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ISSN: 1084-0613 (print)

## Whatever Happened to the Promise of Online Learning?

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*The full report and country case studies are available to OBHE member institutions and organizations. Please visit [www.obhe.org](http://www.obhe.org).*

This article offers a perspective on the evolution, significance, and future of online higher education globally, and is aimed at anyone trying to understand this dynamic and complex field—higher education leaders and practitioners, governments and agencies, and online learning companies. The article draws on a report and a series of national case studies produced by The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) in 2017 and 2018. The stimulus for OBHE's case study series was the tension between the scope, diversity, and relative maturity of online higher education around the world, and the near-absence of studies assessing the significance of online higher education on a global or cross-border level.

The report makes a distinction between five high-level national categories. The first category is **Distance, Not Online**. This category applies to countries with a large distance-learning sector and little or no use of online learning beyond some MOOC enthusiasm (e.g., Egypt, India). **Online Learning as Marginal** is the second category—strong growth in campus enrollment, with some online elements. Most distance learning is blended with in-person study centers, and marginal from a national perspective (e.g., Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and sub-Saharan Africa). The third category is **Blurred Growth**. This category is characterized by a poorly defined combination of informal, distance, and online learning enrollment that consistently exceeds the overall market in terms of growth (e.g., Mexico, Spain). The fourth is **Clear Online Growth**—a clear online distance-learning sector continues to outperform the overall market in terms of enrollment (e.g., the United States). Finally, **Peaked/Decline**, where online enrollment has grown at the expense of the national distance university. Online enrollment appears to be peaking or has been relatively flat or uneven in recent years (e.g., England, South Korea).

### **BRICKS-AND-MORTAR HIGHER EDUCATION HAS KEPT ON GROWING**

One way to judge online higher education is in light of overall higher education enrollment and funding trends since 2000. From the beginning, advocates positioned online learning as offering the potential to circumvent conventional institutional access, quality, and cost limitations, suggesting that new technology could accomplish what standard infrastructure could not. Enrollment trends since 2000 tell a different story—according to UNESCO data, the gross enrollment ratio at the undergraduate level doubled in much of the world over the past two decades.

The vast majority of this enrollment expansion had little to do with online learning. Overall enrollment growth dwarfs online student ratios found by OBHE case studies—which are typically well below 10 percent. In countries where online does exhibit enrollment scale, traditional age undergraduates—the vast majority of higher education students—are rarely the target. Brazil, where a number of very

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**The vast majority of this enrollment expansion had little to do with online learning.**

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large for-profit higher education providers have used online learning to rapidly expand enrollment, may be an exception. Despite concerns about the expansion potential of conventional bricks-and-mortar higher education, this model has proven accommodating and popular with students, parents, institutions, and governments.

#### **AT WHAT COST?**

Debate continues about the cost efficiency of online learning. Many faculty and administrators regard online learning as more expensive to develop and deliver than conventional arrangements. The what and the how of online learning is more important than the “fact” of the delivery mode. Details of implementation—the host of variables at play—inhibit simple conclusions or generalizable findings. Formal assessment requires quantitative data, but the subjective and relational nature of education calls for qualitative inputs. What can be measured is not necessarily what needs to be.

The bottom line is that online higher education has yet to clearly demonstrate lower development and delivery costs. Put another way, specific forms of online higher education with well-understood cost reduction models and quality safeguards have rarely been scaled up. Few nonprof-

it higher education institutions embark on online learning with cost savings top-of-mind. No question there are financially successful, popular, and quality online programs with respectable outcomes. The point here is that online programs tend to emphasize convenience over cost, and price, conventionally, as a proxy for quality.

#### **WHAT ABOUT CROSS-BORDER ONLINE LEARNING?**

Another strand of early enthusiasm for online learning was the notion that the technology would disrupt national higher education systems, prompting large virtual student flows across country borders. Again, reality proved rather different. From a large base, conventional international student flows have increased about threefold since 2000 to almost five million students, while cross-border online learning has remained marginal by comparison.

The OBHE report examines data from Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, showing that the fully online or distance share of total international student enrollment—all modalities—is modest and often in decline. Despite the convenience and direct or indirect cost savings that online learning affords, some mix of preference, habit, regulation, and technology limitation continues to render the modality peripheral to international student recruitment.

#### **CONCLUSION**

UNESCO forecasts that global demand for higher education will rise from an enrollment of about 200 million today to 414 million by 2030, driven by population growth, a burgeoning middle class in emerging economies, and attainment gains in secondary education. Higher education enrollment more than doubled between 2000 and 2015, leveraging primarily bricks-and-mortar models, and despite earlier predictions that distance learning would need to address a looming capacity gap. But adding another 200 million students may only be practical if online learning plays a more strategic role.

Fixed broadband is reaching a critical mass in much of the world, an essential precondition to online learning taking off. Governments increasingly see online learning as a tool that can be used well or poorly, rather than something to be blindly championed or stereotyped. But it is hard to imagine fully online degrees catering to a large proportion of traditional age undergraduates, the bulk of the higher education market. By itself, the delivery mode is simply too limited pedagogically to engage the typical student throughout a lengthy degree program. Online learning is no match for travel, immersion, and networking, not least for international students. For shorter programs, at least at the graduate level, and for more experienced students who enroll later in life and for whom the convenience of online is es-

sential, fully online can be a good fit if pedagogically sound.

For many institutions and students, a blend of online and in-person study may be the best way forward. Blended learning means that online learning complements, rather than competes with, the traditional campus; supports learners, faculty, and staff where they live (in urban areas at least); and affords creative combinations of individualized and group, and online and in-person learning. This vision of online higher education aligns online and campus development, something that is surely in the long-term interest of most institutions. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10935>

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## Maximizing the Civic Mission of Universities

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Michelle Obama's autobiography, *Becoming* (2018, p.147), talks about growing up on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois (US), and the chasm between the University of Chicago and its neighborhood. She writes, "To most everyone I knew growing up, elite meant *not for us*. Its gray stone buildings almost literally had their backs turned to the streets surrounding the campus... Like many South Siders, my family maintained what was an admittedly dim and limited view of the university, even if my mom had passed a year happily working there."

Michelle's reflections are echoed in a recent United Kingdom survey. According to a 2018 survey by the Civic University Commission, 58 percent of respondents said they were "proud" of their universities. However, 35 percent were unable to name a single thing their local university had done to engage the local community, and 30 percent of lower socioeconomic respondents had never visited a local campus.

### DOES THIS MATTER?

Universities have served society well, playing a leading role in nation formation, scientific discovery, and intellectual and public discourse. But nowadays, in the context of widening socioeconomic and regional disparities within countries and competitive economic circumstances globally, there are growing concerns about student performance,

learning outcomes, and employment opportunities. The contribution of education and research and their value and impact for national and local objectives are also questioned. There are concerns that pursuit of global reputation and status have come at the expense of social responsibilities—worries that are reflected by a collapse of trust in public institutions and elites.

Accordingly, in many countries, there is growing public and political demand that universities be more accountable and deliver more public benefit to their cities and regions. Universities are being asked to stretch beyond the traditions of teaching, research, and scholarship, and to reach out beyond their walls, real or metaphorical, in order to connect with their communities and regions in ways that are novel, challenging, and impactful.

These tensions are giving rise to three interrelated issues: public attitudes toward public services, including education; degree of public trust between different sectors of society; and public interest in effective and efficient use of public resources, and the contribution and value to society.

### THE ENGAGEMENT AGENDA

"Engagement" now forms a critical part of government and, correspondingly, of higher education agendas. Historically, academic involvement in activities beyond teaching and research or scholarship was described as "service." Over the years, "service" was interpreted primarily as involvement on university committees and/or membership of professional organizations. Today, engagement between universities and society and the economy is a major issue. It is a key component of national policy making, a tool for institutional profiling, and/or an indicator of performance as part of the broader accountability and system steering agendas.

The OECD led an influential project exploring the relationship between higher education and 40 regions and cities, and the drivers and barriers for engagement. The issues were summarized in *Higher Education and Regions: Globally Competitive, Locally Engaged*. The European Union produced a guide for regional authorities on *Connecting Universities to Regional Growth*, and is now pursuing a place-based regional development strategy, called smart specialization, for which university research and the vocational education and training system (VET) are key actors. The UNESCO Global Universities Network for Innovation (GUNI) picks up on the idea of the civic university and the need to respond to grand challenges, as set out in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in its report *Higher Education in the World: Balancing the Global with the Local*.

The European Union has also been developing tools for institutional profiling and ranking to capture categories of knowledge exchange and regional engagement, as well as graduate employment. This began with U-MAP (2005), an

institutional profiling instrument, and was then applied to U-Multirank (2014). *E3M: European Indicators and Ranking Methodology for University Third Mission* (2012) was another EU project. These initiatives are similar to the *Carnegie Elective Classification for Communication Engagement* (2006). Others include *Campus Compact Indicators of Engagement* (2001), Talloires Network/Association of Commonwealth Universities *Inventory Tool for Higher Education Civic Engagement* (2004), initiatives by the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) (2008), and UK National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. Global/commercial rankings have also begun to focus on engagement indicators.

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN WALES

Given the significance of higher education for social and economic development, ministries of education in many countries are seeking to steer universities toward a greater degree of civic engagement. Policy instruments employed include national frameworks and priority setting, performance indicators and/or other funding instruments, entrepreneurship education and work-based learning, and evaluation criteria aligned with national priorities.

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For example, the Netherlands Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, 2015–2025, identifies knowledge valorization—the creation of economic and social value from knowledge and social benefit—as a key priority. Finland’s performance funding model includes indicators related to meeting national and strategic objectives and encouraging cooperation. Ireland’s Action Plan for Education, 2016–2019, requires institutions to demonstrate how they contribute “to personal development as well as sustainable economic development, innovation, identifying and addressing societal challenges, social cohesion, civic engagement and vibrant cultural activities.”

Wales is no different. Traditionally, Welsh higher education has been characterized by a commitment to the people of Wales, with funding from public subscription and lifelong learning opportunities for local people. Today, however, Wales is a net importer of students and net exporter of graduates. In the context of Brexit, forecasts suggest that Wales could become even poorer economically than the rest

of the United Kingdom, with a greater gap in educational attainment. Thus, in a determination to steer a distinctive position for itself, the Welsh government has introduced some innovative policy initiatives. Whereas England has embraced a marketized approach to higher education, with escalating tuition fees and growing institutional and regional inequality, the concept of “public good” underpins Welsh public policy. In 2015, the Well-Being of Future Generations Act made it a statutory requirement for each public body to work toward delivery of seven well-being goals to ensure Wales is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, and composed of cohesive communities with a vibrant culture and Welsh language, and a society that is globally responsible. The new Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales (TERCW) will create better coordination across higher and further education and oversee greater civic engagement between institutions and Welsh society.

