for a job or a company, you should do some homework for that about their company, like their history, what kind of person they want to employ or hire. And that's my responsibility to get familiar with background, any information about the company I want to work in.

4.4.1.4 Overall Appraisal of Job Search Sessions

Participants reported that through the job search sessions they experienced changes in ideas, gained confidence in finding jobs, knew about their own

advantages as international students as well as skills they could offer to future employers, and gained awareness of the workplace differences between Canada and their home countries. Phoebe talked about her personal experience in the job search session as follows:

I think it helped me to change some of my ideas and concepts. At the very beginning, I have no idea on what should I do. It shows me a right way to seek a job. With their help, I get a basic idea of the westerners and which kind of people western companies prefer. Also, as an international student, what advantages I have in the job market, for example, language, cross-cultural awareness and so on. It's like we have one more technical skill.

What's more important is that participants also learned to broaden their career choices. They realized that with transferable skills, they can do anything they are interested in, instead of being restricted to their areas of study. As Wendy said:

I know that even I can't find job on campus or off campus, I also have lots of chances to volunteer. Through volunteer experience I can get job information too. Another difference is my job search area is not as narrow as I imagine. I'm a biology student. So if I want to find a job, I focus on biology companies or those pharmacies in at least do... like work as research assistant on campus in other lab for other supervisors. But after that program, I learned if you are a biology student, you don't have to focus your career direction on science. You have your own skills, like interpersonal communication skills and that very help, helpful. And also I like to communicate with others and I want to share information or any good ideas with others. So they will be helpful work as communicator or something. And also they advise me to... if I want to be a teacher, I can also, I just base on the interaction skills, communication skills. Yeah that's basically the big difference, especially for science students.

Participants also considered something needed to be done to improve the job search sessions. For example, international students need specific direction and guidance in terms of how to do certain things. As Ryan commented:

With time, a lot more should be done. We were given some social networking websites like LinkedIn, we were given how to search for employers through the internet, but I think a lot more has to be done in terms of knowing the specific jobs that needs the qualification and how to search for it... I think more emphasis should be laid on how to specifically do that and if possible more enlightenment has to be given to the students and the participants on how to use the link of the Career Development Department to look for jobs.

4.4.2 Networking

In the PSDP program, international students were offered several opportunities to network. One networking event was held in Memorial University. Representatives from different companies were invited to have lunch with the PSDP participants. Each student had about five to ten minutes to talk to the representatives, introduce themselves, and exchange emails or business cards. In this way they could establish contacts with these companies. The other two networking events were Career Fairs held in Memorial University and Holiday Inn respectively. Representatives from different companies and government agencies were present at both Career Fairs. International students had the opportunity to talk to professionals from companies and agencies, and handed in their résumés and cover letters. They could talk to people from various walks of life and learn how to establish contacts with them through personal experience.

4.4.2.1 Establishing Contacts for Transition to Employment

In networking sessions participants met with people from different sectors of industries. They learned how to meet with people, how to talk to them, how to

introduce themselves, and how to establish contacts with important people so as to make smooth transition from school to employment. As Adam said:

It was fun because I had the chance to practice my handshaking, introducing myself to someone outside the campus, because mostly I deal with people in the university. They were from outside the university, from industry. It's fun again meeting new people. I like meeting new people. I network like crazy now.

By talking to professionals in the companies, international students got to know their potential employers, the kind of employees that the companies are looking to recruit, the positions they offered, as well as functions of the companies. All these help international students to better prepare themselves in terms of transition to employment. Talking to these professionals also broadened students' views and gave them new perspectives. As Dan said:

For example, in one of them, a couple of people from different companies and organizations came to MUN and then we just start discussing about different thoughts and the different things that they do in order to hire people, so that was really kind of good view for us, new view for us to see what's going on here in Canada.

Networking sessions made participants realize the importance of establishing contacts with other people. These contacts may be able to help international students with transition to employment upon graduation. Nina commented as follows:

If you happen to know some people who can help you with your career, you can ask for their business cards, call them and they may be able to help you. It will be much better than go to the company without knowing anyone there.

4.4.2.2 Communication Skills and Interpersonal Skills

When asked what competencies they gained through networking sessions, fourteen participants (87.5%) said they improved their communication skills and interpersonal skills. Through personal experience in getting in contact with others, they learned how to talk to strangers, how to initiate a conversation, how to keep conversations going with strangers, and how to speak to other people from different places. Participants identified that these competencies were of great significance to them, because for international students, their language barrier and cultural backgrounds may hinder them from effective communication with others. As Jake said:

I learned how to be able to approach people, how to initiate good conversation relating to career and profession. That sounds simple for most people but it can be really challenging for others, especially in my case. I come from a culture which is very reserved, so just going out to someone and talking to him for me it was a good lesson.

More importantly, they learned how to talk to professionals and how to present themselves in a professional manner. Participants got to know the importance of communicating effectively with potential employers and to interact with professionals for better transition to employment and development of their future careers. As Jake said,

Because now I am able to start conversation with professional to discuss my career plans, tell them what exactly I'm looking for and they also tell me what they are looking for. So I'm able to see, navigate to go in the right way in terms

of my career path.

Apart from talking with professionals, participants had many opportunities to listen to and talk with other international students. In this way they developed awareness of cultural differences through networking. As Alison said:

So, we asked so many questions and that's one of the points, the positive points, about those sessions is that we ask so many questions as people coming from different backgrounds in order to understand how it was done here in Canada. This was really rich and knowing about different cultures too.

From talking with people from other cultures, participants were able to compare cultural differences and learned about non-verbal cues, which are very helpful in interpersonal skills. As Yvonne commented:

People from different cultures have different ways of communicating. For example, in some culture people avoid looking into eyes, and they don't want to have a handshake, maybe, or they speak more quietly or something like that I understand that can happen because of different cultures. It's just different communication styles. Yeah it's diversity.

Through networking sessions, some international students gained awareness of the importance of improving their communication skills in order to better adapt to Canadian culture and develop their careers. They felt that compared to their Canadian counterparts, international students had greater needs to improve communication skills if they wanted to develop their future careers in Canada. As Tom said:

Canadian students generally are better in communication skills, and foreign students are high in technical skills themselves, but they are not as good in communication skills. In Canada they emphasize and focus on communication,

the networking (connection) between/among offices. So in this way Canadian students have a better edge. So the requirement is that if you want to succeed, you need to improve communication/ networking, so as to adjust to the (Canadian) culture.

4.4.2.3 Networking's Influence on Future Career Development

Through networking opportunities participants learned from other people's experience, and got information and advice on their own future careers. One participant said through talking with a company which was recruiting international students, she knew what her future career options were. This kind of information is significant help to international students, because the sources of information come from experienced professionals who know what is going on within the industry. These professionals can offer specific guidance to international students and help them with transition to employment and their future career development. Ben talked about his experience of getting hidden information as follows:

I mean I get to know some companies, like we are new here, so we are necessarily know which company recruits you and who doesn't. Or what are the, like if you look at a company, like Radio Canada. Ok, at first glance you think "I can not get a job here, it's not relevant." But when you talk to them and then they will say "yes we need programmer". It's like, it's hidden inside. So once you talk with them, you sometimes find some possibilities that you can look upon later.

One component of the networking sessions was showing international students how to use social media to network and keep in contact with potential employers. These social networks also serve as alternatives for job search. Participants learned the importance of using these social networking websites. As Alison said:

One of the also very important points was to be aware of all the social networks that are going around, such as Facebook or Twitter or LinkedIn, all of those different things that are coming up over time because of the technology advances and things like that. They told us how to explore the resources, how to make our Facebook page more adaptable or in that sense more adapted to job search too, how we can look for people in our profile, how would add people from company and actually look for different pages in there that actually linked to the company. So they actually told us alternative ways of job search and not just the traditional ones of just sending a letter or an email, but actually to be in contact with those people, and to also be careful of showing too much of our personal life in those networks, right? So I think it was good that they put that in our space because most of the time that we see all those networks, people think just to make friends. But it is such a powerful way to interact with company as well. I actually didn't know that and it was pretty useful.

Participants also identified the importance of professionalizing their social networking websites in order to better market and present themselves to potential employers. Ben found the differences in Canada and his home country as follows:

It is changes like it issues some practice to talking with professionals, and like to present yourself. That is important, because that is another difference from my country and Canada. In my country you don't advertise yourself. There is a job posting, you apply for it, if they like what they see on paper, they will call you. But here you need to like, show yourself that you are, like you stand out among others. So that is something I think. Sometimes they say they watch you by Facebook, so you should professionalize your everything. Like there's something when an employer gets a résumé, he searches his (applicant) name in the internet and see what is there. So it is important that you have good profile on Google. If your name is searched, something good comes here.

4.4.2.4 Cultural Differences in the Workplace

Participants were able to identify many cultural differences between Canadian workplace and those in their home countries. Adam told his personal experience in the following:

Networking in my country is not important. You need to know someone in the company to get the interview and you know, you... like...mostly family relations. If you know someone related to you in the company or the government. It's easier to know people to get the job. But here, you do your own networking.

Participants also reported that they learned about workplace etiquette. They identified that knowing the cultural differences, learning how to interact with people and how to respect other people's values are considered very important in the workplace. As Dan said:

They also provide some information about the working etiquette and also we learn that how we should act in multicultural work environment in Canada. Because you know, many people come here, and Canada is kind of multicultural work area. And when you just contact with different people with different backgrounds, how should we interact and how should we just respect or how should we just eliminate the misunderstandings, so in terms of those stuff, they provided very good information.

4.4.2.5 Overall Appraisal of Networking Sessions

All participants considered the networking sessions important and helpful in terms of transition to employment. They all thought the concept of networking was very good. One participant commented that the PSDP offered opportunities for university students to learn about the whole process of looking for jobs and networking. The idea of condensing the process into several sessions helps international students in terms of better preparing themselves for transition to employment. As Alison said:

But also they brought us closer a concept that is usually taken once you graduate and you actually like present to it like "boom", like so fast. So, they

brought this whole complicated process to the students of the university, in order to kind of chew it up, and actually prepare us with time. So, I'd say that's the important part. That's what I like the most, the fact that they put such a lot of information into different steps and they showed us really close.

Three participants (18.8%) thought there should be more networking opportunities, and more time should be allocated to each session so that every international student was able to present themselves and to impress potential employers. As Wendy said:

Like the people from different companies sit at different tables and students have only 5 or 10 minutes to introduce themselves to different companies and exchange those business cards or information. That's not enough for that company to know well about this person and about how was his skill. Because there may be 3 people from different...from each company sitting at the table. And there are more than 6 students sitting around the table. So there is not every student to get the chance to talk to those people from that company.... And if you don't have enough time to communicate with them, they will forget. They don't even remember your name. And even I spent the whole 5 minutes to talk to them, they don't even remember my name.