Against this background, *Maximising Universities’ Civic Contribution* (2018), authored by John Goddard, Ellen Hazelkorn, Stevie Upton, and Tom Boland, made six recommendations:

- Adopting a strategic vision for the postcompulsory sector in Wales
- Including civic engagement as a formal aspect of universities’ performance
- Developing regional clusters of institutions as a means of strengthening place-based planning and decision-making between higher education and other parts of Welsh society and economy
- Incentivizing collaboration between universities and other parts of the postcompulsory education sector
- Embedding and widening access and lifelong-learning, including adult education, as intrinsic characteristics and responsibilities of civic mission
- Providing engagement funding for universities contingent on collaboration and alignment with Welsh national and regional priorities.

The intention is to ensure a coherent, integrated approach that does not lead to the siloing of teaching and learning, research and innovation, and engagement and civic mission into three distinct and parallel sets of activities, competing for money, time, and status. Rather, the ambition is to encourage an embedded approach, whereby civic mission is part of the core role and responsibilities of universities, as institutional citizens of and for Wales. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10936>

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# The Country Configuration of Global Private Higher Education

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Given the large and expanding reality of private higher education (PHE) globally, it is important to know its country configuration. This is now possible from analysis of the first-ever comprehensive and reliable worldwide dataset on private higher education, which may be found at <https://prophe.org/en/global-data/global-data-files/global-enrollment-by-country/>. It covers all 192 countries showing higher education enrollment data, though 179 is the total allowing us to see or calculate data for both private and public sectors. This article uses figures from 2010 (with limited longitudinal comparison).

The article shows that a twin reality captures the key country configuration of global private higher education. One reality is the dispersion of the private presence to so many countries in all regions. The other, however, is the heavy, disproportionate concentration of private higher education in the largest country systems. Obviously, the impressiveness of each reality qualifies the impressiveness of the other reality, but it is by identifying the patterns of dispersion and concentration side by side that we can appreciate the overall country configuration of global PHE.

## **PHE IS WIDELY DISPERSED**

Large expansion is not a necessary condition for widespread dispersion of PHE across countries but it certainly facilitates it. Until a few decades ago, many countries had no or only quite marginal PHE. During these decades, however, PHE has grabbed a greater and greater share of total enrollment even as the public sector itself has expanded more rapidly than ever in raw enrollment. Although the private proportional growth is now finally slowing, its absolute growth remains powerful. In the first decade of this century, while the global private share increased from 28 percent to 33 percent, private enrollment jumped from roughly 27 million to nearly 57 million. We could conservatively estimate PHE today as having at least 75 million students.

One clear illustration of country dispersion is the near disappearance of public monopoly systems (as already laid out in *IHE* volume #94, “Vanishing Public Monopoly”). Among our 179 countries, perhaps only 10 still lack PHE, and some of these are either grappling with PHE proposals or have some ambiguous private form (e.g., international rather than national). We can now add that some 98 percent of the world’s enrollment is in dual-sector systems.

Yet near ubiquity is not the only illustration of country dispersion. As late as in the middle of the last century, US PHE was the sole towering private enrollment presence. Although it still towers in quality, prestige, research, and finance, it holds only a tenth and shrinking share of global private enrollment. Whereas India is the new giant—its over 12 million private enrollments more than doubling any other country’s—delete India and global enrollment falls only from 33 percent to 29 percent. The global spread of PHE has already been such that it will never again be nearly as concentrated in any one country as it once was in the United States. Further, other than Brazil in Latin America, the deletion of the country with the largest PHE lowers no region’s private share by more than 2 percent (and the deletion of the largest two country private sectors never by more than 3 percent). Region after region has seen dispersion of PHE of some significant size to more and more countries.

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**We could conservatively estimate PHE today as having at least 75 million students.**

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Much of the increased country dispersion of PHE involves the developing world. While the developing world accounts for most of the growth and increased dispersion of higher education overall, this is particularly so for the private sector. Some developing countries, China foremost, build large private sectors even with relatively low private shares of total enrollment, but many developing countries with large higher education systems (e.g., Brazil, India, and Indonesia) have large private shares. Why the special growth and dispersion of PHE in the developing world? One reason lies in developing countries’ limited public finance amid great higher education growth. Another is that whereas most developed countries experienced formidable growth in a world era in which, for most countries, public was the nearly unquestioned dominant empirical and normative form, most developing countries have greatly expanded their systems in an era of greater privatization

in social arenas, with dual-sector options quite available in higher education.

#### **PHE CONCENTRATES HEAVILY IN THE LARGEST SYSTEMS**

But for all these realities of PHE country dispersion, the country spread is far from uniform. Indeed, global PHE concentrates significantly in a set of countries. While PHE holds 33 percent of total global higher education taking its average as a mean, its median by country is 20 percent. Just three countries—India, the United States, and Brazil—hold over 40 percent of global PHE. In fact, 17 different combinations of just three countries (always including India) aggregate to a third of global PHE. On the other hand, whereas one can be struck by just any three countries holding such a high share of global PHE, the reality that 17 different combinations exist could also be taken as some further evidence of relative dispersion across countries.

The most robust manifestation of the country concentration of PHE is how much it clusters in *large* higher education systems. Of course, we might well expect some correlation between total and PHE enrollment. The world's largest 10 systems (the only ones with over 3 million enrollments) do hold an impressive 58 percent of total global enrollment—but they hold 69 percent of global private enrollment. Choosing the largest 10 countries by private enrollment rather than by total enrollment would raise the private share by only 2 percent. Indeed, nine of the top 10 countries would remain the same, while the Philippines would replace Turkey. In descending order, the 10 largest private enrollment sectors are in India, the United States, Brazil, China, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Iran, the Philippines, and Russia. Six of these have private sectors larger than their public sectors. Whereas Asian countries are the majority on this top 10 list, Latin American countries are the majority in the next 10.

This last observation suggests that alongside the country concentration of PHE lies regional concentration, a topic for another occasion. What the present article shows is that global PHE's country configuration features a combination of significant dispersion across systems alongside significant concentration in large higher education systems. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10937>

*International Higher Education* would like to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) for its support of coverage of higher education in Africa and for its general support of our publication. CCNY has long recognized the importance of higher education in Africa and beyond, and this generosity significantly enables both our work as well as that of our partner at the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal in South Africa, home to the International Network for Higher Education in Africa (INHEA).

## Governance of Higher Education in the Arab World and the Case of Tunisia

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Public universities in the Arab world have suffered from what might be called a *political model* of governance. This model involves the subordination of universities to political influence, from top to bottom as well as horizontally. It leads to the closing of minds, the undermining of knowledge production, and a limited ability of universities to bring about social change. The exception to this dominant model in the Arab world is Tunisia, which, not coincidentally, has also been the only exception to the failure of the “Arab Spring,” continuing on the path of democracy and progressive reform despite some setbacks.

#### **THE POLITICAL MODEL**

An edited volume recently published in Beirut recounts the historical development of 10 Arab public universities—the oldest in each country—from their inception until 2016. It shows that the typical Arab public university fell under a political model of governance, mostly in the 1970s, moving away from the Napoleonic model used previously. This Napoleonic model references the French system established by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), in which higher education is centralized (state oriented), secular, and provided in distinct professionally and academically oriented schools apart from research institutes (which are also centralized).

For example, in 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat issued a law prohibiting political activity at Egyptian universities. Based on this law, security agents began setting up checkpoints at the entrances of university buildings and intervening in university decisions. In fact, Sadat revived the strong legacy of control familiar in the Nasser era (1953–1970) while, paradoxically, adopting a liberal economic policy and new openness to the West and Israel in foreign policy. To fight the continuing political influence of Nasserism inside universities, Sadat relied on conservative Islamic forces, including both faculty and students. The same approach continued under the next president, Hosni Mubarak, who held power until 2011. Indeed, Egyptian universities remain the topic of many reports on academic freedom violations by Human Rights Watch. During the same

period, Egyptian public universities witnessed a decline in the international exchange of students and academics. Concomitantly, the “borrowing system” of Egyptian professors by Gulf countries accelerated after the oil crisis of 1973. To increase the number of senior professors sent abroad, the provision of local PhD graduates increased, leading to a sort of inbreeding in academia. Furthermore, the “borrowed” faculty, subjected to the conservative atmosphere of their host countries, returned home as *nouveaux riches* and contented with the status quo.

Damascus University in Syria came under both security control and the influence of the political ideology of the ruling Ba’ath party. While the security system required academics to be “silent”—their academic freedom curtailed—they were also asked to speak the language of the Ba’ath Party. This began in the 1970s, when a branch of the party was established at Damascus University with offices in various colleges and departments. A decree, issued in 1970, transformed the Teachers’ Union (an independent body established in 1935) into a “popular organization” that included all civil servants in the ministries of education and

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**Damascus University in Syria came under both security control and the influence of the political ideology of the ruling Ba’ath party.**

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higher education. This organization was affiliated with the Ba’ath Party. As for the students, they were affiliated with the “Student Union Executive Office,” which was part of the “National Union of Syrian Students,” in turn affiliated with the Ba’ath Party. All this took place in accordance with the Law on the Prevention of Political Activity at the university.

The situation in Libyan public universities is similar to Syria, with a further touch of surrealism. Instead of the Ba’ath ideology, it drew on the Third World revolutionary ideology professed in the *Green Book* (1975) of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, who ruled the country between 1969 and 2011. The process started in 1973 with the country’s Cultural Revolution, during which Gaddafi declared the “abolition of all the laws in force, clearing the country of perverts,” and promising “no freedom to the country’s enemies.” Cooperating with the intelligence services, the country’s Revolutionary Committees expelled faculty, deans, and university presidents. Gaddafi himself went to Benghazi University in order to push the process forward, giving

speeches and leading rallies aimed at eliminating opposition figures. According to available sources, he attended the execution, at the university’s central square, of students who were considered enemies of the people, carried out by student members of Revolutionary Committees. After Gaddafi, universities went through the same process again, but in reverse, with the elimination of anyone accused of having collaborated with Gaddafi.