Four participants (25%) expressed their needs to establish contacts with professionals within their areas of study. As Ben said:

The concept is good, but I found that there are not many opportunities to connect, like I know about engineering and there were only a few related to oil and gas engineering. But nothing... I can tell nothing, around computer engineering or electric engineering. So it was like one-sided, the networking. The idea is good, but if there were more companies involved, then it'd be better.

Six students (37.5%) expressed their needs for more detailed and specific guidance on what they should do to effectively network with professionals and potential employers. They realized the significance of networking, but they lacked

in-depth know-how in each step. Henry talked about his experience as follows:

I liked it a lot, but I don't think I really learned anything out of it. 'Cause it was more of a fun thing you know. We got together, we went to a job thing, a job fair, we went to different desks, collected pens and stuff... but yeah, I personally met a couple of people there you know, talking about jobs, asking for a couple of information. That was a good part. Other than that, I think if people could guide us of how to and where to go, say I'm a business student, so they can kind of tell us "ok you should go to this this this stall, and ask them about this this this thing". You know, guide us a little bit more; that would be a better thing.

Henry also talked about his questions concerning why they went to the career fairs and how they needed more direction. He said:

You know just going here and there, 'cause everyone went to exhibition, like "ok we don't have any jobs, but you can put in your CV". So I then kind of get the idea of "why were they there", you know, "why was the job for there to set up if you didn't have any jobs to offer." So that was kind of frustrating.

Due to language problems participants also encounter difficulties in what to say in networking events. This echoed international students' needs for specific techniques in terms of networking with professionals and potential employers. Like Nina said:

However, we don't have many opportunities to get to know people like that and talk with them. I think the language is the biggest barrier for us since I don't know what to talk about with them. The language barrier may limit our questions to things like "what does your company produce?" And they may answer us with terms or specific things that we don't understand. If this happens, we can't go on with the talk.

One participant thought a monitoring system would help in guiding international students in the networking events. By monitoring system he meant that during

networking events, attention should be given to and measures should be taken to ensure that participating international students focused only on the networking activities. Ryan commented as follows:

For networking, what I understand was, we had three networking events. We were taken to those events, and in those events you are expected to go and to speak to the representatives of the companies, and all that...so although we had been told of what to see and how to do that, but we were left with on our own while we were there, and a lot of people just went ahead doing something else, instead of doing what they went to do. So, there needs to be some kind of monitoring even if it's a body language to be telling the participant what to do rather than just be focusing and concentrating on how to get gifts, play around and do other stuffs.

Many international students, Asian students in particular, are very used to teacher-centered learning experience. They expect to be told step by step in doing things. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find they are somewhat frustrated in not being shown specific steps and techniques in networking. This special cultural context requires that career counsellors be culturally competent, explore the special needs of international students, and take a cultural approach in career counselling.

4.4.3 Service Learning

In the PSDP program, participating international students were offered many opportunities to volunteer. They could choose to volunteer at the St. John's Farmer's Market, I love MUNDays, Make Midterm Matter, Let's Talk Science, Flag Parade, as well as numerous volunteering opportunities that Memorial University had to offer. They were required to complete two sessions of volunteering in order to

complete the PSDP program.

4.4.3.1 Changes in Attitudes toward Service Learning

One interesting fact reported by participants was that except for one student, all the other fifteen international students (94%) had never done any volunteering work in their home countries. These participants said they experienced significant changes in concepts and attitudes toward volunteering. Through the PSDP program they learned the importance of volunteering. They learned that volunteering plays significant roles in the labor market. Henry talked about the change of concept like this:

The thing is we in our country are not used to volunteering at all, so we don't have the concept. Like I would say it's a waste of time before I came here. But now I'd say it's the best thing to do—you learn, and it forms the basis for you to find a good job, and you know, a lot of things. People appreciate it a lot; you make your networks, so it helps you in a lot of ways.

Two participants (12.5%) said after doing volunteering work they realized it was so important to do things for the community, and to give back to the community. They said it was rewarding to feel that they were doing something for the community and for people around them. This was a big change for them in concepts. As Adam said:

I definitely think (so), because I never, like, had the idea of giving back to the community but here it's really important. Everyone cares about it. Now I care about that and I want to do something to the community. So I really enjoy doing it.

Through volunteer experience participants also realized the importance of integrating into the community. Community involvement made them go out of the classroom and into the real world. As Lorry said:

It gives me awareness about the importance of volunteer work and it just not about studying. You have to participate in the community. It is a good thing. I know they value a person who has done a lot of volunteer work. We can get into the community. We can learn many things in the community, how they do things, how do they work things.

Volunteering and integrating into the community also provide international students with the opportunity to get in contact with different people and learn from them. This will also help international students with their transition to employment.

As Ben said:

That is the whole point I think, for PSDP, because everyone thinks differently and they are from different cultures. So getting to know the community the best is the most efficient way, for you to get a job. If you stay secluded and then expect that "I have a degree. Now I have got a job". It's not gonna happen.

One participant said he realized that volunteering and integrating into the community helped him understand and adapt to the local culture. Like Jake said:

Like it's important for me to integrate so than I'm able to understand the culture here, the work ethics, so you are comfortable and that when you look for work or when you work with people you know what's expected of you and what they expect of you, which is good.

4.4.3.2 Competencies Gained through Service Learning

Participants identified different competencies gained from volunteering sessions,

among which the one they referred to most was communication skills. Five participants (31%) said they improved their communication skills and interpersonal skills such as how to talk to others, how to better listen to others, understand each others, how to get understood, and so on. Effective communication is essential in volunteering because students need to know what they should do, how they should do it, and what they should not do. Wendy talked in detail about her experience as follows:

As a leader, I need to communicate with the peers with me which are both leaders. And we have rules, we can't be rude. Or you know, you are the leader, you look down upon others, that no way. As a leader, I also need to communicate with the members that I lead in my team, and because they are different persons with different cultural backgrounds, so I need to communicate well and make sure they are well understood and I'm understood and they understood each other.

Four participants (25%) identified that they learned teamwork skills through volunteering. This has to do with interacting and cooperating with other people, and working effectively with others in order to accomplish the task. For Phoebe, it was her first time to cooperate with domestic students. She found it very interesting to get in contact with and talk to Canadian students. Alison found interacting with the public and with other international students a good experience for her. She talked as follows:

From that one, it was mostly learning how to interact with people, with the public per se, but also interacting with the rest of the volunteers over there, and working in a hierarchical way 'cause it's one person in charge of this whole marketing thing, the person who organized it, learning how to work under them in that sense and yeah basically it.

Volunteering also gave international students the opportunity to learn from other people's experience and their skills. As Jake said:

When you volunteer, you are not only going to do a job that you normally would do or are trained for, so whatever you are, you tend to... you learn some skill that is not normally within your career path. Which is good 'cause it's not just good to just be focused on yourself and what you need to do, but by helping others you also learn to do what they are doing and understand their skills.

One participant said he gained valuable experience and learned about problem-solving through volunteering. As Mark said:

I should talk to them first, and I think it improved my interpersonal skills and I know how to talk to them, how to solve problem when they happen. They may happen actually. And as a volunteer I should be like hard working, warm-hearted and help some old people to move some stuff actually. So I think the most important thing I learn from this session is that I know I'm familiar with the volunteer work here. It's kind of gaining experience because I have no working experience here, so I think do more volunteer work can help me learning quickly.

Wendy also said she gained multitasking skills through volunteering.

Multitask skills, 'causes you know, when you work as a volunteer, you can't just focus on your position, sometimes they need your help. If I talk with you, I can't focus on my own stuff, and then I never done my stuff. So I need to multitask skills, and that's very important.

4.4.3.3 Influence of Service Learning on Transition to Employment

Participants unanimously agreed that they learned through the PSDP that volunteering played a significant role in the job market. All participants reported they learned that volunteer experience was extremely important on their résumés and

will enhance their résumés. Like Dan said:

That was kind of new experience for me, because that was the first time that I was working with Canadian people. But that was a so tough job that I was doing some simple stuff but you know when you feel that you are doing some volunteer job, it affects you mentally and also it's said that it's very good for your résumé and CV, right? So in terms of that, that was good.

Some participants did not have any work experience before they came to Canada, while some participants had work experience back home but did not have any Canadian work experience. When they are at school, international students may not have the opportunity to work in their fields of study. Volunteering would help them gain valuable experience in Canadian work environments, which will in turn help them with their transition to employment. Like Ben said:

Another thing that I learnt here is if I wanna find a job, volunteer job is considered as a real job here in Canada. But in my home, it's not like that. So that was really really good policy which is going on here in Canada. So if, you know, your potential employer in the future, if they see your résumé, and they see ok, this guy has an volunteer work experience and he was in contact with a Canadian work atmosphere, so that would be really good.

Participants also realized that through volunteering experience they had the opportunity to extend their social networks by meeting different people. Like Jake said:

Well, for me I never thought of volunteer work really important but now I realize it's a really important part of professional growth because you realize at the end of the day it's not just about you, it's about everyone around you, the society as a whole. Sometimes you need to volunteer and the good thing is that when you volunteer, you actually meet people; also you get to talk to them. That's also networking.

4.4.3.4 Overall Appraisal of Service Learning Sessions

All participants recognized that volunteering was very important, both in terms of enhancing their résumés, gaining valuable work experience, extending social networks, and in terms of community involvement. No participants thought it was a waste of time, but they expressed that they would give priority to volunteer work within their fields of study. As Adam said:

I wanted to do some volunteer relative to my area. I didn't do Farmer's Market because I don't think it's gonna... of course it's fun to me, it's new people and I'm volunteering, but I want to do some volunteering in my areas—science. Find the volunteer position for yourself that fits your career.

On the other hand, three participants (18.8%) said they did not mind volunteering in areas other than their fields of study. They thought as long as they volunteer, they would benefit from the experience. Volunteering does not have to be related to their fields of study, therefore they would like to have more sessions involving volunteering. As Henry said:

I think volunteering definitely helps you a lot. It doesn't matter where you volunteer. (It) definitely helps you a lot, especially in the Canadian market. And this is something we learned from the PSDP that no matter what, if you're not volunteering, you will kind of not get a good job you know. That is where you learn to work in a Canadian environment. And they emphasize on it a lot. I'd say if this program probably if they put in more volunteering, 'cause it's just like one day or two days, they put in more that would be a good thing. Like say, one day...one hour a week. Something like that. If it's a continuous thing you'd learn more.

4.4.4 Cultural Adjustment

In the PSDP program, one session was held on cross-cultural communication with a guest speaker talking about multicultural contexts in the workplace and the workplace etiquette. In the interviews of this study, this question was to explore whether participants gained any cultural competence through the PSDP program, whether they developed any cultural awareness through different activities, and what they thought they needed to do in order better adjust to Canadian culture.