Similar observations of politicized university governance—each with its own peculiarities—could be made at the University of Sanaa in Yemen, the Lebanese University, Khartoum University in Sudan, Kuwait University, and the University of Jordan. Among the Gulf States, the case of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, founded in 1986, shows a distinctive version of the political model of governance: a paternalistic one. The university is under the protection and care of the sultan and conservative values are dominant; from its inception, this has inhibited intellectual openness and encouraged self-censorship.

**THE TUNISIAN EXCEPTION**

Public universities in Tunisia appear atypical. They remain closer to the Napoleonic model. Unlike the Syrian Ba’ath Party, the Tunisian ruling political party, the Constitutional Liberal Party (*Destour*) is no ideological party; it is an elite party with a popular base. It incorporates members from a variety of intellectual backgrounds, including leftists; indeed, former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali appointed a member of the left, Mohamed Charfi, as minister of education (1989–1994).

The differences between the Tunisian case and others in the region are significant enough to be explanatory regarding the varied outcomes of the so-called Arab Spring. The first difference concerns intellectual openness. The University of Tunis was, and remains, open to the French university system in its curricula, organization, and intellectual resources. French books, newspapers, television, and other media are part of Tunisian culture and university life, even influencing the Islamic Ennahda Party. The second difference relates to the selection of university leadership. An election system was introduced by law in 2011 and consolidated afterwards—unlike in Egypt, where it was legislated following the 2011 revolution, but subsequently annulled. The third difference is the legacy of syndicalism. A union for higher education and scientific research was established in 1967 and joined the Tunisian Labor Union, which had been in existence since 1946, preceding the country’s independence from French rule in 1956. The Higher Education Union expanded in the 1980s, as a reaction to the shift toward economic liberalism in the country.

The political model of governance is likely to transform

the university into an agency of socialization, producing elites armed with certainties, ready answers, and loyalty. Since the region is characterized by social inequality and tensions, counter ideologies hide beneath the surface, waiting for the moment to explode. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10938>

## Forced Internationalization of Higher Education: An Emerging Phenomenon

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Today's world is faced with a severe forced migration crisis. The recent *Annual Global Trends Report* by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicates that a person becomes a forced migrant every two seconds. The current number of forced migrants worldwide is 68.5 million. These forced migrants include established scholars as well as undergraduate and graduate students whose education has been interrupted by forces outside of their control. They are knocking on the doors of universities in different parts of the world. Some are being heard, others are being ignored. Universities and governments should remember how significantly forced immigrant scholars and students have contributed to national research and development and institutional quality in the past, including, for example, Jewish scholars who fled to the United States from Nazi Germany.

A recent report by the UNHCR, *Left Behind: Refugee Education in Crisis*, reveals that the ratio of refugee youth studying at a university is 1 percent, which is far lower than the global enrollment rate in higher education of 36 percent. It is extremely disappointing that national governments and individual institutions have not acted more quickly to assist the large mass of displaced people in accessing education—in line with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—thereby recognizing this as

a human right. There have been some promising efforts, but these efforts have not been evenly spread across the developed and the developing world. According to the *Annual Global Trends Report* of the UNHCR, 85 percent of the refugees under the UNHCR's mandate, who have been forcibly displaced as a result of conflict, violence, or persecution, are hosted by countries in the developing world. The challenges faced by these countries in responding to a global problem on their doorstep requires further attention, as the case of Turkey illustrates.

### SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

Currently, Turkey hosts over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, the highest number hosted by any country. As the war in Syria is ongoing, and assuming therefore that it will host Syrian refugees for a long time, the Turkish government has repositioned itself by strategically internationalizing three functions of Turkish universities.

In order to help Syrian refugees access universities as students, the Turkish government has reformed academic and financial admission policies. Universities have been required to admit Syrian refugees without proof of previous academic qualification as “special students,” and those who do have proof as “regular students.” In addition, Arabic-taught programs have been established at eight universities in southern Turkey, close to the Syrian border. Financial policies have been changed to provide Syrian refugees with government scholarships and exemption from tuition fees paid by other international students. The result has been a dramatic increase in the number of Syrian students enrolled in Turkish universities, from 608 in 2011 to 20,701 in 2018, as reported by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE).

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**Currently, Turkey hosts over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, the highest number hosted by any country.**

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The strategic internationalization efforts of the Turkish government have also targeted potential academics among Syrian refugees. In 2016, an online platform, the Database for International Academics, was established to collect curricula vitae. This resulted in increased numbers of Syrian academics working in Turkey. According to the CoHE, the number of full-time Syrian academics has increased from 292 to 348 in the last three years. In addition, in the same period, masters and doctoral programs admitted 1,492 and 404 Syrian refugees respectively.

The Turkish government has also strategically internationalized the public service function of Turkish universities to ensure that Syrian refugees who are neither potential students nor academics are able to access Turkish universities. This has resulted in some Turkish universities offering a range of free services to Syrian refugees. These services include free Turkish language courses, healthcare, psychological support, and information seminars on crucial topics such as childcare, legal rights of refugees, and employability.

#### FORCED INTERNATIONALIZATION

The above illustrates an emerging phenomenon, namely forced internationalization. The above-mentioned reforms in Turkey have simultaneously provided forced migrants with access to higher education and internationalized the policies and functions of universities. So what are the key characteristics of forced internationalization? And what does it offer for the future?

Consistent with the existing definition of internationalization of higher education, forced internationalization is intentional, strategic, and it addresses the three core functions of universities: teaching, research, and service. However, it is different in several ways. It responds to a crisis on the doorstep—in Turkey’s case, the forced migration of millions of Syrian people, a significant number of whom look to higher education as a pathway to a better life as students, academics, and/or public service recipients. Whereas in the past, internationalization of higher education has primarily been voluntary and part of a deliberate institutional (and in some cases governmental) policy, this emerging form of internationalization is “forced.”

Academically, the diversity and brain gain that refugees bring will enhance the quality of learning, teaching, and research, as do other forms of internationalization. Economically, while forced internationalization is unlikely to be a source of income generation in the short term, history tells us that, in the longer term, the innovative and entrepreneurial contributions forced migrants will make to institutions and countries as skilled migrants are substantial. Socially and culturally, forced migrants have the potential to enrich and strengthen the host society. Politically, forced internationalization is a soft power investment, which may lead to improved future diplomatic relations between the host country and the forced migrants’ home countries.

In addition to the traditional four rationales for internationalization, forced internationalization demonstrates a new rationale—a “humanitarian rationale,” suggested by Streitwieser and his colleagues in 2018. This rationale recognizes higher education as a public good on a personal

level (for the benefit of individuals in need), at the national level (for the benefit of societies and communities within a country) and internationally (for the benefit of the world).

Beyond any doubt, however, integrating a disadvantaged international group into a higher education system creates uncommon challenges. The host society, especially where access to university is highly competitive, may resist this type of internationalization, regarding the forced migrants as competitors with an unfair advantage. Formulating and passing controversial laws is a legal challenge. Forced migrants often need not only exemption from tuition fees, but also direct financial aid, posing an economic challenge. Administratively, it can also be difficult to assess forced migrants’ previous qualifications. Forced migrants need access to information about applying to universities, which creates communication challenges. A language-related obstacle is that most forced migrants lack proficiency in the host country’s official language. Forced internationalization is in many ways a race against time, requiring a host country to act swiftly in order to find and support the best talents among the refugee population.

Despite these challenges, we suggest that forced internationalization driven by a humanitarian rationale offers a positive response to forced migration. Applied globally, “forced internationalization” would see governments and universities across the world internationalizing in new ways, in places far away from those affected by crises in geographic terms, but close to them in humanitarian terms. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10938>

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## How Is Academic Culture Influenced by Internationalization?

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In a globalized world, higher education systems (i.e., universities and colleges) integrate international practices into teaching and learning processes, research, and admin-

istrative functions. The latter allows them to respond more adequately to international demands such as cooperation, mobility, and the development of international networks. Internationalization trends arise within decentralized contexts; that is to say, they are not anchored in specific cultural or academic sites, but are the result of an accumulation of global higher education circumstances that lead to the establishment of mechanisms and priorities within broader public policy agendas. As a consequence, the objectives, strategies, power relationships, and individuals contributing to internationalization are scattered throughout different higher education systems around the globe. Ultimately, internationalization processes may be conceived as “belonging to no one, but affecting everyone.” Yet, denying that world-class universities and the educational systems of developed nations are key influencers of internationalization practices would be specious.

#### **INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION ON INTERNAL PROCESSES**

Four key mechanisms illustrate the spread of internationalization practices in higher education systems and institutions: rankings, cooperation, academic mobility, and curricular reforms. Furthermore, as indicated previously, world-class universities exert a clear influence on all four mechanisms. These institutions set international standards for teaching strategies as well as for research and service practices. This brings up an important question: what happens, internally, to universities that decide to seek and adopt internationalization practices? An important part of each institution’s unique internal world is reflected in its academic culture: its own set of beliefs, norms, habits, and values. Institutional and academic priorities, types of norms, validating guidelines, as well as what is allowed, expected, and valued is likewise influenced by ideals of what a university “should be” and what “quality” is. What are the features of research universities’ academic cultures that are influenced by internationalization, itself guided by the forms and mechanisms of world class universities?

Teaching processes are affected in several ways. Beliefs regarding quality in teaching, teaching strategies, and evaluation techniques are modified. International demands and notions of what “quality teaching” is may intermingle with academics’ own ideas of what a quality teacher is and what is important to teach within each discipline—ideas that have been validated by academics through personal experience within their own undergraduate or postgraduate programs. As a result, internationalization processes can generate new challenges as well as tensions.

Internationalization processes also impact curricular decisions. Features such as the learning objectives of undergraduate programs, graduate student profiles, and cooperation with foreign universities are affected. All these aspects are marked by how knowledge is developed and validated by research communities, given that internationalization processes stipulate which forms of research are valid and where valid research must be produced and disseminated. This international influence reroutes the institutional norms and values that academics associate with knowledge production.

#### **THE INFLUENCE OF RANKINGS ON RESEARCH**

Within the process of internationalization, rankings are important. They weigh on decisions made by academic institutions; for example, they control the type of research that is prioritized and funded, forms of international cooperation, knowledge dissemination (e.g., which academic journals

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### **Internationalization processes also impact curricular decisions.**

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are considered relevant), and the way academic output is measured (e.g., the number of peer-reviewed articles that an academic must publish per year). Therefore, a relevant question to ask would be: to what extent do international demands determine the *what* and *how* of research?

As for “academic autonomy,” international trends undoubtedly reprioritize the areas of knowledge considered relevant for academics and schools and institutions to be optimally positioned. This rearrangement happens, in part, due to the number of indexed journals and specific publications with more perceived value, and by drawing professors to become members of editorial groups of esteemed journals. As such, higher education institutions may have local autonomy, but their interactions with the international scene influence how they produce and disseminate knowledge.

#### **DOES THE INTERNATIONAL OVERPOWER THE LOCAL?**

What happens to local needs and demands during internationalization processes? Does the *international* overpower the *local*? When shifting their focus toward internationalization trends, higher education institutions can lose sight of local needs and mission objectives. Some institutions give more importance to international accreditation than to

national accreditation, and prioritize international rankings over local needs and internationally oriented policies over social needs. Internationalization should be conceived as a medium through which institutional quality and education processes are improved in general, and not as an end goal in and of itself.

In conclusion, internationalization processes unquestionably affect academic cultures by establishing new challenges within teaching/learning processes, research, and administrative functions. They also have an impact on how new knowledge is produced and disseminated. While undoubtedly generating tensions and conflict, internationalization should stimulate academics to reevaluate their teaching and research strategies. Similarly, it should improve the quality of higher education and its relevance to local needs—put under pressure by globalization. Instead of imposing external clusters of practices and standards, internationalization should become a support for local decision-making at higher education institutions. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10940>

## Internationalization of Indonesian Higher Education: Recent Initiatives and their Problems

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Indonesian higher education is insular in comparison to its Southeast Asian neighbors, e.g., Singapore, Malaysia, and even Vietnam. Student and staff mobility are low and no international branch campus operates in the country. In early 2018, two government initiatives—welcoming foreign providers and recruiting international academics—signaled that the situation was about to change. However, lack of progress in those initiatives raises the question of what has blocked the internationalization of Indonesian higher education and what can be done to rectify the situation.

### RECENT INTERNATIONALIZATION INITIATIVES

The first internationalization initiative, welcoming international branch campuses, seeks to bring in quality providers to improve the training of Indonesian human resources. The introduction of these campuses may also bring competition in the higher education sector and stimulate local universities to improve their quality. Nevertheless, statements from different government officials regarding the specific regulations for these campuses were ambiguous. Some said that these campuses could be wholly owned by foreign universities, while others stated that they had to be a joint investment. Indonesian media reported that by mid-2018, ten campuses would be operational, including branches of the University of Cambridge and MIT, which would be located in a special economic zone outside Jakarta. These campuses, it was stated, would be required to teach compulsory Indonesian subjects, such as religious instruction and national ideology, and the courses offered would be limited, mainly, to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The second initiative, World Class Professors, seeks to recruit up to 200 academics from the world's best 100 universities. This 2018 initiative is the revamped and extended version of an earlier program launched in 2017. That first program was deemed successful for bringing in international academics through a sabbatical placement program, lasting for several months, at Indonesian universities. The underlying rationale is to improve the research productivity of Indonesian universities. It is believed that by bringing in highly productive international researchers, Indonesian academics will have collaborative partners who can help increase their research quality and international publications. For this second iteration, the government has set aside approximately US\$13 million. This means that each international academic is to be paid about US\$4,000–5,000 per month for a maximum period of three years. Importantly, the prospects of career improvement are limited as these international academics may not take up managerial positions.

The two initiatives aim to increase the quality of Indonesian higher education through internationalization activities. There seems to be an awareness among policy-makers that knowledge transfer from international universities and academics is needed to improve human resources and boost research productivity and innovation in Indonesian higher education. Hence, internationalization in the Indonesian context is largely synonymous with quality improvement. However, in early 2019, the progress of these initiatives seems slow, and no international branch campus is operational in the country.

**INHIBITING FACTORS**

The slow progress of internationalization at Indonesian universities can be ascribed to national and organizational problems. At the national level, there is no unified policy on internationalization. The government has been keen to create world-class universities in Indonesia, but the road map has never been made clear. Premature planning and contradictory statements by Indonesian officials regarding the opening of international branch campuses indicate a lack of policy coherence. The rationale for internationalization and its role in the quality improvement of Indonesian higher education remains largely unknown.

At the organizational level, the management of many Indonesian universities has not undergone adequate transformation and a *status quo* culture is pervasive. Among academics, an entrenched patronage system in some universities may force junior academics to be subservient to the will and direction of senior academics. Innovative junior academics can wait long before securing the opportunity to hold leadership positions and transform the organization. Moreover, university leaders may often be chosen because of their seniority of service, not necessarily because of organizational skills and a proven track record in managing

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**The slow progress of internationalization at Indonesian universities can be ascribed to national and organizational problems.**

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innovative education programs, let alone internationalization efforts. Consequently, the organizational culture in some universities may not be conducive to fostering staff members who can quickly respond to change. Coupled with the absence of a unified policy, these organizational ailments seem to have turned higher education institutions into sluggish organizations that are reluctant to welcome new internationalization initiatives from the government. In fact, through the mass media, many Indonesian academics opposed the two initiatives above and called them neocolonialist and an unbridled commodification of higher education, without any consideration of the government's goal to improve quality.

**THE FATE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN INDONESIA**

The fate of internationalization of higher education in Indonesia largely depends on national policy-makers and actors at the level of universities. Conceptualized as a part of

quality improvement, internationalization holds potential for Indonesian higher education development. If the Indonesian government should be willing to develop a robust internationalization policy as a means to improve the higher education sector, much could be adapted from the policies of neighboring countries. How Malaysia incorporates international branch campuses so that foreign quality providers can absorb unmet demand for higher education can serve as a model, for instance.

However, considering the resistance against internationalization initiatives within Indonesian universities, the biggest issue that Indonesia must tackle is transforming the organizational culture and management of universities. Without major efforts to do so, the future of the Indonesian workforce is in jeopardy. A study done by the Boston Consulting Group in 2013 predicted that Indonesian companies would trail behind in future years, as they were unable to recruit quality talent. By 2020, recruiting entry-level candidates will be difficult, as only half of the positions will be filled. At the senior management level, the Indonesian workforce will not have enough global exposure and leadership skills to keep up with regional and global competition. To transform the management and culture of universities, Indonesia can learn from the policies of its Asian neighbors. The Chinese 211 and 985 projects have experience that can be contextualized to the Indonesian situation, particularly on how to drive the transformation of key institutions to help them become world-class universities. The willingness to learn from the experiences of its neighbors may hold the key to transforming and internationalizing Indonesian higher education. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.109415>

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## India Takes Slow Steps toward Internationalization

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There is a growing consensus in India among government officials and many university leaders that Indian universities need to improve significantly on the internationalization dimension, especially in terms of international students and faculty. This emerging consensus is in part due to the consistently poor performance of Indian universities in various world university rankings. Only a few Indian institutions count among the top 500 universities

worldwide. Even fewer, no more than one or two, have occasionally figured among the top 200. The poor performance of Indian universities in world rankings is in large part due to deficits in terms of research production, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition, most institutions—including the various branches of the well-known Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)—fare poorly on the internationalization dimension. One of the reasons why Indian universities do not attract larger numbers of international students is because of the poor quality of education at most institutions, though other factors—including bureaucratic hurdles and the near-complete indifference among public universities to the international sphere—play a role as well.

Indian officials now believe that with greater internationalization, the country's universities will improve their positions in world university rankings. For that reason, over the past year or so, the government and the IITs have taken several initiatives to attract larger numbers of international students and faculty.

#### CURRENT NUMBERS

India has 903 universities and nearly 50,000 colleges and other kinds of degree-awarding institutions. At the last count, more than 36 million students were enrolled in these institutions and their numbers will keep growing in the coming years. However, international students make up only a small number of the total. In 2010–2011, there were 27,531 international students in India. Their numbers increased to 46,144 in 2017–18, an increase of 67 percent. While this increase may appear to be significant, it is not. There are many more Indian students in the United States alone—more than 200,000 Indians in 2017–2018. Tens of thousands of Indian students study in other Western countries, including non-English speaking countries. Non-Western countries have become popular destinations as well. More than 18,000 Indians study in China, more than in the United Kingdom, and their numbers are expected to keep growing. Finally, even though the numbers of international students in Indian higher education have increased over time, they still comprise less than 0.2 percent of the total student population.

The number of foreign faculty at Indian universities is also small. For example, only 40 foreign nationals teach across the 23 IITs. This is less than 1 percent of all faculty members. Some private universities have done relatively well in recruiting international faculty, but, overall, there are far too few foreign faculty teaching at Indian higher education institutions.

#### NEW INITIATIVES TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The Indian government has belatedly recognized that

world-ranked universities bring prestige and are a source of soft power. To that end, it launched a new initiative in 2016 to promote its best universities on the world stage. The so-called Institutions of Eminence (IoE) initiative—somewhat similar to China's Projects 211 and 985 in the late 1990s—aimed to identify 20 eminent universities, 10 each in the public and private sectors. These eminent institutions are to have near-complete autonomy from the government which, many believe, is responsible for the current dismal state of higher education. Among other things, these universities are permitted to hire larger numbers of international faculty, up to 25 percent of the total. The expectation is that eminent universities will improve their world rankings over time and attract larger numbers of international students, which in turn will further boost their rankings. However, the initiative remains on the slow track with only six institutions selected so far.

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**The Indian government has belatedly recognized that world-ranked universities bring prestige and are a source of soft power.**

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Another initiative taken by the government in mid-2018 was the “Study in India” portal, which aims to make it easier for international students to select suitable Indian universities. According to Prakash Javadekar, the human resource development minister in charge of education, “India can become a hub of affordable education for foreign students.” The government's goal is to increase the number of international students to 200,000 in five years. In support of this goal, officials announced that 55 percent of 15,000 total places on offer across institutions would be supported by merit-based fee-waivers at differential rates for students from Asia and Africa.

Apart from the “Study in India” initiative, the IIT Council, the highest decision-making body for all IITs, decided that each IIT would be free to independently set fees for international students. The idea was that each IIT could charge competitive fees in order to attract students from low income countries in the region and beyond. IIT–Delhi has led the way by reducing tuition fees substantially for international students, especially for graduate studies.