4.4.4.1 Cultural Competences

All participants identified that they developed awareness of the cultural differences between Canada and their home countries. The awareness was gained through the speech in cross-cultural communication, and also through interacting with people in networking and volunteering sessions. For example, Adam was able to compare cultural differences in an academic environment between Canada and his home country. He talked about directness and indirectness in discourses, and that they were very much used to being told specifically what to do. Adam commented as follows:

Because North American culture is more direct than my culture. So when they say something to me directly, I used to feel that way like "oh, this is rude like saying it this way". In my culture and most eastern cultures I think it will be that. But it is indirect, like you imply things and you try to know, but won't hurt people' feelings. And Canadians are not hurt my feelings, they are just being direct. This is their culture and I think I got over that too. I don't feel upset when

someone says something like this to me. In my home country, even for the university, your boss is your boss. My supervisor is my supervisor, and I need to do whatever he says and he explains to me every step like, you need to do this, put this there, and have this result... but here my supervisor just say you need to do this, you need to do your own research, you have to do it, you need to get it done. I am not used to it, like, I need to know every step like I want to know everything, do this, do this and I have this, but this is not happening. No. I need to do by myself. I keep procrastinating.

Another participant Tom told about his experience and his awareness of cultural differences between Canada and the U.S. Tom said:

I think Canada is a little different from U.S. The U.S. is very inclusive and a melting pot in which all cultures can be absorbed. Different cultures can exist together. You can have your own culture, but in a larger system all cultures exist together. In Canada, you don't have to accept their culture; you can have your own culture. But when dealing with them you still need to do things in the Canadian way. This is the tricky part.

Ryan found compared to his own culture, Canadian culture was simpler and there was less sense of superiority and seniority. He found this made it easier in terms of job search and career development. He said:

I think it's simpler in the sense that you find it easier to walk up to anybody regardless of their position and you talk to them. You can be a part of their network, social networks websites like LinkedIn and others. Like it's easier to communicate with them regardless of their positions in the corporation or the company, which I find a lot more easier and useful for a potential job seekers.

Jake talked about how he gained more information about cultural differences and thus developed cultural awareness.

I think I am more informed. I'm now better informed of Canadian culture you know, how it is, what is expected from you. You know, like whenever we learn about a new culture you always compare it to your old culture, the one you grew up. The differences are the most important. You want to know how it is

different from your culture. I know here I can speak what I like. I can express myself freely. I don't have to worry about age. In my country it's different. If someone is older than me, it's very difficult for me to say exactly what I want to say.

Alison said she gained confidence in dealing with cultural issues, especially when dealing with her superiors, now that she knew about the cultural differences.

She said:

I've learnt a lot of confidence. I'm confident when I deal with someone who is in a high position in a company or in a high position in the department. I was taught tips and ways to always be respectful for the people, but show a little bit of your own personality so they get to know you a little bit better. And that's one of the most applicable things too. And then also to know how to write letters, like proposal letters, discover the objective of the position that you interested in and then put that in your résumé; give that with your references.

When asked if they gained any cultural competences through PSDP, many participants talked about skills they learned from the multicultural speech, which was about workplace etiquette and differences among cultures. Through the discussion participants learned the differences in Canadian employers' expectations of their employees. As Lorry said:

I remember that I heard from a speech from the one that I have talked about...He talks about multicultural in the workplace where different, where employers, Canadian employers, they expect the employees to be able to meet Canadian standard at workplace such as...he gives examples like, Canadian employers, like in Canadian workplace, they are quite flexible, like we are from Asian country, our employers should told us what need to do to achieve this one and that one, and for here, it is in a bit different way, you are flexible, but at the same time they want you to achieve the goal they want.

Dan described his experience in how the workshop helped him learn how to deal

with other international students in avoiding misunderstandings. He said:

Well, in that program they just provide some information about the different culture which, you know, when they get mixed together, how should kind of behave, and how should they do to understand each other more, but besides that, as a graduate student, I am contacting with many other international students with different cultures, with different backgrounds and that's a kind of very big sessions for me, very big learning sessions. How I should work with people with different cultures, but after describing the main differences, for example, in different cultures, during the program I realized that for example, if I do this way, then misunderstanding won't happen or if I do that way, misunderstanding will happen. So after that I am just trying to react to other people with different cultures, actions, so such kind of really bad contacts won't happen in the future.

4.4.4.2 Adapting to Canadian Culture

When asked what they needed to do in order to better adapt to Canadian culture, participants' answers varied. Two participants (12.5%) did not know what to say. They seemed to have no idea what they needed to adapt to the culture. Two participants (12.5%) said they needed to overcome the language barrier. Phoebe described her efforts to conquer the language problem and get on better terms with other Canadian students.

I realized that if you want to keep a good relationship with others, you should never ignore their hint to talk. I determined to make a change starting right from my boyfriend's roommates. They are really nice. I was unwilling to talk to them at first. And when they talk to me, I replied with just several words. One of them was a Korean. As we were both from Asia, we shared some common values. However, he was able to get on with those Canadians very well, which not only because he could dance hip-hop, but he took initiative in talking with domestic students. Since then, we got rid of the thoughts of losing face and became pretty close to those students. Of course, we made a lot of mistakes, but sometimes, they also made some ungrammatical mistakes as we did. Finally, I felt free when I was staying with them.

Participants also realized that they need to socialize with Canadians, communicate with them, get involved in many activities, and experience the culture in order to adapt to it. Isolation from the community or staying only with their own colony of immigrants wouldn't help international students adapt to Canadian culture.

As Henry said:

Like talk to people. That made me learn a lot. But as compared to some other students who just live in their rooms I would say it must be very difficult. 'Cause it's a huge cultural difference, especially when you talk about Newfoundland. People here are not used to diversity; they don't really socialize with international people, or.... Maybe just a personal experience, I would say this. You can not learn a culture by reading a book or reading it off internet. You have to experience it to learn it. So yeah this should be more emphasized you know. The cultural training would be more involved in this program I guess.

Ben talked about his experience and said for him to adapt to the culture, he needed social involvement, getting to know more people, and immersing in the Canadian culture to experience the differences.

So the more important thing is that you talk with them, you be with them, spend time with them, then you get to know. Yeah. I mean theoretically some can tell you there will be cultural difference, but as long as you don't experience it yourself, you won't feel that.

Tom found he needed to know about the differences in thinking styles in order to better adapt to Canadian culture.

Another thing is to think in local people's way, because eastern people and western people are totally different in their thinking styles. I can't tell exactly what the differences are. Anyway when they think, the first thing they think about is different. Although some things have been explained by teachers in class, and we understood them all, but when you communicate with domestic students you'll find they discuss a totally different point from yours. They also

value different things. About this, to me, it's difficult to figure out how and why there is such a difference. It will take me some time to work this out.

Fay found in the process of adapting to the culture, it's important to keep her own judgment about what she should do and what she should not do. For her, adapting to the culture does not mean following suit without considering her own situations. Fay said:

Be yourself first. Just follow the things that I'd say you think is normal. Don't just do stuff because you want adjust so much, like here, partying all the weekends. If you don't feel like doing some things, you don't have to. I think just be yourself and follow the different rules. Meet other people, like meet Canadians. From them, from those people you can learn more about the culture.

Like Fay, Lorry thought it was important to keep her cultural identity when adjusting to Canadian culture.

I am being myself. I mean it not the way I adjust myself in Canadian culture but I think it is like two-way kind of understanding about the differences. Because it is...it's not, it's two-way kind of thing. It also emphasize about multicultural thing in workplace, about how do they value the culture.

Ryan thought he needed to understand people better in order to know how to deal with them. What he needed was knowledge of different cultural practices, and some cross-cultural skills and interpersonal skills.

I think personally what I need more is to understand the people better, and to be able to bridge the gap between the culture. Obviously there are lots of differences from my culture and the Canadian culture. I find Canadian culture a lot simpler. Although in terms of job search and networking I think I need to improve on the follow-up, when I talk to people and how to follow up with them... and I also need to know how to prompt people from there. How to prompt people when I send email or when we meet someone, how to get response from them. 'Cause I feel when I contact people I don't contact them

all the way again if I don't hear from them. And this is one of the things that we were taught, that the culture here and in getting a job here you need to keep keeping in touch with the prospective employer.

4.4.4.3 Overall Appraisal

Four participants (25%) thought that one session on cross-cultural communications was not enough. They would like to have more sessions on cultural adjustment issues. Like in networking sessions, participants considered it important to have more specific guidance on what to do to adapt to the culture. Ben said one session gave him some awareness of cultural differences, but it did not give him the detailed implementation of cross-cultural skills. This is what he thought needed to be done. Yvonne said more events and more opportunities would be better in helping them. Ryan commented as follows:

What I mean is a single session might not be enough to be able to pass on the information to people from different backgrounds, and expect them to carry that on from school to their workplace. Maybe one or two more sessions on that particular topic will be a constant reminder and a good topic to talk on. I think there should be more. It should extend through the duration of the semester. Since it's something you do only once throughout your stay at MUN, so it should be long enough for you to have the whole feel of the program to achieve the main objective of it.

Mark said more cultural programs in teaching them specific steps to deal with cultural issues would benefit them a lot in adapt to the Canadian culture.

Cultural program, like teach us some different special cultures that are like total different than my own culture, you know. And we can learn from the culture and learn what we can do to adapt to this culture. So I think just like offer, provide us some details information about culture which like totally different, so we can know it well and know how to address some problems maybe.

4.4.5 Confidence in Job Search

In the interviews, participants were asked if they gained any confidence in looking for jobs after participating in the PSDP, as well as what they needed in order to have more confidence in seeking employment. Fourteen participants (87.5%) said they gained confidence in job search, although they varied in the extent of how much confidence they gained. Three participants (18.8%) said they gained a lot of confidence, two participants (12.5%) said they gained a bit, and others were somewhere in between. When asked to put their confidence on a scale of one to ten and where they had been on the scale before the program versus where they were after that, the average was 4.8 before the PSDP and 8.3 after their participation in the program. This was a significant improvement in confidence in job search.

4.4.5.1 Gaining in Confidence

Thirteen participants (81.3%) said they had more confidence in looking for jobs because now they were equipped with techniques in writing good résumés and cover letters, techniques in conducting a Canadian interview, lots of information about where to look for jobs, and how they can network to help job search. Two participants (12.5%) said they were confident because they knew the hidden job resources. Dan said this program brought him self-confidence in terms of how to search jobs and how he should approach finding a job. Adam talked about the importance of networking in helping the job search process as follows:

Eighty percent of jobs are hidden. They are not listed for you, anywhere or somewhere. You need to go find them. You need to know people, especially you should be networking. I think it is the biggest part of job search. You have to network; you need to let people know that you are looking for a job. Since they are working inside of the industry they could be aware of the positions not posted online or wherever they post that. It's good to have connections, even though I don't have enough connections, I'm just trying to make connections. But I believe with this program I got the idea of how important knowing people.

Three participants (18.8%) identified they gained confidence because the PSDP helped improve their communication skills and interpersonal skills. Lorry said this helped her personal growth. She said:

I was an introvert person before; I didn't really talk much and this program somehow Uh...increase my communication skill, my confidence, especially my personal growth. And this program really helped me to build up my confidence, and I feel more confident in my job search, and I hope that during the interview, I will be more confident in the interview in job search later on in the future.