#### INITIATIVES TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL FACULTY

In November 2018, in an effort to attract larger numbers of international faculty, the Indian government waived all

relevant security clearance requirements for this population. This addressed the slow pace of India's bureaucracy; indeed, both interested institutions and international faculty have tended to lose interest when the clearance process spanned many months. Universities can now hire foreigners directly, without clearance from the ministries of home affairs (MHA) and external affairs (MEA). Mandatory clearance is now limited to foreigners from "Prior Reference Category" countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. The government has also allowed Indians with foreign passports who are also registered as Overseas Citizens of India (similar to a second passport) to be appointed as tenured faculty members without clearance from the MHA or MEA.

On their own initiative, the IITs have agreed to look collectively and proactively for foreign faculty. The IIT Council decided that each of the older and well-established IITs would be responsible for recruiting foreign faculty from one or more geographical areas, both for itself and for other IITs. For example, the United States was divided into three regions and allocated to IIT-Bombay (West Coast), IIT-Delhi (southern US), and IIT-Madras (East Coast). The strategy seems convoluted but does indicate that the IITs may be serious about proactively hiring larger numbers of international faculty.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

These recent initiatives by the Indian government and select public institutions—the IITs—are unlikely to be immediately successful. Even with incentives for foreign students, a "Study in India" portal will not be sufficient to attract larger numbers to India. Indian universities certainly need to be better promoted abroad. Currently, some private universities actively seek to attract students from African countries and elsewhere, but there is no wider strategy in place yet to promote "Studying in India." In addition, overall living conditions for foreigners can be challenging even in larger cities, due to poor residential facilities at universities, racism, and crime.

With respect to international faculty, the IITs will struggle to offer competitive salaries to potential faculty. Furthermore, many IITs are located in far-flung places and do not offer the comforts of larger cities. They are unlikely to be attractive for foreigners. IITs in large cosmopolitan cities such as Mumbai and New Delhi face different sets of problems. New Delhi's toxic air, for example, makes world headlines, and is a major put off for foreigners. Finally, the nature of India's current politics may also deter students and teachers from coming to India. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10942>

## Critical Thinking and Ideology in Chinese Higher Education

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Some may think universities in China lack academic freedom, as they are politically controlled by the party-state in various ways. For example, 10 percent of the total number of credits taken by a student must come from political education courses; academic staff need to be cautious about what they say; and discussing certain historical events in class is taboo. However, these and other mechanisms of political socialization do not necessarily eliminate all efforts of academic freedom. In an attempt to improve the global reputation of Chinese higher education, the state encourages Chinese universities to be innovative and to promote critical thinking, as expected of world-class universities. However, this may significantly counter the effectiveness of the political indoctrination that the Communist Party of China (CPC) wishes to implement throughout China's higher education system. Fudan University (FDU) in Shanghai is a leading university with a long history of pursuing academic excellence and striving for university autonomy. As such, it is an ideal case for examining the tensions between the political and academic tasks of universities. This article is based on fieldwork done in 2014 by the author, using mixed data collection methods and including document review, questionnaires, observation, and interviews.

#### DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

The tension is rooted in the different expectations placed on FDU's academic staff by the state, the university management, and the students.

For its part, the state expects FDU—and all universities in China—to be globally recognized as academically outstanding, while at the same time being politically reliable and continuously serving China's development needs, as a state-supervised entity. The state's expectations of students' education goals are captured by the 1950s slogan, "Red and Expert." In other words, it expects students to aspire to be experts in their field, while at the same time being the successors to, and builders of, Chinese socialism.

In response to these state expectations, FDU focuses on training teachers not to introduce politically incorrect content in their classes, to avoid running afoul of the National

Security Department (which oversees teaching content through indirect external observation) and the university's own security and publicity departments (which perform direct internal oversight). At the same time, however, recent speeches by FDU presidents—regarding the university's responsibility to seek the truth, remain academically independent, and preserve its staff's freedom of thought—show that the university expects to enjoy some degree of academic autonomy. This seems to contradict the state's efforts at exerting political control, especially as FDU has not dismissed or seriously punished academic staff who did talk about politically sensitive topics in class.

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**Critical thinking is encouraged, even in political education courses (PEC).**

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FDU students report having mixed feelings. To some, political education is a necessary part of university education; others see it as an obstacle to academic freedom. Generally, students expect their teachers to foster critical thinking in class.

**TEACHERS AS IMPLEMENTERS OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION**

FDU teachers practice self-censorship by recognizing and adhering to the CPC's political bottom line, thus playing the role of implementers of political socialization. Their teaching experience at the university informs their understanding of which politically sensitive topics and historical events they may and may not discuss in class—which dictates the protocol they use when self-censoring.

The core of the political bottom line is the recognition of the CPC's leadership in China; no matter what topic teachers discuss, they may not challenge the legitimacy of the CPC. The rest of the political bottom line prohibits, or at least severely restricts, discussion of specific historical events and incidents that might cast the CPC in a bad light, such as the 1989 Tiananmen Incident. Bearing these rules in mind, teachers have come up with self-censorship strategies that enable them to quietly exert their academic autonomy, while not technically violating the CPC's political orthodoxy.

The first such strategy involves replacing politically sensitive words with metaphors (e.g., saying "incident" instead of "uprising"), or using events in other parts of the world as subtle allegories for political issues in China. The teachers'

second strategy is to avoid editorializing on Chinese politics in class; for example, they may outline China's political system, but will not overtly adopt a political position. The third strategy involves teachers compromising their personal political views in their research to avoid offending the party-state and to ensure getting published—for example, setting their critiques in the context of given historical periods, to avoid giving offense to the current regime.

**TEACHERS AS ACADEMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS**

Despite their awareness of the political bottom line, FDU teachers generally feel free to pursue academic freedom by encouraging critical thinking among their students. For example, teachers often discuss Western values in class, including the advantages of Western political systems and social values, although doing so is not encouraged by China's ministry of education. In addition, FDU teachers sometimes introduce content challenging the legitimacy of the CPC, using various techniques to avoid crossing the political bottom line—for example, using ironic metaphors, or showing their disagreement with CPC policies or ideologies through facial expressions. FDU teachers also exercise academic judgment when selecting teaching materials, such as rejecting officially approved textbooks.

Critical thinking is encouraged, even in political education courses (PEC). Some PEC teachers even regard the practice as a form of reverse brainwashing, since it helps students to learn the importance of balanced views and allows them to contribute divergent ideas. Some FDU teachers encourage students to look for different, unofficial information sources, to be able to discuss academic issues with a more open mind. Teachers also promote discussion and debate in class to stimulate critical thinking.

**THE PHENOMENON OF ROLE SPLITTING**

The phenomenon of role splitting arises as a result of the competition between state, university, and student expectations, and as a strategy to preserve academic freedom within the political restrictions of the Chinese higher education system. In their interactions, teachers take on different roles with different responsibilities, adopt different strategies, and exhibit different, even contrasting behaviors on different occasions. Sometimes, they obediently observe the political bottom line and work within the boundaries set by the state, particularly those regarding political affairs. Other times, they challenge those norms by trying to expand the scope of their academic freedom into politically sensitive areas. This results in a unique model of higher education.

Based on these understandings of Chinese higher education, the findings show that the boundary of political con-

trol can be managed by teachers through a strategy of role splitting, which is a way to solve the tension between political control and academic freedom and allows the inclusion of alternative perspectives in higher education programs. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10943>

## Research Productivity of Chinese “Young Thousand Talents”

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Implementing talent recruitment programs has become a widely adopted strategy by numerous countries seeking to attract international researchers. Countries that fail to recruit international talent and/or retain domestic talent risk facing severe brain drain. Well-designed talent recruitment programs, offering exceptionally attractive working conditions and salary packages, help in turning brain drain into brain gain.

Until the turn of the millennium, China was a country challenged with brain drain. To deal with the problem, the Chinese government issued successive policies to attract overseas Chinese and foreign talent to China. The “Young Thousand Talents” program (Y1000T), established in 2011, is arguably the most influential of these programs, recruiting early- and middle-career researchers from overseas. The Y1000T program provides attractive terms of employment in an effort to recruit young talent (doctoral degree holders under the age of 40) from overseas who have the potential of becoming leading figures. From 2011 to 2018, around 4,000 researchers have been supported by Y1000T in China. The majority are Chinese returnees. It is commonly agreed that returning talent can effectively enhance the quality and competitiveness of Chinese higher education, yet the research performance of returnees has not been compared to that of Chinese scholars remaining in other research-intensive countries, especially the United States. It is interesting to verify if China really offers better research conditions compared to other countries.

We have compared Y1000Ts selected in the years 2011 and 2012 (the “treatment group”) and Chinese researchers working in American research-intensive universities (a control group whose data has been extracted manually from institutional websites for the sake of this study). The comparison attempts to show whether Y1000Ts are able to publish at a similar rate and with the same quality as their US-affiliated counterparts. The treatment group includes 183 individuals, while the control group includes 363 researchers. While Y1000Ts work either in Chinese universities or in research institutes, all researchers in the control group

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**While performance is similar in terms of gross number of publications, Y1000Ts are at a slight disadvantage in terms of quality of publications (journal impact factor).**

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work in research-intensive universities. Both groups are homogenous in terms of age and discipline (life sciences, engineering and materials sciences, chemistry, mathematical and physical sciences, informational sciences, environmental and earth sciences, medicine, and public health and preventive medicine). The group of US-based Chinese researchers has been split into two cohorts in order to be compared with the Y1000T returnees.

### **SIMILAR PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF RATE OF PUBLICATION**

All selected researchers received their doctoral degrees around 2006. In the next five years, both groups made considerable progress in terms of number of publications. In 2013, the average number of publications among Y1000Ts was 27.1, compared to 25.7 among the control group. After coming back to China, and until 2018, this number increased to 39.0 for Y1000T, while for researchers in the control group, it was 39.4. This is not a significant difference, although the increase in the number of publications by Y1000Ts is slightly slower than that of the control group.

With respect to types of publications, after recruitment, 84.8 percent of publications by Y1000Ts were journal articles (other outputs being proceedings, chapters, or others), while for their counterparts the percentage was 76.1. There is no clear preference for publishing in an open access mode by either group. Both groups’ rates of open access publishing increased over the time span in focus here, rep-

representing an increase of 3.7 percent to 6.9 percent among Y1000Ts, and 4.6 percent to 6.6 percent for researchers in the United States.

#### SLIGHTLY BEHIND IN THE QUALITY OF PUBLICATION

While performance is similar in terms of gross number of publications, Y1000Ts are at a slight disadvantage in terms of quality of publications (journal impact factor), although there is no significant difference between the two groups in the number of publications in first quartile journals. In terms of impact factor, Y1000Ts tend to publish in less prestigious journals. They are more successful in getting their publications cited, regardless of how many times. Specifically, Y1000Ts had 78.29 percent of their publications cited after moving back to China. In the same period, their counterparts had 73.8 percent of their outputs cited.

Descriptive statistics also illustrate that, after being recruited back to China, the average citation per Y1000T publication (12.225) is lower than that of the control group (15.931). With respect to publication recognition, measured by accumulative citations, Y1000Ts appear to lag behind their counterparts. In addition, although Y1000Ts are very focused on publishing with international partners, there is an evident decrease in international collaboration rate after their return to China. Before returning to China, 56 percent of publications by Y1000Ts involved international collaborations. This percentage dropped to 44.8 percent after their recruitment under the Y1000T program. Meanwhile, the control group managed to maintain a rather high level of international collaboration rate (66.2 percent before the control years 2011 and 2012; 65.6 percent afterwards).

#### CONCLUSION

In sum, the Y1000T program has been rather successful in terms of attracting some of the best overseas Chinese talent back to China, as demonstrated by the highly prestigious list of institutions from which they graduated with their PhD. After their return, the majority of Y1000Ts worked in elite Chinese universities or research institutes, with rather abundant research funding and privileged working conditions—in some cases, better than those of the control group in terms of financial and hardware support.

Nevertheless, conditions sets by Chinese institutions deserve further examination, particularly regarding the assessment devised for Y1000T recipients. According to the program, the primary task of Y1000Ts is to publish high-quality articles in prestigious international journals on an annual basis. While Y1000Ts have been successful in keeping a publication rate similar to the control group, the quality of their publications may have suffered due to the intense pressure to publish.

This sheds light on the overall assessment system of Chinese research performance. In China, the urge to catch up is pervasive and influences the country's national and institutional strategies of enhancing research capacity. Short-term returns, especially the number of research publications and targeting journals' impact factors, are stressed by both government and institutions. However, while much attention is paid to the number of publications and publishing in first quartile journals, the quality of each publication ends up being less of a concern. Although the concentration on short-term returns greatly contributes to the boost in research outputs, it may hinder the development of a more sustainable academic culture emphasizing quality. It may also hamper the development of academic fields where intensive publishing is less likely. Arguably, the next step for China is not to deal with financial or talent shortage, but to overcome its urge to catch up and to pursue short-term returns. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10944>

## International Students in China: Facts, Paths, and Challenges

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The internationalization of higher education is a mainstream trend in the development of higher education, with international student mobility as an important indicator. In 2018, the Institute of International Education released a report showing that, in 2017, great changes had taken place in the ranks of the top eight host destination countries, compared to 2001: the United States still ranked no.1, but Belgium, Japan, and Spain had disappeared from the list. Germany had gone down, while the ranks of the United Kingdom and France remained the same. China and Canada ranked no.3 and no.6 respectively and Australia went up from fifth to fourth. The report showed that since 2001, China had significantly improved its performance in attracting international students. This article elaborates on this last finding, and draws from a report by China's ministry of education.

**FACTS**

According to a statistical report on international students in China from 2000 to 2015 released by the ministry of education, these figures increased from 52,150 in 2000 to 397,635 in 2015. Asia was the largest sending continent: 60.40 percent of international students came from Asian countries in 2015. The second home continent was Europe, with 16.79 percent of all international students coming from that region. In turn, African students comprised 12.52 percent of the total number. The percentages of students from America was 8.79 and from Oceania, 1.51.

As for countries of origin, Korea has been sending the most students to China since 2000, and since 2008 the United States has been the second country on the list. In 2015, Korea sent 66,672 students to China (16.77 percent) and the United States 21,975 students (5.53 percent). In recent years, the number of international students from India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, and other Asian countries has increased dramatically.

In terms of academic level, while the percentage of nondegree students has been decreasing since 2000, this grouping remains the majority. In 2015, the percentage of nondegree students was 53.53. The percentage of undergraduate students had increased to 32.17 in 2015, while the percentage of graduate students was 13.47.

The percentage of students receiving a Chinese Government Scholarship decreased very slightly from 2000 to 2015. In 2000, 10.28 percent received a scholarship, while in 2015 the percentage was 10.21.

The top five fields of study of international students were literature, Chinese medicine, engineering, western medicine, and economics. The percentage of students taking literature declined in the past 15 years—but 53.60 percent still study literature. Meanwhile, the share of students taking Chinese medicine decreased from 7.09 percent in 2000 to 3.09 percent in 2015. The percentage of students taking engineering, western medicine, and economics increased, with western medicine as the most attractive with 8.75 percent. The share of students taking engineering and economics reached 6.56 percent and 4.70 percent respectively.

**PATHS**

There are several Chinese scholarship programs available for international students, such as the Confucius Institute Scholarship program and local government scholarships. The Chinese Government Scholarship is the most important program, covering in particular living expenses and health insurance. Notably, the Confucius Institute Scholarship program has become increasingly important in recent years. In 2016, there were as many as 8,840 Confucius In-

stitute Scholarship students in China. Further, some provinces of China set up local government scholarships. Jiangsu Province, for instance, has set up the Jasmine Jiangsu Government Scholarship, while the government of Beijing launched the Beijing Government Scholarship for International Students (BGS) to support outstanding international students studying in Beijing. The Confucius Institute is a new form of educational cooperation between China and foreign countries. For instance, the “Confucius China Studies Program” is a study program for foreign students to study in China. In 2016, the program recruited 72 students from 26 countries to study in joint research PhD programs or pursue PhD degrees.

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**The increase in the number of international students is a result of the economic and education cooperation between China and other countries.**

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Chinese universities offer many English-taught courses. According to China’s ministry of education, in 2009, 34 universities of China offered English-taught graduate programs in business and management, engineering, social science, humanities, and other fields. The China Scholarship Council website shows that more than 100 universities offered English-taught courses in 2018.

Providing work permits is an increasingly important strategy for countries that want to attract more international students. International students in China can work after receiving a permit. Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou have published information about how to apply for work permits. Recently, the Chinese government decided to set up a “New Immigration Bureau” to focus on the immigration of international students.

The increase in the number of international students is a result of the economic and education cooperation between China and other countries. China launched the “Belt and Road Initiative” in 2013 to stimulate economic and education cooperation with Asian and African countries as well as with some European countries. According to data about international students studying in China in 2017 released by the ministry of education, more than 60 percent come from “Belt and Road Initiative” regions, upon which China will rely heavily in the next few years in terms of incoming students.

**CHALLENGES**

As mentioned above, China has taken several measures to attract more international students, but is facing a number of challenges, in particular the limited number of international students receiving a scholarship. China's ministry of education has issued a list of universities allowed to provide scholarships to international students, but the list is extremely limited. This weakens China's competitiveness on the international education market.

The Chinese language is hard to learn for international students. In recent years, Chinese universities have set up English courses for international students, but efficiency is low. Most faculty still teach in Chinese. Although Chinese universities offer Chinese language courses for international students, their proficiency remains limited.

Opportunities to immigrate and get a job are also limited. Most international students are eager to immigrate or work in their host country—especially those from developing countries. Although the Chinese government modified the requirements allowing international students to work after graduation, only three cities to date have published the details on how to apply for a work permit. If the government wants to expand interest in studying in China, it must focus on addressing these three issues. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10945>

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## Challenges to Higher Education in Laos and Cambodia

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Trying to summarize the challenges facing higher education in Laos and Cambodia presents several obstacles. One is the risk of addressing the topic superficially. Another is the risk of not acknowledging sufficiently the distinctiveness of each country's culture, history, and political circumstances. These matters aside, this article seeks to identify three broad challenges shared by the two countries with respect to their higher education systems.

**THE SETTING**

Laos and Cambodia are now experiencing rapid and sustained economic growth, based mainly upon the exploita-

tion of their natural resources, the development of manufacturing industries, and the emergence of new services sectors. Both countries continue, however, to be poor by international standards. Each has high levels of income inequality and poverty is extensive in rural areas. Corruption is ubiquitous in both countries, including within their higher education sectors.

Significant improvements in school retention rates over the past 15 years have contributed to a surge in demand for higher education. In both countries, the public higher education sector has been unable to absorb the surge in demand. Private higher education sectors have therefore been permitted to expand rapidly and without too much control. In Cambodia, where this policy has been more vigorously pursued, the private higher education sector is now larger than the public higher education sector.

In 2015, the most recent year for which reliable data are available, Laos, with a population of over six million, had five public universities, eight public colleges, and 43 private degree-granting colleges. It also had more than 90,000 higher education students, about one-third of whom attended private-sector institutions, though mostly on a part-time basis.

Cambodia, with a population of over 15 million, had 109 universities and institutes, including 66 private-sector universities and colleges. It had about 260,000 higher education students, over one-half of whom attended private-sector institutions.

**INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY**

The first challenge for higher education in both countries concerns the need for more institutional autonomy. In each setting, public universities have the necessary governance committee structures for the exercise of institutional autonomy, but their governing boards and academic committees have little or no decision-making authority. In Laos, even modest changes to training programs must be approved by the ministry of education and sports; in Cambodia, the situation is similar, except that public universities are line-managed by as many as 15 different ministries, as well as being coordinated by the ministry of education, youth, and sports. Nine public higher education institutions in Cambodia have been granted limited financial autonomy by virtue of being designated "public administration institutions," but no such development has been evident in Laos.

The consequences of a lack of institutional autonomy for public higher education institutions are widely felt in both countries. Academic managers feel weighed down by the burden of state bureaucracy. There is also a culture of risk avoidance in decision-making.

In contrast, private-sector higher education institutions in both countries function more or less independently of state controls. These institutions are mostly profit-driven and owned by wealthy individuals or families. Their governance structures are corporate, but it is their owners who tend to determine their strategic priorities.

#### RESOURCES

The second challenge for higher education in both countries concerns the need for more resources. Because Laos and Cambodia are low-income countries, budgets for public higher education are inevitably restricted. Budget restrictions are, however, so severe that improvements in the quality of classrooms, libraries, information technology networks, and research laboratories at public higher education institutions occur more by exception than by rule. Both countries are committed to spending more on their education systems, but each of them has heavy existing commitments to the establishment of their early childhood, primary, and secondary education sectors. Increasing the flow of resources to public higher education institutions is considered difficult to achieve.