Ryan said the communication skills he learned through the PSDP gave him lot of confidence in dealing with other people. He was now more willing to interact with others.

I mean I have more confidence even interacting with people and meeting people. Personally I think it has even helped me in my research. So I have confidence to talk to people, to walk up to them, to get what I want without feeling reluctant to do so.

Yvonne reported that from every step in the PSDP she learned a lot and gained a lot of confidence.

It makes so much difference for me. Starting from the job search, and preparing a résumé and cover letter, and going and talking to people introducing myself, and having an interview, yeah in every step I can feel the difference. I can feel more confident and better about everything.

The two participants who did not identify any gain in confidence also talked about the reasons. One participant had an unpleasant experience in one volunteering session, and she felt very humiliated. The other participant Nina said she did not gain confidence in looking for jobs because she felt there was something wrong with her academic program. Nina commented as follows:

It's that I find many weaknesses in myself, such as lack of proficiency in language and the defects of my academic program. What we learn is not very technical but something about management. But we feel at loss because we don't learn anything very technical, meanwhile we aren't qualified for management work. In is not only because of the defects of the program but also due to weakness in myself.

The difference in the extent of confidence has a lot to do with participants' personal experience and their academic background. For example, looking for jobs in St. John's is a little difficult for some academic programs because of the job market. Participants' personality may have something to do with their confidence. The language barrier may also hinder them from gaining confidence because they could not communicate effectively with others even if they wanted to do so.

4.4.5.2 Participants' Needs to Be More Confident

Five participants (31.3%) said in order to have more confidence in job search, they would like to have more sessions of the PSDP, including more networking sessions and more networking opportunities between students and their potential employers; more volunteering sessions to gain more Canadian work experience;

special sessions on Canadian workplace culture and work ethics, and so on.

Ryan and two other participants would like to have more sessions related to their fields of study.

Maybe organize a special session, which doesn't have necessarily to be PSDP program. Maybe like two sessions, like special training, like weekend program, for People are willing to know more about how to search for jobs in Canada in that regard. That is related to their fields, and the workplace etiquettes and procedures. And I'm sure people will turn up.

Alison thought some refreshing sessions as reminders would help international students.

So one of the ways to keep it up in our confidence, I think, it would be to either have refreshing sessions of PSDP to remind us of that, or having... come back to all the sessions again all together and to kind of update us on what's new in the field 'cause all this information, all those resources are gonna update sometime, right? So I think it would be good to keep it up to not only offer in this program and I'm not asking to redo this program again because it's long. But to kind of having updating sessions every x-number of weeks, for example, but to actually do a networking session again where everyone could fit in. I think it will be very beneficial.

Nina suggested that a mentoring program for students in their areas of study would provide good guidance to international students in terms of the transition to employment.

I think there should be a mentor for international students to help guide them. Because in PSDP what they taught was something general and we can all do it. I think we need someone who specializes in engineering, who knows how many oil and gas companies in St. John's. I hope we can have some contact with him so as to provide us with some links. If we search for a position, his instruction would be useful. Of course, we don't expect him to be very specialized, but he should be able to offer us the general direction. He should be like a mentor or a

something like a legal counsellor. The students can book an appointment once during the program and after it he gives the instructions on the general direction. This doesn't need too much time, but it is very effective.

Phoebe thought it was important to customize the program to make it more suitable for international students who have different situations than others.

I hope they can customize the program for us. Unlike many other students from China and Iran in PSDP who are either graduate students or senior students, who have been staying here for a long time, we just came here. They had a clear aim and emergent need to find a job. For us, things are different. We only came here to learn something. It's just an opportunity for us and we just gave it a try. I hope they won't have the same requirement and standard as they do to others. Sometimes we can't accomplish that.

Ted said international students needed to establish their own advantages in order to compete with their Canadian counterparts in the job market.

I have confidence to look for a job, but I still think it's hard for me to find a paid job here. I do not mean the general job. I mean the profession jobs. Because they (Canadian students) may get better communication skills, they can write better résumés and cover letters than us. So we need to discover ourselves something special to build the...I think ... to build our parts of... can show we are special. That's quite hard.

Two participants (12.5%) said the Career Development and Experiential Learning needed to promote and advertise the PSDP and Career Fairs so that students realize the significance of the program and know the importance of attending to the Career Fairs.

Wendy said that the PSDP should inform students of their transferrable skills and encourage them to broaden their scope of looking for jobs. In this way students

could gain more confidence in seeking employment. She also suggested that the PSDP branch out in order to better serve international students in terms of their fields of study. Wendy said:

We have career fair twice a year or once. If they want students more confident, or participate in the career fair events, they should tell them just like what I've said. Even you are a scientist; you have a lot of important skills that the business company also wants, they should emphasize on that part. I think it is very important to let students know that scientists also can do art work, that's very important. And another thing is, some program like PSDP, I know it is a new program, and if they have some branches, for example, this whole PSDP program is for every student. If they have branches for different departments, for science, art or business, they have more focus on them and each branch they have their own group, they have, research assistant, instructor in a group of students. That will be so much easier. Because they focus on their own, student go to that branch just for the information they need.

4.4.6 Needs for Future Career Development

The last question in the interview was to explore what other career-related needs that international students identified after they experienced the PSDP program. All participants were asked whether they had looked for any jobs before, and what kind of difficulties they had encountered in looking for the jobs. Then all participants were asked what difficulties they thought they would encounter in the future when seeking employment in Canada, specifically in Newfoundland and Labrador. As the last question, participants were asked what they thought Career Development and Experiential Learning and Memorial University could do for them to fulfill their career-related needs.

4.4.6.1 Difficulties in Seeking Employment

Results of the interviews showed that nine participants (56.3%) reported they had not encountered any difficulties in looking for jobs. Of these nine participants, three said they had not encountered any difficulties because they never looked for any real jobs. The other six participants looked for part-time jobs on campus and found it was not especially challenging to do so. Of the six participants, four students said they were working as Graduate Assistants or Teaching Assistants. Those were jobs offered by their academic departments. The other two were working part-time in the language lab or another department teaching foreign languages.

Seven participants (43.7%) reported that they were faced with difficulties in seeking employment. There were various reasons for the difficulties they had encountered. Of the seven participants, three said they did not get any replies for interviews because they used the wrong résumé format. They found the résumés in their home countries did not work here in Canada. Two other participants reported that they failed to get any jobs because of their communication skills and misunderstandings that resulted. They also mentioned that lack of Canadian work experience was one of the reasons for the difficulties. The other two participants found the difficulties lay in the job market for their fields of study; they could not find any jobs that were suitable for their areas of study in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In answer to the question about the difficulties they thought they would encounter when looking for jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador, eight participants (50%) identified that language barrier was the biggest one that they were concerned about. Participants found the Newfoundland accent and dialect made communication difficult, especially when they wanted to have effective communication and interactions with people in the workplace. Since English is not the native language for most international students and some students are still not proficient in English, their actual meaning in the discourse can not be fully reached. Then misinterpretation and misunderstanding may result and subsequently hinder effective communication.

Four participants (25%) thought Newfoundland and Labrador cultural barriers would be one of the difficulties for them. Like Adam said:

I'm actually kind of afraid of Newfoundland because there's accent, because some people they have accent. And sometimes... I don't have any big issues with like problems of diversity but some people are just too...they are not very open to different cultures. I feel that they don't do or say anything mean, but... I don't know. You know, it's not just language; it's culture. Language is culture. To communicate, it is not just the verbs and grammar. And it takes time to adapt. And I'm trying to improve my communication skills in terms of language too. That's how I am trying to deal with like talking to native Newfoundlanders and trying to get their language.

Henry also talked about the cultural barrier and the disadvantage as an international student.

A lot of people say international students are preferred by looking for a job, but I think in a place, in a city like this, it would be a negative thing to be an international student looking for a job. So that is probably the main reason why

most international students just want to go to a bigger city where there are normal people you know. Like I'm not saying people are racist or anything here but definitely there are still cultural barrier. Yeah a big problem.

Wendy found it difficult to understand the different thinking styles based on diverse cultural backgrounds. To her, the difficulty could not be eliminated all at once because they were rooted in the differences in cultures.

Sometimes it is very difficult for them to understand us, or for me to understand others. For example, I sent those e-mails to tell them, to inform the members of students, when you should be the farmers market as a volunteer, and some students just like local people, if they don't have time to go there, they will tell me at least one day earlier to try to figure out by their own, like is there any shift I can do? But for other countries' students, if they just don't have time, they tell me on that day, and I have no backup students to go. So I think that's kind of different when they face the problem, and maybe that's the difficulty for me if I face the problem work in the future when I work in the company.

Some practices are widely used in the Canadian workplace. These practices may cause difficulties if international students are not accustomed to the practices or if they never know the practices at all. According to Lorry, presentation and public speaking was one good example of the difficulties she had.

Like uh... about my presentation skills. I think the workplace here they emphasize more on presenting their findings which I don't really have much skill in that. So I think it's gonna be a little bit difficult for me to express myself, to speak in front of people, to do presentation, Yeah, I think it's gonna be my difficulty in the workplace here. It was different, because back home we didn't do so much on presenting our findings, we didn't do so much presentation thing. But I think here they do a lot of presentation.

Another difficulty for transition to employment that participants identified was the job market in their areas of study. Eight participants (50%) thought this would be

the difficulty they were faced with. The difficulties include such aspects as successfully finding a job in Newfoundland and Labrador related to their fields of study and parallel to their degrees; insufficient information on jobs in their fields of study; and fierce competition due to lack of job opportunities in St. John's. For example, Ryan said:

I think the problem I might have is looking for my specialization specific jobs since I don't have enough information on how to adequately search for that job. It might be a little difficult looking for where and how to get the kind of job that relates to my field.

Jake said:

In Newfoundland and Labrador the biggest thing is the work field that I want to go into is small. There are only two companies that are doing actuarial work here in St. John's, and no head offices. So that makes it really difficult because most of the time we need to consult the head offices to make decisions. So I don't think I'll find a job here. So I'm looking mainland mostly, where there are many companies, more than twenty companies that I'm looking at.

Ben found the differences between the structures of knowledge on the undergraduate level among countries could also be one difficulty and obstacle to international students trying to seek employment in the host countries. He said:

One that I think I might have is that there is a difference between the structure, like what you learn in Canada as an undergraduate student and what you learn as an international student. So when you go for an interview, I will have to look up if I have something missing. Because if that comes in the interview, that will trouble me. Like you don't know you are supposed to know that. That can happen. And also I know for electrical like the whole system is different, you know, the power distribution, everything is different. There it's 220 volt and here is 110 volt. So you should...if you want a job here...you should know the things here.

To Henry, the difficulty lay in lack of networks with potential employers.