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### **The third challenge for higher education in both countries concerns the need for better quality.**

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There is a policy in both countries of keeping a tight cap on tuition fees for attendance at public higher education institutions. This policy is defended on grounds of not wishing to make public higher education unaffordable to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This argument is, however, rarely supported with data about the socioeconomic profile of the students who currently attend public-sector higher education institutions. Many of these students are widely regarded as coming from better-off families with a capacity to pay higher student tuition fees, but this perspective is routinely rejected by both national governments.

The tuition fees charged by private-sector institutions are many times higher than those charged by public-sector institutions. This situation frustrates public-sector academics because they observe that the training programs delivered by the private sector are often the same as those being delivered by the public sector. Furthermore, academics delivering the programs in the private sector are often public-

sector academics who are “moonlighting” for the purpose of increasing their incomes. Public-sector academics also argue that there seems to be no shortage of demand for the more expensive programs offered by the private sector, in which case tuition fee levels for public-sector programs could be increased without causing an adverse social impact, especially if more scholarships were available to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### QUALITY

The third challenge for higher education in both countries concerns the need for better quality. In each case, the qualification levels of academics are poor by international standards. In Laos, for example, fewer than 5 percent of all academic staff members have a doctoral qualification. Teaching skills are also not well developed, and there is little or no professional support available to assist with teaching improvements. In both countries, there is an official expectation that academics at public universities will engage in research. Research productivity at these institutions remains, however, negligible, in large part because academics have neither the skills nor the resources to engage in significant research projects. In addition, many of them prefer to supplement their meagre salaries by accepting additional teaching duties.

System-wide quality assurance policies and procedures have been introduced in both countries, but they are slow to be implemented and there is not much evidence to date regarding their impact. Government ministries do, however, acknowledge openly the existence of quality-related problems. Of increasing concern in both countries is a perceived mismatch between the needs of the labor market and the kinds of training programs being delivered by higher education institutions. Also of concern, though sporadically, are scandals involving private higher education providers who have become excessively greedy.

#### CONCLUSION

The three major challenges for higher education in Laos and Cambodia reported here are, of course, interrelated, which means that all three most likely need to be addressed simultaneously for the sake of achieving meaningful progress. In both countries, official rhetoric about the need for reform provides the foundation for elaborate plans and guidelines. Curiously, though, there is a lack of reform momentum in the higher education systems in both countries. It is difficult to avoid that there does not yet exist, in either country, the strength of political will that will be required to make the changes necessary for higher education to flourish over coming years.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10947> ■

## Graduate Employment in Vietnam

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Education is perceived as an indispensable solution to unemployment. When a nation is confronted with an economic downturn or wishes to improve its economic performance, one of the very first possible steps is to increase investment in education, particularly higher education and R&D. Despite a continuing belief in the “education gospel,” higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide are now faced with a strong pressure to empirically prove their ability to ensure their graduates’ employability. In the case of Vietnam, the pressure is top down from the Vietnamese government toward HEIs, now required to provide statistics of employment rates to fulfill missions set out in the 2011–2020 Education Development Strategy. The result has so far been ineffective, as HEIs are simply responding to government pressure rather than proactively improving their reputation based on favorable employment statistics.

### SKILLS MISMATCH IN THE VIETNAMESE ECONOMY

Since its official participation in the World Trade Organization beginning in January 2007, the Vietnamese economy has undergone extensive structural reforms to adapt to growing integration and global market demands. “Modernization” and “industrialization” have become national motifs and an open market with an expanding private sector has gradually replaced the centrally planned model. As a result, a large share of the labor force has moved from the agriculture sector to manufacturing and highly skilled sectors. Moreover, the concept of “knowledge-based economy” was incorporated into the 2006–2010 National Development Plan and has become a principal guideline for Vietnam’s educational reforms, leading to a surge in the demand for higher education qualifications. The supply of job seekers with higher education qualifications quickly surpassed the demand of employers for highly skilled labor, calling into question the relevance of higher education. Increasing numbers of higher education graduates fail to obtain jobs matching their academic qualifications.

### MANDATORY PUBLICATION OF EMPLOYMENT RATES

In an effort to encourage competition and quality improve-

ment among HEIs, the ministry of education and training (MOET) made it mandatory for HEIs to publicize the employment rates of their respective graduates within 12 months after graduation, starting from January 2018. According to Circular 05/2017/TT-BGDĐT, universities and colleges that fail to publicize the required information will be prohibited from recruiting new students. The publication of employment rates is expected to assist students and families in making informed educational choices.

The initiative to publicize employment rates among HEIs is not unique to Vietnam. Similar attempts have been conducted in many countries, for example Australia, Singapore, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States, among others. Among these five examples, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, and the United Kingdom gather information through a national-scale survey conducted by a third party—a state-monitored agency. The US ranking, however, is managed by US News, a profit-sharing multiplatform publisher, and relies more on individual universities to self-report their statistics. On the global scale, the QS graduate employability ranking is considered the most elaborate effort to compare employment rates of graduates from 500 different higher education institutions around the world. However, as indicated in the methodology, the statistics are based on a self-reporting mechanism. The *Times Higher Education* also publishes a Global University Employability Ranking, which evaluates graduates of 150 universities from 33 different countries.

### UNRELIABLE EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

By April 2018, 64 Vietnamese HEIs had published the employment rates of alumni as required. According to the published statistics, the employment rates of graduates of regional universities such as Tay Bac University, Hong Duc University, and Hai Phong University are considerably lower (ranging from 30 to 70 percent) than those of universities located in big cities and the capital (over 80 percent). The HEIs that complied, however, account for less than 20 percent of the total number of HEIs (306) in Vietnam. Furthermore, the published statistics have been criticized for being unreliable. Out of 64 universities, 34 reported employment rates that were higher than 90 percent, 10 reported rates between 70 to 90 percent, and the rest reported rates between 40 to 70 percent.

Graduate employment statistics are believed to be inflated, because the December 2017 report of the ministry of labor claimed that a fifth of the total unemployment count (237,000 out of 1.07 million) hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. The question that arises is why there should be as many as 237,000 unemployed, when the employability rates published by the 64 universities are that high.

There is also some suspicion toward the University of Finance and Economics (Ho Chi Minh City) and the University of Fire Fighting and Prevention, both asserting 100 percent employment rates. Critics wonder whether the sample sizes used by university self-reports are large and representative enough. For example, in a report published in September 2017, Saigon University concluded that the employment rate of its graduates in the sector of electrical engineering technology and electronics was 100 percent, based on only one individual response. It is also unclear what kind of jobs are being counted as employment. In Vietnam, many graduates do not work in fields matching their specialization; some graduate with professional teaching degrees but become textile workers after graduation.

#### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Concern about the unreliability of employment statistics is common in countries that do not have a specialized and accredited agency to conduct employment surveys. Whenever individual reporting of HEIs is involved, there are doubts about whether figures are truly reliable. Employment surveys conducted by third parties under the monitoring of state agencies are considered more credible and objective.

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**Vietnamese HEIs are not yet accustomed to function as independent enterprises in a competitive education market.**

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Several articles in the Vietnamese media have expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the country's new policy. It appears that the public expects state regulations to actually be implemented. To address concerns about the reliability of employment statistics, it is highly recommended that the MOET either conduct the national employability survey itself or establish a dependable agency to monitor the surveying process—rather than leaving this up to the universities. Moreover, to enhance the credibility and quality of employment information for the benefits of the students, the MOET should require universities to report the average incomes of their graduates.

For the moment, most Vietnamese HEIs are perceiving the regulation to publish employment statistics more as a requirement to be met than as a golden opportunity to improve their positions in quality rankings. In other words, Vietnamese HEIs are not yet accustomed to function as independent enterprises in a competitive education market, where customers (students and parents) review

employment statistics to make decisions. Therefore, the government's plan to lower unemployment through top-down pressure will not succeed as long as employment rate publication is considered a must rather than a need. This is an inevitable result of the status quo in a centrally planned education system, as pointed out in a recent article on the autonomy of Vietnamese HEIs in *International Higher Education*. It will take a long time before employment data becomes an effective tool to motivate Vietnamese HEIs to improve the quality of higher education. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10948>

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## Panama: Higher Education is Key

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Because of its unique geographical position, Panama has always been an important regional and global crossroads, with the Panama Canal offering perceptible evidence of this. Built over a century ago, the waterway is critical to global commerce and the national economy. International finance, transport and logistics, and tourism and other services comprise over three-quarters of the gross domestic product (GDP) and besides their reliance on geography, these economic drivers have something else in common: they require a highly educated workforce. Ironically, Panama has one of the weakest education systems in the region. Worse still, the country is doing relatively little to remedy this situation and lacks a collective sense of how central brainpower is for the nation's future. This complacency may be due to its noteworthy performance over the past decade; economic growth has averaged over 7 percent annually and infrastructural developments in and around Panama City have been impressive. This success is probably unsustainable, however.

Panama likes to compare itself to Singapore. Both countries have small, diverse populations, limited physical resources, and privileged global positioning that allows for valuable niche economies based on international services. But Singapore has successfully focused on education since the beginning, for economic growth and sustainable devel-

opment based in significant part on human resources. Panama has not. As a result, Panama is more like the United Arab Emirates, a country that relied for years on a single natural resource, acknowledged late the need to diversify its economy, began to do so with overreliance on imported talent and product, and only recently recognized the importance of improving its education system to create a more productive national workforce. Panama must take note.

#### OVERVIEW OF PANAMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since the 1990s, Panama has experienced a major growth in the number of universities established—beyond the five public and one Catholic institutions, mostly in the for-profit sector. Over 100 universities are listed in the public registry; less than half are recognized by the authorities, and fewer than that are accredited by either national or international accreditation agencies. Enrollment figures are around 40 percent, though completion rates are far lower. According to UNESCO, 13.5 percent of the Panamanian population hold a bachelor's degree, 2 percent hold a master's, and 0.3 percent hold a doctorate. Roughly, two-thirds of the students are enrolled in the five public universities, the oldest and largest being the University of Panama (UP), with the others more recently established from former UP departments or regional centers. The private sector represents only a third of enrollment but is the fastest growing segment. Most universities are located in and around the capital, with several others scattered among a few other larger cities.

#### CRITICAL DIFFICULTIES

Like many Latin American countries, Panama has underfunded and neglected its schools at every level and concentrated on coverage instead of student learning outcomes. Consequently, public schools are typically of low quality and unable to provide the skills young people need to succeed in postsecondary education or participate directly in a service-based economy. Those who can afford it send their children to private schools to prepare them for better employment opportunities. This has contributed to high economic inequality and an increasingly polarized social structure.