I don't have any network outside the university. I don't know anyone except for the professors at the university. I would probably ask help from them but obviously they can't find a job right away or they can't guarantee a job. So I think that's a big thing. If I'm back home, you know, like I'd have network, I'd know people, I know different companies out in there, I'd find references. But here I don't really have the references other than the people in the university again. And I don't have a network. That's the biggest thing.

4.4.6.2 Participants' Career-Related Needs

Participants were asked whether they had any needs for their transition to employment and future career development that Memorial University and Career Development and Experiential Learning could do for them. The results of interviews showed the needs varied according to personal experience and backgrounds. In general the self-identified career-related needs could be divided into five categories: 1) three students (18.8%) have needs for more job opportunities to gain more Canadian work experience; 2) five students (31.3%) have needs to develop professional skills, such as communication skills, presentation skills, knowledge of workplace etiquette, and other soft skills; 3) four students (25%) expressed needs to get information about local companies related to their fields of study and hidden information on recruitment; 4) three students (18.8%) expressed the need to network with potential employers and get insider perspectives; 5) one student (6%) had the need to have specific guidance and career counselling for international students.

For example, Ben talked about his needs to have the insider perspectives on expectations of international students as follows:

Right now what I'm doing is I'm looking through different company WebPages that is in my field and I'm looking for what are their expectation, what they expect me to do. So in that sense, still an outside view that is generated by everyone. But like I said if I get to know someone from a company and talk to him personally, I think I'll have some better understanding of what is required. Like I know there's some electronics company here we got to know from our professor that they are shifting from one development board to another. So it's not information you can find on the internet or... if you know someone from inside, he tells you, then you can prepare for it.

Ryan talked about his needs to have the views of people from industries and from the company's perspectives.

I think they can bring companies for information sessions, not necessarily for companies to come and tell us who and what they can recruit, but to tell us from their industrial experience what they ask people when people come for interview with them, and not the interviews conducted for us out of the value of PSDP program. Tell us how we can submit our résumés to their websites, how they could possibly call us for interviews, how, what they expect of us when we go for interview with them. When all these information comes from the industries, it's quite different from when the people in the academic tell you. Maybe a particular session of the career development program, but invite a company to do that. And the student would have a feel of it more than what the career development are telling for them.

Fay expressed her needs to have specific guidance in detailed information as to where to look for jobs.

So they can maybe provide to international students the places where they can find jobs, yeah where to find the places to work at the end of the programs, right? Like if you study, I don't know, education. They can just give you maybe name of schools, places where you can work, according to your education, according to what you did in school.

Wendy talked in detailed how specific guidance and career counselling for international students was necessary.

As a scientist student, sometimes I need more specific directions to the career, like the orientation stuff. So if our school or the career center will have...can I call it counselling? So if students have any questions, they can have persons like sit down one by one, like interview, like communicate. It's not a program for all the students, like four or five students go there at once, and they introduce that they have some presentation, and showed up. That's not particular for each student; every student has his own specific problem. If the career center has that kind of counselling office, or some person sit there, just for this kind of students, you know, just encourage them, and give them specific information about the job or the area they want to apply. That will be so important, so helpful because you have no idea of how many e-mails I get when I was a research assistant, and I don't know how many e-mails of Jennifer and Lynn get during that program. I know that students just want you to communicate with them one by one, they want you to listen, they want you to give them advice, and Jennifer, Lynn or me, we assistant don't have time to do that. We have our own jobs for the program, so if we have those special office, just for that part, that will be so much better.

When participants were asked if they thought ten sessions of the PSDP were enough to help them develop professional skills, fifteen participants (93.8%) said ten sessions were enough, but that there could be some adjustment on the content and length of some sessions.

Participants said they would like to have more mock interview sessions and more volunteering sessions added to the PSDP so they could have more practical examples and experience. As Alison said:

Maybe giving more practice examples or giving more sessions in which, for example, we had to deal with a meeting, like mock sessions, that is what I mean, besides the interview, could have allowed us to put a lot of the things that we learnt in class into practice. Then I also think that more volunteering sessions could be very beneficial as well, not just this only time that we had.

Dan suggested inviting professionals to special sessions as an adjustment to the

components of PSDP.

Some of the sessions are kind of repetitive. They can invite more professional people in their areas in different areas. That would be, I think, a good idea. At least two or three guest speakers during the nine sessions.

Other participants said there could be more interaction between the instructor and international students. And they would like to have more sessions to learn about Canadian culture, including how to adapt to the culture, as well as how to communicate in the Canadian culture.

Two participants (12.5%) said Career Development and Experiential Learning could make some recommendations to international students in terms of the best time to participate in PSDP. Like Dan said:

Maybe this program can recommend people to just come and participate in this program in their last year of their program, because I saw some people who were for example in the third year of their PhD and they just came there and sit there. I'm pretty sure that after, you know, couple of years until they graduate, they totally will forget what they learnt and what happened. But it's good to know maybe they are recommended last year of your (academic) program if you just participate in this program. That will be more beneficial for you, yeah.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter results of both the quantitative and qualitative research were analyzed. While there are limitations to the study, the researcher considers that the findings of the interviews elaborated on and refined the survey results. The combination of both stages of research provided an overview of self-identified competencies that international students gained through the PSDP 2010 Fall semester.

The findings also provide the answers to the four research questions proposed in the study, which will be elaborated in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter discusses the self-identified competencies that international students gained through the Professional Skill Development Program (PSDP), as well as the professional skills that participants self-identified as a need for transition to employment. Research questions are answered through presentation of the findings. Recommendations and implications of the study are also provided in this chapter.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the PSDP program on the development of career competencies of international students to enhance their transition to employment. Specifically, the study aims to 1) determine whether international students self-identify that the PSDP helps improve their career-related skills, such as their cultural competences, their skills in acculturating to Canadian workplaces, and other necessary skills in job search and interview techniques; 2) explore international students' perspectives on whether they believe the PSDP helps equip them with professional skills and prepare them for transition to employment. Another purpose of this study is to explore whether networking and service learning sessions help international students to improve their career-related skills. Findings of

the study aim to answer the four research questions.

5.2.1 First Research Question

The first research question is: Do participants describe improvement in job search skills, résumé and cover letter writing, and other career-related skills as a factor of their participation in the PSDP?

The findings indicate that an overwhelming majority of participants identified that the PSDP improved their professional skills in terms of job search. They learned about the Canadian format of résumés and cover letters, and they learned the Canadian standard of good résumés and cover letters. All of the participants learned what kind of questions would be asked in Canadian interviews, what was expected of them in the interviews, what skills they could provide to employers as international students, and how to interact with the interviewers. Furthermore, all participants practiced their interview skills through the mock interview sessions, which helped reinforce such skills as answering the behavioral questions, skills of approaching the answers in interviews, skills of impressing the interviewers, and some non-verbal communication skills such as handshaking and keeping the eye contact. Participants also identified they were equipped with a significant amount of job search information, which in turn will greatly help them with transition to employment in Canada. Before participating in the PSDP, participants' sources of information were limited to Memorial University websites, department postings, and

Google. The PSDP informed participants of many other job search sources. These sources of information enable international students to narrow down their job search scopes on one hand, and broaden the choices of jobs on the other hand.

Participants also identified that they gained more confidence in job search through their participation in the PSDP. They found themselves more confident now that they were well informed of the job search process. They learned techniques in seeking employment and finding potential employers. They knew what to do in a Canadian interview, and they knew where to look for the hidden job sources. Equipped with this information, participants identified they were more confident in terms of where and how to look for a job.

As far as job search sessions are concerned, it would be more beneficial to international students if there are more mock interviews. Mock interviews give participating students hands-on experience of how a Canadian interview will be like. Students in the PSDP will benefit even more if professionals from industries are invited in some of the mock interviews and offer their comments, opinions, and suggestions to student participants.

5.2.2 Second Research Question

The second research question is: Do the networking and service learning sessions incorporated within the PSDP help participants improve their skills?

Networking was an eye-opener to many participants in this study. They were exposed to new experience and they identified a lot of improvement in their communication skills and interpersonal skills in networking events. They learned the importance of professionalizing their social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. They used these social media to search for jobs and keep in contact with potential employers. Through the networking platform provided by the PSDP, participants learned skills of establishing contacts with professionals, skills of tapping resources from experienced people, and awareness of cultural differences in the workplace and workplace etiquette.

Coombs-Thorne et al. (2007) argued that in Newfoundland and Labrador there was a disconnection between labor market demand and supply. "There is a breakdown in communicating the demands of the labor market and the requirements of occupational positions to potential immigrant candidates. Immigrants can find success in Newfoundland and Labrador if they have the right information, are willing to adjust their abilities to meet local needs, and invest their energy into the process" (Coombs-Thorne et al., 2007, p. 1). In this sense, networking is of great significance to international students because it helps to build a bridge between job-seekers and potential employers. Through networking, international students can obtain valuable information about the demand of the job market, and can pass on to potential employers their special and unique skills to meet the demand.

In this study participants expressed their needs for specific guidance and direction in networking. Interviews with the participants indicate that international students, especially Asian students, are used to teacher-centered methodologies. Therefore, they expect to be shown step-by-step what to do and how to do networking. Lack of knowledge about the local community and lack of previous experience may also be the reasons for their needs of specific guidance. There are many things to be included when instructing international students about networking. For example, how to do small talk and what to talk about, what topics are popular in the local culture and what are the taboos. These are new things important for international students to learn and they may not have an opportunity to learn about them, especially in cases where international students live and deal with people of their own nationality most of the time. In future PSDP networking sessions, case studies with real workplace scenarios can be used with detailed directions and examples. International students can learn from the discussions of the case studies. It would be constructive if discussions are held before and after networking events. Discussions will help guide international students on what to do in the networking events, and provide opportunities to reflect on their experience in the networking events, pass it on to the program coordinator, and apply what they learn to the new situations.

Similar to networking, volunteering was also a brand-new experience to participants in this study. Many of them had never done any volunteer work before

participating in the PSDP. It is not because these international students are not enthusiastic about volunteering, but because back in their home countries, volunteering is not considered as important as it is here in the American and Canadian job market (Hustinx et al., 2010). Therefore, through the PSDP many participants experienced significant changes in their concepts and attitudes toward volunteering. They learned that volunteering was considered real work experience, volunteering enhances their résumés, and they could extend their social networks through volunteering and possibly meet their potential employers for future paid jobs. Participants realized that community involvement helped to improve international students' communicational skills and interpersonal skills. Participants also identified they gained such competencies as problem-solving, team work, cooperation, leadership, as well as responsibility.

Service learning experience would be more helpful if international students had the opportunity to volunteer in places related to their fields of study. The volunteering experience would be the platform where students could meet people from their industries and get real job experience. More importantly, international students would benefit more if they continue to volunteer instead of being involved in only a few volunteering events. Besides enhancing résumés and getting work experience, service learning has many other meanings to international students. It can enhance international students' cultural awareness and critical thinking ability. It helps foster citizenship, responsibility and professional identity. It also facilitates

interpersonal and personal development, changes in attitude and beliefs toward the community, and increase in community engagement (Amerson, 2010; Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000; Lai, 2009). If the PSDP informs participants of these impacts of service learning, international students will have more meaningful purposes in continuing to volunteer.

5.2.3 Third Research Question

The third research question is: Does this program help participants improve their cultural competences?

Cultural competence consists of four components: a) awareness of one's own cultural worldview, b) attitude towards cultural differences, c) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and d) cross-cultural skills (Martin & Vaughn, 2007). Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Luckhardt (2010) believes that cultural competence is a more complex set of skills than basic categorization. She argued that simply being aware of individual and cultural differences is not enough to successfully navigate interactions between cultures. In this study, cultural competence is used in the sense that international students need to acquire not only cultural awareness, but also skills, abilities and attitudes in order to better develop their careers in a multicultural work environment.

Through the PSDP program, participants gained cultural awareness. They learned there were cultural differences in the workplace, such as equality between superiors and inferiors and expectations of employers. Participants were also able to distinguish and compare their home cultures and the host culture. These were what participants learned from the PSDP program. However, what participants identified also indicated that they only gained cultural awareness. They lacked specific cross-cultural skills and well-informed attitudes toward worldviews and cultural differences in order to be indeed culturally competent. They did not know sufficiently what their own cultural identities were, what their attitudes to the cultural differences were, or what positions they would take in dealing with the host culture. Their knowledge of cultural differences came mostly from their own concrete experiences. Specifically, they need theoretical and practical guidance to help them reflect on their experiences, make generalization, and apply it to the new situations. Cultural awareness is only one part of this cycle; international students need more detailed directions to complete the cycle.

Furthermore, nonverbal communication is also an essential part in developing cultural competence. Nonverbal communication includes more than handshaking and eye contact. It covers many areas such as proper personal distance, turn-taking in conversation, body smells, the tone, volume and pitch of voices, postures and body languages, thinking styles, to name just a few. International students who come to the host community with their home cultures deep rooted in mind will sometimes be

confused and make social blunders if they are not well informed of these differences. Unless they are taught through courses or programs, it will take international students a long time to realize these cultural differences. Programs like the PSDP can provide necessary information and practice through offering experiential learning opportunities and thus benefit international students.

There should be more than one session on cross-cultural communications. More sessions on verbal communication, non-verbal communication, and cultural adjustment issues should be added to future PSDP. Cross-cultural business communication case studies would be very useful in informing international students of the differences in the workplace.

5.2.4 Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question is: What other professional skills do participants self-identify as a need for transition to employment? How do they describe their experiences in this regard?

Before the PSDP none of the participants in this study had worked off campus within their fields of study. Therefore, many of them expressed the need to have more opportunities to gain Canadian work experience related to their programs in Memorial University. These opportunities also included volunteering, which is considered real work experience in the Canadian job market. Participants reported

they did not have many opportunities to work in their areas of study to get Canadian work experience.

Participants also need to have more networking opportunities in order to meet their potential employers and get in touch with them. What is more important to international students is that they maintain long-term contact with their potential employers instead of only getting to know the employers and lose contact afterward. As much as they need to maintain long-term relationships with potential employers, many participants do not know how to achieve this purpose. In this sense, they need specific skills to deal with and interact with Canadian employers. The practice of keeping long-term relationships in Canada may differ substantially from the practice in international students' home countries. Therefore, they need specific guidance and direction in this regard.

Another big concern of participants was the difficulty in finding jobs related to their fields of study in Newfoundland and Labrador. The difficulty results from lack of job specific information on the part of participants, and also from the Newfoundland job market and the local economy. Concerted efforts are needed to meet this need in order to retain highly skilled international students in the Province after their graduation. For example, Memorial University can provide more information sessions about the job market, and the provincial government can formulate policies on employment favorable to international students. It may take

some time to change the situation.

Participants also identified other needs such as getting information about local companies related to their fields of study and hidden information on recruitment; practical perspectives from industries; and have specific guidance and career counselling for international students.

In terms of the professional skills that participants identified as a need for transition to employment, the most urgently needed one is language proficiency, especially knowledge about the Newfoundland dialect, the feature of which is a strong accent and fast speed of talking. Language barriers hinder international students from effectively communicating with others, and provide an obstacle in their adjustment to Newfoundland culture. Another professional skill that participants identified was cultural competences which help international students overcome the cultural barrier in transition to employment. Participants also identified such skills as interpersonal skills, communicational skills, presentation skills, knowing about workplace etiquette, as well as getting used to procedures and standard practice in the workplace.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the PSDP 2010 Fall semester. Altogether sixteen international students participated in the personal interviews. The small sample size

plus the single-program sampling limited generalizability of the study. In the sixteen participants, ten were from Asia. Therefore, the results may be more influenced by Asian values and representative more of Asian students' opinions than students from other parts of the world. A larger sample with diverse and averaging nationalities may decrease the possible bias and better reflect participants' opinions.

Another limitation is that interviews were conducted in English, which was the second language for all participants. Participants' proficiency of English also differed. The language barrier might hinder participants from expressing themselves eloquently and sufficiently.

This study employed explanatory mixed methods. It was conducted within a limited amount of time and resources. With more various research methods in the qualitative stage, for example, field notes, observations, and participants' journals, the experiences of international students may be better described and reflected.

Due to the descriptive nature of this study, there might be social desirability bias in participants' responses. By increasing the number of participants and using such techniques as indirect questioning and face saving questions, social desirability bias could be reduced.

5.4 Recommendations

Several recommendations are provided based on the major findings of the study.

5.4.1 Reinforcement of Soft Skills

Soft skills, also called the 21st century skills, refer to “the traits and abilities of attitude and behaviour, rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude” (Tobin, 2008, p. 1). Soft Skills are behavioral competencies. They include computer literacy, analytical skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills, creativity, social skills, negotiation skills, and time management (Terego, 2009). Soft skills are important to both international students and Canadian students. They are particularly indispensable to international students who may be equally strong in technical skills but weak in soft skills compared to their Canadian counterparts. It is recommended that soft skills be emphasized in the PSDP program. Such essential skills training as interpersonal skills, negotiation skills, critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity should be embedded in particular sessions so that international students are informed about what skills they lack and how they can develop necessary competencies.

5.4.2 More Networking Opportunities

Although the PSDP organized several networking events and demonstrated to participants social media as networking platforms, international students still need more opportunities to network, especially with professionals within their fields of study. Considering that many international students, Asian students in particular, are very used to teacher-centered learning experience and expect to be told step by step

in doing things, it is recommended that more specific directions be given to international students in terms of how to achieve the best results in networking opportunities. It is also recommended that more specific guidance be provided to international students as to how to keep long-term relationships with their potential employers and how to accumulate their social capital. More opportunities should be created for international students to establish and keep contacts with professionals in various business sectors, so that through endeavor of the university and personal efforts international students can accumulate resources from relationship with professionals they know.

5.4.3 Culturally Focused Service Learning

Through the PSDP international students learn that volunteering can enhance their résumés, increase their Canadian work experience, and extend their social networks. What is more important, international students can gain cultural competences and cultural identity through service learning (Lai, 2009). It is recommended that the PSDP provide explicit orientation in terms of how to gain cultural competences through volunteering, and promote culturally focused community-centered service learning, so that international students have opportunities to immerse in Newfoundland culture. Culturally focused community-centered service learning is defined as direct cross-cultural contact occurring through work with a community in which individuals are involved in the

social, political, cultural, and environmental aspects of that community (Burnett, Hamel, & Long, 2004). Immersion in a different culture also increases international students' cultural awareness and encourages them to re-examine their values and behaviors that might be ignored or denied in a similar or familiar cultural context (Tomlinson-Clarke et al., 2010). Through cultural immersion international students learn about the local culture, and the community also has an opportunity to know more about international students. In this sense both the community and international students benefit from the service learning opportunities and mutual understanding can also be promoted.

5.4.4 Mentoring Sessions

Shen and Herr (2004) said that international alumni can serve as current students' mentors because they have successful experience of transition to employment and have superior job connections. Certain sessions can be added to the PSDP with international alumni invited to pass on their experience in seeking employment and surviving in Canadian workplace. Case studies can be especially helpful in this regard because through real cases international students can get more pragmatic experience. In mentoring sessions information should be added about advantages of the Province, potential of the Province, the job opportunities and prospects, settlement support, provincial policies and regulations for international students. These hands-on experiences and mentoring come from people who have

similar experience as international students and are more realistic and convincing.

5.4.5 Career Counselling for International Students

The importance of career counselling is self-evident. International students especially need career counselling because they come from different cultural backgrounds. They have different learning experience, and some international students are not accustomed to using career counselling services or come from places where formal career guidance systems do not exist (Singaravelu, White & Bringaze, 2005). The present study indicates that international students have many questions and concerns in terms of transition to employment and future career development in Canada. These questions and concerns may differ from person to person. Culturally competent career counsellors are of significant help to international students because they can arrange individual meetings with international students and listen to their concerns.

5.5 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study confirm other studies on the importance of providing job search techniques to international students to meet their career development needs. Skills such as interview techniques, résumé and cover letter writing skills, and skills in job search are necessary in transition to employment for international students who are not familiar with Canadian standards of job search procedures.

This study fills the knowledge gap of how networking and service learning play a significant role in helping international students gain essential career competencies to enhance their transition to employment. Through networking and volunteering opportunities international students gain communication and interpersonal skills. They establish contacts with potential employers and professionals in different industries. They gain Canadian work experience as well.

Future research should take into account how to enhance international students' professional identity and cultural identity through service learning, and how international students can make full use of the networking opportunities for future career development. Future research also needs to explore how to develop international students' cultural competences through co-curricular career development programs.

5.6 Conclusion

International students play a very important role in the economic development of Newfoundland and Labrador. They bring "cultural diversification to our institutions and communities, offer opportunities for our students to learn about and experience other cultures, and help to better prepare our youth to compete in the knowledge-based global economy" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, P. 17). Retaining international students in the Province after their graduation will greatly help the provincial economy.

Co-curricular career development programs like the Professional Skill Development Program (PSDP) are very important in guiding international students in job search and successful transition to employment. Since the number of international students at Memorial University is increasing, evaluating the impact of this program and improving the program is the concern of Career Development and Experiential Learning. To this end, the study explores the influence of the PSDP on the development of career competencies of international students to enhance their transition to employment. This study also explores the role that networking and service learning sessions play in helping international students to improve their career-related skills. Understanding what competencies international students self-identified through their participation in the PSDP will facilitate future career development programs in providing better counselling services to international students, and will help them with successful transition to employment in Canada.

REFERENCES

- Amerson, R. (2010). The impact of service-learning on cultural competence. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 31*(1), 18–22.
- Arthur, N. (1997). Counselling issues with international students. *Canadian Journal of Counselling/Revue Canadienne de Counseling, 31*(4), 259–274.
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. (2005). *Retention and integration of immigrants in Newfoundland and Labrador – Are we ready?* Final Report. Retrieved from <http://www.nlimmigration.ca/media/2854/immigrationstudyfinal.pdf>
- Balcazar, F., Suarez-Balcazar, Y., & Taylor-Ritzler, T. (2009). Cultural competence: Development of conceptual framework. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 31*(14), 1153–1160.
- Bartol, G. M., & Richardson, L. (1998). Using literature to create cultural competence. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 30* (1), 75–79. doi:10.1111/j.1547-5069.1998.tb01240.x
- Bell, J. (1999). *Doing your research project*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bikos, L. H., & Furry, T. S. (1999). The job search club for international students: An evaluation. *The Career Development Quarterly, 48*, 31–44.

- Bohonos, A. (2009). *Assessing the effectiveness of a career program for international students*. (Master's thesis, University of Manitoba). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (MR60459)
- Boyle-Baise, M., & Kilbane, J. (2000). What really happens? A look inside service-learning for multicultural teacher education. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 7, 54–64.
- Burchum, J. L. R. (2002) Cultural competence: An evolutionary perspective. *Nursing Forum*, 37(4), 5–15. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-6198.2002.tb01287.x
- Burnett, J. A., Hamel, D., & Long, L. L. (2004). Service learning in graduate counselor education: Developing multicultural counseling competency. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32, 180–191.
- Canadian Association for Graduate Studies. (2008). *Professional skills development for graduate students*. Retrieved from <http://www.cags.ca/media/docs/cags-publication/Prof%20Skills%20Dev%20for%20Grad%20Stud%20%20Final%2008%2011%2005.pdf>
- Carver, R. L. (1997). Theoretical underpinnings of service learning. *Theory into Practice*, 36(3), 143–149.
- Center for Career Development and Experiential Learning (CDEL). (2010-2011).

- Application for funds: Student support for international students fund 2010-11.* Unpublished manuscript. CDEL& Student Success, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.
- Chaparro, D. P. (2009). *Are our efforts worthwhile? International students' perceptions of a project-based program designed to internationalize higher education.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (AAT 3344683)
- Chen, C. P. (1999). Common stressors among international college students: Research and counseling implications. *Journal of College Counseling, 2*, 49–65.
- Cheng, D., Leong, F. L., & Geist, R. (1993). Cultural differences in psychological distress between Asian and Caucasian American college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 21*, 182–190.
- Chupp, M. G., & Joseph, M. L. (2010). Getting the most out of service learning: Maximizing student, university and community impact. *Journal of Community Practice, 18*(2), 190–212. doi:10.1080/10705422.2010.487045
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2009). *Annual report to parliament on immigration.* Retrieved from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/annual-report2009/sectio2.asp#part2_2%20idpart2_2

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2010a). *Strategic outcomes and program activity architecture*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/paa/activity-02.asp>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2010b). *Socioeconomic profiles of immigrants in the four Atlantic Provinces — Phase II: Focus on vibrant communities*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/research/socioeconomic/section2.asp#a3%20ida3>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2011). *Work permits for students: Working after graduation*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/work-postgrad-who.asp>
- Coombs-Thorne, H., & Warren, M. (2007). *The integration of immigrants into the Newfoundland and Labrador workforce*. Retrieved from Association for New Canadians Newfoundland and Labrador website:
<http://www.nlimmigration.ca/media/2830/fcrsummary.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd Edition). NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Crockett, S. A., & Hays, D. G. (2011). Understanding and responding to the career counseling needs of international college students on U.S. *Journal of College Counseling, 14* (1), 65–79.

- Cross, T. L. (1988). Service to minority populations: Cultural competence continuum. *Focal Point*, 3(1), 1-4.
- Cross, B. Jr. (2010). Cultural competency — Is it the third wave of diversity? *Diversity Factor*, 18(4), 1-4.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in research process*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Eyler, J. S., & Giles, D. E. (1999). *Where's the learning in service learning?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Feen-Calligan, H. (2002). *Constructing professional identity through practica and service learning—a study in art therapy*. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (UMI Number: 3068859)
- Flores, L. Y., & Heppner, M. J. (2002). Multicultural career counselling: Ten essentials for training. *Journal of career development*, 28 (3), 181-202. doi:10.1023/A: 1014018321808
- Fowler, A. (2010). *Fact book 2010*. (030-038-09-10-275). Retrieved from Memorial University of Newfoundland, Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP) website: http://www.mun.ca/ciap/Analysis/Fact_Book_2010.pdf

- Gallini, S. M., & Moely, B. E. (2003). Service learning and engagement, academic challenge, and retention. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 10(1), 1–14.
- Gien, L., & Law, R. (2009). *Attracting and retaining immigrants to Newfoundland and Labrador: Voices from the newcomers and international students*. Final report. Retrieved from Memorial University of Newfoundland, The Harris Center website: http://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/research/funding/immigration/IRF_Gien_2009_08_31.pdf
- Godfrey, P. C. (1999). Service-learning and management education: A call to action. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8, 363–377. doi:10.1177/105649269984004
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (2007). *Diversity—opportunity and growth: An immigration strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador*. Retrieved from <http://www.nlimmigration.ca/media/2833/ie-magazine-2007.pdf>
- Graduate Student Survey (International Graduate Students Responses) Summary Report. (May 4, 2010). Unpublished Report, Office of the Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Newfoundland, Canada.
- Heffernan, K. (2001). Service-Learning in higher education. *Journal of Contemporary Water Research and Education*, 119(1), Article 2. Retrieved

from <http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/jcwre/vol119/iss1/2>

- Hustinx, L., Handy, F., Cnaan, R. A., Brudney, J. L., Pessi, A. B., & Yamauchi, N. (2010). Social and cultural origins of motivations to volunteer: A comparison of university students in six countries. *International Sociology, 25*(3), 349–382. doi:10.1177/0268580909360297
- Hutchinson, S., & Skodal-Wilson, H. (1992). Validity threats in scheduled semistructured research interviews. *Nursing Research, 41*(2), 117–119.
- Ilagan, P. (1997). *Buddy Program: A participatory approach to cross-cultural adjustment of international students*. (Master's thesis, University of Manitoba). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (MQ23351)
- Jacoby, B. (Ed.). (1996). *Service-learning in higher education: Concepts and practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Knutson, S., & Lovatt, M. (2005). International students experiences at Memorial University of Newfoundland. *Communiqué, 6*(1), 26–30.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lai, K. H. (2009). Developing leadership and cultural competency through service

- exposure attachment program. *New Horizons in Education*, 57(3), 105–118.
- Lee, J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education*, 53, 381–409. doi:10.1007/s10734-005-4508-3
- Leong, F. T. L. (2010). A Cultural formulation approach to career assessment and career counseling: Guest editor's introduction. *Journal of Career Development*, 37, 375–390. doi:10.1177/0894845310363708
- Leong, F. T., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1989). Academic and career needs of international and United States college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 30, 106–111.
- Lin, J. C. G., & Yi, J. K. (1997). Asian international students' adjustment: Issues and program suggestions. *College Student Journal*, 31(4), 473–479.
- Lin, Y. J. (2008). *Job search self-efficacy of East Asian international graduate students*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri - Columbia). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (AAT 3374906)
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Liu, X. Y. (2009). *Examining the impact of international graduate students'*

- acculturation experiences on their career decision-making self-efficacy.*
(Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Greensboro).
Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (AAT 3355954)
- Luckhardt, J. K. (2010). *Building cultural competence through multicultural fictions.*
(Master's thesis, East Carolina University). Available from ProQuest
Dissertations & Theses database. (AAT 1476604)
- Mahadevan, L. (2010). Acculturation and career beliefs — is there a relationship for
international university students? *College Student Journal, 44*(3), 633–658.
- Martin, M. & Vaughn, B. E. (2007). Cultural competence: The nuts & bolts of
diversity & inclusion. *Diversity Officer Magazine, 1*(1), 31–38.
- Mbugua, T. (2010). Fostering culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy and global
awareness through the integration of international service-learning in courses.
Journal of Pedagogy, 1(2), 87–98. doi:10.2478/v10159-010-0011-8
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.*
San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mio, J. S., Barker-Hachett, L., & Tumambing, J. (2006). *Multicultural psychology:
Understanding our diverse communities.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Mishler, E. G. (1986). The analysis of interview-narratives. In T.R. Sarbin (Ed.),

Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct. NY: Praeger.

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. (n. d.). *What is service-learning?*

Retrieved from <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-service-learning>

Olivas, M., & Li, C. S. (2006). Understanding stressors of international students in higher education: What college counselors and personnel need to know.

Journal of Instructional Psychology, 32, 217–222.

Petkus, E. Jr. (2000). A theoretical and practical framework for service-learning in marketing: Kolb's experiential learning cycle. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22, 64–70. doi: 10.1177/0273475300221008

Education, 22, 64–70. doi: 10.1177/0273475300221008

Ramsey, P., Ramsey, D., & Mason, R. (2007). The Massey kiwi friend programme.

Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 44(2), 109–118. doi:

10.1080/14703290701251264

Reeves, T. C. (2000). Socially responsible educational technology research.

Educational Technology, 40(6), 19–28.

Reynolds, A. L., & Constantine, M. G. (2007). Cultural adjustment difficulties and career development of international college students. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 15, 338–350. doi:10.1177/1069072707301218

Assessment, 15, 338–350. doi:10.1177/1069072707301218

Roche, V. F., Jones, R. M., Hinman, C. E., & Seoldo, N. (2007). A service-learning

- elective in Native American culture, health and professional practice.
American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 71(6), Article 129, 1-8.
- Rosenthal, D. A., Moore, S. M., & Taylor, M. J. (1983). Ethnicity and adjustment: A study of the self image of Anglo-, Greek-, and Italian Australian working class adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 12(1), 117-135.
doi:10.1007/ BF02088309
- Sandhu, D. S., & Asrabadi, B. R. (1994). Development of an acculturative stress scale for international students: Preliminary findings. *Psychological Reports*, 75, 435-448.
- Sarma-Debnath, K., & Kutty, Y. (2006). *Occupational accommodation of new immigrants and refugees in Newfoundland: Understanding the roadblocks, challenges and barriers in labour market integration*. Retrieved from Memorial University of Newfoundland, International Student Advising Office website: www.mun.ca/isa/employment/Employment_Challenges.doc
- Sharpe, D. B., Dwyer, L., & Pidgeon, M. (2001). *University experiential learning options: A review of opportunities at Memorial University of Newfoundland*. Unpublished research report. Department of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.
- Shen, Y. J., & Herr, E. L. (2004). Career placement concerns of international

- graduate students: A qualitative study. *Journal of Career Development*, 31(15), 15–29. doi:10.1177/089484530403100102
- Sigmon, R. (1979). Service learning: Three principles. *Synergist*, 8, 9–11.
- Singaravelu, H. D., White, L. J., & Bringaze, T. B. (2005). Factors influencing international students' career choice: A comparative study. *Journal of Career Development*, 32(1), 46–59. doi:10.1177/0894845305277043
- Spencer-Rodgers, J. (2000). The vocational situation and country of orientation of international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, 28, 32–49.
- Spencer-Rodgers, J., & Cortijo, A. (1998). An assessment of the career development needs of international students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39, 509–513.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research: Perspectives on practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stolte, M. (2006). Assets and barriers to finding employment. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 40(2), 96–109.
- Terego, A. (2009). Hard facts and soft skills. *Principal Leadership*, 10(1), 42–44.

- Tobin, P. (2008). *Soft skills: The hard facts*. Retrieved from <http://www.prowess.org.uk/conference/documents/tobinprolessresearch081.doc>
- Tomlinson-Clarke, S. M., & Clarke, D. (2010). Culturally focused community-centered service learning: An international cultural immersion experience. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 38*(3), 166–175.
- Van Ham, M., Mulder, C. H., & Hooimeijer, P. (2001). Local underemployment and the discouraged worker effect. *Urban Studies, 38*, 1733–1752. doi:10.1080/00420980120084831
- Wade, R. C., & Saxe, D. W. (1996). Community service-learning in the social studies: Historical roots, empirical evidence, critical issues. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 24*, 331–359.
- Wan, G. F. (2001). The learning experience of Chinese students in American universities: A cross-cultural perspective. *College Student Journal, 35*(1), 28–44.
- Watts, T. (2009). *Why career development matters?* Retrieved from http://www.cica.org.au/uploads/Downloadable%20Resources/Resources/Why%20Career%20Development%20matters_CICA_November%202009.pdf
- Yang, E., Wong, S. C., Hwang, M., & Heppner, M. J. (2002). Widening our global

- views: The development of career counseling services for international students. *Journal of Career Development*, 28(3), 203–213. doi:10.1177/089484530202800305
- Yi, J. K., Lin, J.-C. G., & Kishimoto, Y. (2003). Utilization of counseling services by international students. *Journal of instructional psychology*, 30 (4), 333–342.
- Yik, M. S. M., Bond, M. H., & Paulhus, D. L. (1998). Do Chinese self-enhance or self-efface? It's a matter of domain. *The Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, 24(4), 399–406. doi:10.1177/0146167298244006
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research, design and methods* (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zhang, N. (2000). *Acculturation and counseling expectancies: Asian international students' attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help*. (Doctoral dissertation, Ball State University). Available from Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (AAT 9937198)

Appendix A: ICEHR Approval



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

Office of Research
St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5B7
www.mun.ca

ICEHR Number:	2010-11-096-ED
Approval Period:	March 3, 2011 - March 31, 2012
Funding Source:	-
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Robert Shea Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>International students' self-identified competencies gained through a co-curricular career development program</i>

March 3, 2011

Ms. Ying Zhang
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Zhang:

Thank you for your submission to the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) seeking ethical clearance for the above-named research project.

The Committee has reviewed the proposal and appreciates the care and diligence with which you have prepared your application. We agree that the proposed project is consistent with the guidelines of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS). Full ethics clearance is granted for one year from the date of this letter.

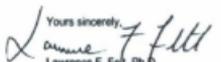
Although ethics clearance has been granted, the Committee would like to suggest the following minor revisions to the consent form:

1. The new ICEHR telephone number is (709) 864-2861 and we ask that you revise the contact information in the ICEHR statement to reflect this change.
2. The second sentence in the last point listed under *Additional information about confidentiality* appears to be incomplete.
3. You may want to consider replacing the word "recant" with simpler words such as "withdraw" or "take back".

If you intend to make changes during the course of the project which may give rise to ethical concerns, please forward a description of these changes to Mrs. Brenda Lye at lyeb@mun.ca for the Committee's consideration.

The TCPS requires that you submit an annual status report on your project to ICEHR, should the research carry on beyond March 2012. Also, to comply with the TCPS, please notify us upon completion of your project.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence F. Felt, Ph.D.
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

LFM
copy: Supervisor - Dr. Robert Shea, Faculty of Education
Associate Dean, Graduate Program, Faculty of Education

Telephone: (709) 864 2561 / 864 2861 Fax: (709) 864 4612

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation for Interviews

Good Day International Students:

My name is Ying Zhang, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University, with a focus on Curriculum, Teaching and Learning studies. I am doing my master's thesis, which is about the international students' self-identified competencies gained through the PSDP program. As an international student who has experienced this program in person, your participation in an individual, semi-structured interview would be very helpful to me and to the Center for Career Development and Experiential Learning. Interviews will take approximately 30-60 minutes. If you consent to do so, I will conduct the face-to-face interviews on campus. If you can not be accessed on campus, the interviews can be conducted via SKYPE with the help of webcam, or conducted through telephone if you can not be approached online.

All information shared during the interview process will be confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the final copy of my thesis. I will send your personal script of interview to you for verification before including them in my thesis.

Your participation in this study is of great importance to me and to Center for Career Development and Experiential Learning in terms of career counselling services provided to international students. All participants will be given a \$15 Wal-Mart gift card as a show of appreciation.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about this research and for participation inquiries.

Ying Zhang
Graduate student
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
(709) 368-8995 (H)
(709) 749-5286 (C)
yz1140@mun.ca

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled "*An Analysis of International Students' Self-Identified Competencies Gained through a Co-Curricular Career Development Program*".

My name is Ying Zhang, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. I am writing my master's thesis about international students' self-identified competencies through Professional Skill Development Program. I'm interested in gaining a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of international students who participated in this program through individual interviews. The findings of this study will contribute to understanding the needs of international students in terms of development of career-related skills. You will receive a \$15 Wal-Mart gift card as my thanks for participating.

Interviews will take approximately 30-60 minutes and consist of eleven open-ended questions. You are free to decline participation; free to refuse any questions, stop the interview at any point, and can stop participating at any time. Cessation will have no influence or impact on your education at MUN.

Interviews will be voice recorded and then transcribed. You will be asked below to give your level of permission regarding voice recording and use of interview quotations. **You can withdraw this permission at any point by contacting the researchers.** Transcribed interviews will be sent to you for confirmation of accuracy.

Additional information about confidentiality

- o Transcribed voice recordings will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, separate from consent forms, in the Faculty of Education. Digital recordings stored on the research computers will be file protected (password protected).
 - o In five years time, all transcripts and digital recordings will be permanently disposed of through professional shredding, digital deletion, and removal procedures.
 - o Confidentiality will be assured by presenting aggregated data only. Interviews will be reviewed and coded for the purpose of determining themes of self-identified competencies. **No direct quotations will be attributed to individuals unless permission has been provided below.**
-

* By signing below, I indicate that I have read the above, understand the procedures, and am willing to participate in these interviews with the following specifications:

Interviews with voice recording X _____
Interviews with no voice recording X _____

Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - Fall 2010 SURVEY

To help us provide an improved PSDP program next semester, we hope you will take a moment to fill out this evaluation form. All information is anonymous, and your help is greatly appreciated.

Q1. Program of study:

- Undergrad }
 Masters } in(write name
of program) }
 PhD

Q2. Degree Start Date: _____ **Q3. Anticipated Graduation Date:** _____

Q4. Country of birth: _____ **Q5. Gender:** Male Female

Q6. My participation in PSDP has improved my Canadian job search knowledge:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q7. My participation in PSDP has improved my resume and cover letter writing skills:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q8. My participation in PSDP has improved my understanding of interviews held in Canada:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q9. My participation in two networking sessions through PSDP strengthened my networking skills:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q10. My volunteering experience helped me to understand the importance of community involvement in my career development process:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q11. My participation in PSDP has improved my communication skills related to my search for employment in Canada:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q12. My participation in PSDP has given me more confidence in my interactions with professionals and employers:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q13. My participation in PSDP has increased my confidence in my ability to project a professional image:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q14. My participation in PSDP has given me more confidence in my ability to interact with those from different cultures:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q15. Overall, my participation in PSDP has helped me gain skills that will be valuable in my future employment in Canada:

Disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Agree

Q16. Rate the sessions of PSDP (1 for 'dislike', 2 for 'somewhat dislike', 3 for 'neutral', 4 for 'somewhat like' and 5 for 'like'):

1. Skill Identification Session 1 2 3 4 5

2. Resume and Cover Letter Writing Session 1 2 3 4 5

3. Job Search Session 1 2 3 4 5

3. Interview Skills Session 1 2 3 4 5

4. Mock Interview 1 2 3 4 5

5. Intercultural Communication Session with Guest Speaker

1 2 3 4 5

6. Social Media in Job Search/Networking Session

1 2 3 4 5

7. Networking Opportunity – YMCA Career Fair/HR MUN

1 2 3 4 5

8. Networking Opportunity - On Campus Networking Session

1 2 3 4 5

9. Volunteer Opportunity

1 2 3 4 5

Q17. Would you recommend this program to other students?

Yes No Maybe

Q18. Please provide us some feedback on your experiences with the networking opportunities presented this semester:

Q19. Please suggest any improvements (or topics to be included) for our future PSDP sessions? Do you have any additional comments?:

Would you mind being contacted in the future for career development follow up/research?

YES NO

If **YES**, please indicate email address: _____

Any information you provide is collected under the general authority of the Memorial University Act (RSNL 1990 Chapter M-7) for the purpose of the PSDP Survey and for no other purpose. If you have any questions about this survey please contact Lynn Walsh at 864-8167 or e-mail lwalsh@mun.ca.

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Section I: Demographic information

1. Could you tell me your nationality? _____
2. What's your age? _____
3. Are you a graduate student or undergraduate student?
Graduate undergraduate
4. What is your main study area? _____
5. How long have you been staying in Canada? _____

Section II: Program Information

6. Do you think you have experienced any improvement in your personal job searching techniques through the PSDP? Job searching techniques refers to such necessary skills as obtaining job searching information, interview skills, résumé /CV and cover letter writing skills?

Prompt: job searching information, résumé /CV writing and other career-related skills.

Follow-up question: Please tell me more about your personal experience during this process.

- 7.1 Did you like the networking session?
- 7.2 What did you learn from that session?

Prompt: experience in gaining workplace etiquette, cultural differences, communication skills.

Follow-up question: How do you think this session helped you in looking for employment in the future?

8. Could you tell me your own experience in the service learning session?

Prompt: how service learning and volunteer session help participants improve their career-related skills, learning about the community, importance of integrating into community.

9. What do you think you must do in order to better adjust to Canadian culture?

Prompt: cross-cultural awareness, cultural differences, Canadian workplace procedures and practices.

10. Do you feel more confident in job searching now that you've participated in the program? (Job searching is also called job seeking, or job hunting. It is the act of looking for employment. The immediate goal of job seeking is usually to obtain a job interview with an employer which may lead to getting hired.)

Prompt: self-confidence.

Follow-up question: what do you think we can do for you to make you more confident in looking for a job?

11.1 What difficulties have you encountered in seeking employment in Newfoundland?

11.2 What difficulties do you think you will encounter in seeking employment in Newfoundland?

Prompt: any difficulties or problems.

Follow-up question: What other needs do you have for future career development?