The university and research sectors have been particularly disadvantaged, badly managed, and resource-starved. Despite the overabundance of universities, few are of reasonable quality, none come close to “world-class” standards, and most do not compare favorably even with other Latin American institutions. This is partly a reflection of resource allocation. Panama invests a paltry 0.7 percent of its GDP in higher education, less than half the percentage the United States and other OECD countries invest. The bulk of this goes to the UP, also notorious for its history of corruption,

inefficient management, and obsolete curricula. Funding for research is also scarce. In the past decade, Panama has invested only 0.1–0.2 percent of its GDP in research and development, about 20 times less than the OECD average. This, combined with low levels of graduate and postgraduate training and the traditional teaching orientation of Panamanian higher education, has made it difficult to develop much of a research culture.

Panama also grapples with a highly bureaucratized and politicized legal environment that limits innovation and development. Its ministry of education is the largest and most dysfunctional of the government agencies; the national constitution places all higher education programming authorization under direct control of the dubious UP; and the National Higher Education Accreditation and Evaluation Council (CONEAUPA), established in 2006, is just beginning to gain a presence in the sector.

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**The university and research sectors have been particularly disadvantaged, badly managed, and resource-starved.**

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#### ATTRACTIVE RESOURCES

Panama also has some assets at its disposal that it could better employ to reverse these lackluster trends. It has an unparalleled but underused resource in its City of Knowledge, an academic–economic free zone located in the former Panama Canal Zone. This location is home to the United Nations hub for Latin America and the Caribbean (and numerous other international organizations), along with several research centers, schools, and foreign universities, including a branch campus of Florida State University. Most of these institutions have minimal permanent faculty and conduct little research, but they offer an international complement to national higher education. By law, the City of Knowledge is free from ministry of education and UP regulation—an enormous advantage—and it also houses the National Science Secretariat (SENACYT), an autonomous body responsible for propelling scientific research and innovation. SENACYT's budget and human resources are limited but still it has begun to establish protocols and processes for promoting research activity. Another autonomous public–private entity, INDICASAT, Panama's first official biomedical research center, is located in the City of Knowledge as well and has started to achieve significant gains in research, doctoral training, and national capacity

building, largely in conjunction with international partners. Much more could be made of all these City of Knowledge assets with additional public and private sector support. Close collaboration, as yet lacking among the City of Knowledge institutions, would also help boost productivity.

#### A WAY FORWARD

Three macroelements and various smaller initiatives are key to turning around Panamanian higher education. First and foremost is the need for recognition by government and society of higher education's importance to sustainable national development. Second is the urgency for dismantling the stifling political, legal, and bureaucratic hurdles endemic in the country's systems. The UP must be relieved from higher education oversight, and public funding of higher education and research must extend far beyond the UP. Third, provision of adequate resources is vital and Panama can well afford to pay for developing quality higher education institutions and R&D that serve national economic and social needs. To neglect this, given the country's economic success over the decades, is unforgivable and foolish.

Private higher education can play a major role in Panama's higher education development and several institutions are beginning to do so in visible and important ways. For all institutions, relevant quality controls and freedom to innovate are indispensable, though neither is well governed at the moment. Finally, internationalization is as central to Panama's academic future as it has been to its economic development and must be advanced accordingly. Potential institutional partners for higher education and research are readily available worldwide—what is required on the Panamanian end is some strategic planning, additional investment, and promotional selling. The City of Knowledge is a fortuitously placed national asset for pushing this agenda and should be better leveraged to this end.

Utilizing Panama's geographic advantage to propel its lagging higher education and research base is imperative for maintaining economic growth and social stability. As banking, logistics, and tourism have been pushed toward world-standard performance, so must happen with Panama's universities if the country is to stake a significant claim to participation in the global economy. ■

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10789>

## Kenyan Universities: On the Brink of Financial Insolvency

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It is crunch time for universities in Kenya: for the last three years, the sector has been reeling under a financial crisis of unprecedented proportions, raising questions about its long-term sustainability. So desperate is the situation that universities are unable to cover basic operating expenses like payment of salaries, utilities, and statutory contributions including income tax and pension funds. One private university has been ordered to close by regulators, owing to financial insolvency, while two other private universities have two years to clear all their debts or face a similar fate. The public university system debt stands at US\$110 million, with the debt of the premier public university at over US\$10 million.

The current crisis echoes the financial catastrophe of the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, when the public university system almost went under owing to state budgetary cuts and the introduction of tuition fees and other market-based strategies. It is ironic that a university system that ten years ago was well funded with tuition revenues should now be on the brink of bankruptcy. The prevailing financial crisis is the result of an interplay of two forces: macro-level policy reforms with system-wide ramifications, and micro-level institutional governance malpractice. The former encapsulates system growth, inequities in enrollment growth, quality enhancement strategies, the failure of the market model, and decreased state support, while the latter includes weak institutional systems of financial governance.

#### SYSTEM-WIDE POLICY CHALLENGES

Uncoordinated system-wide growth has shrunk the tuition revenue available to most universities. The initial surge occurred in response to an unprecedented demand for higher education after its liberalization in the mid-1990s. From four public and one private universities in the mid-1990s, the number of universities currently stands at 63, of which 33 are public and 30 private. Around 70 percent of the public universities were established during the 2012–2013 academic year. The rate of university growth, however, has far exceeded the rate of demand for higher education, which plateaued in recent years. This unchecked growth in the number of universities translates into less tuition revenue available to each institution.

Student enrollment has grown exponentially from 10,000 students in 1990 to 539,749 today. Of these, 86 percent are enrolled in public universities, particularly in the top five. This pattern of enrollment has left most private universities operating at only 50–60 percent of their capacity, reducing tuition revenue—given that private universities charge higher tuition, many students choose to study in public institutions. In addition, the newer public universities established in marginal areas have failed to attract sufficient enrollment owing to location and lack of name recognition. Thus, while the growth of the system has absorbed the demand, it has also caused inequities within this tuition-dependent educational environment.

Recent moves to stave off quality decline have also led to a decrease in tuition-paying students. When the state eradicated cheating in national high school exams two years ago, the number of candidates who qualified for university admission dropped by almost 40 percent. Ever since, the number of qualified students is only sufficient for enrollment in state universities (the preferred destination for most high school graduates, owing to lower tuition fees). Also for this reason, the number of qualified students seeking to join private universities, and associated tuition revenue, has declined significantly.

Similarly, quality improvement measures have led the Commission for University Education (CUE) to restrict institutional growth at low-quality branch campuses, especially at public universities. These campuses, employing adjunct faculty without terminal degrees and located in various urban centers across the country, have been an important conduit for universities to increase enrollment and raise revenues at minimal costs. The enactment of stringent licensing requirements for campus operations caused many of them to shut down, depriving universities of an important source of revenue. One public university had 10 of its 15 branch campuses shut down.

Ominously, the failure of the market model as a strategy to fund universities has cast a dark spell on neoliberal policies as an alternative to state financing. No university in Kenya has developed a robust market-based revenue generation system besides tuition fees to support the bulk of its operations. Anticipated revenues from research grants, consultancy, industrial partnerships, and sale of goods, among others, have failed to materialize, as universities lack the capacities to tap into these resources. While universities in advanced nations get income from these alternative sources, Kenya, like many African countries, lacks the economic capability to support such developments.

Declining state funding for public universities has also contributed to the current crisis. Owing to increased pressure on the state budget, the government has scaled down

its financial support to public universities. In the current financial year, for instance, the public university system budget was cut by nearly US\$300 million, as the government implements austerity measures to stave off an imminent economic meltdown. Public universities received US\$1.03 billion in funding against a request of US\$1.301 billion. This move will intensify job cuts, hiring freezes, and reductions in research and travel expenditures.

#### FAILURES OF INSTITUTIONAL FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

According to published reports, prudent management of financial resources is undoubtedly lacking at Kenyan universities. A key finding of various investigative reports is outright theft and misappropriation of funds. For instance, a private religious university had a surplus five years ago, but is now on the verge of bankruptcy with a debt of around US\$4 million, owing to theft. Two other religious uni-

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**Uncoordinated system-wide growth has shrunk the tuition revenue available to most universities.**

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versities have experienced student strikes and disruptive changes of leadership as a result of irregularities in the management of their financial resources. Public universities have also had their share of financial improprieties. They have been cited by the government auditor-general for misappropriation of resources and poor investment choices. For example, they hired permanent staff based on projected growth in the enrollment of self-sponsored students—which turned out to be unrealistic. One public university opened two branch campuses outside the country at the cost of nearly US\$7 million, but because of regulatory violations these campuses were shut down by authorities before they could operate fully and break even.

#### THE FUTURE

Alleviating the financial stress currently faced by the Kenyan university sector requires an immediate infusion of cash, but for a long-term solution, a multipronged, creative rethinking of financial strategies to fund higher education is needed. This involves a well thought-out and structured state support for both public and private universities, transparency in financial decision-making at the institutional level, separating ownership from management at private universities, tying budget decisions to realistic enrollment

trends, and hiring financial managers rather than academics—as is the case currently—to steer financial decisions.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10789> ■

## Exploring Equity in Higher Education Systems: Reflections from Argentina and Chile

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Public debates on equity in higher education usually focus on the impact of admissions and funding policies on a system as a whole. First, it is assumed that the more selective admission criteria and procedures are, the fewer the opportunities will be for lower-income students to access higher education. Second, it is assumed that the cost sharing of undergraduate studies through tuition fees can reduce the chance of less privileged social strata pursuing higher education. Although both premises are true, two additional factors can significantly affect equity in higher education: the capacity of the secondary school and undergraduate levels to retain and provide high-quality education to lower-income and culturally disadvantaged students; and institutional differentiation, which results in vertical stratification in terms of status, with lower-income students attending low-quality institutions.

### ACCESS AND FUNDING IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

We can illustrate the complexities of the interaction between policies and equity outcomes with two cases from Latin America, which exhibit polarized access and funding policies. Argentina has a nonselective admissions policy for most undergraduate programs (e.g., no entrance exam or maximum number of vacancies) and these same programs are tuition-free in the public sector, which, consequently, has the highest proportion of the enrollment (75 percent of total enrollment in 2015). The Chilean system, in contrast, is based on selective admissions policies and significant tuition fees in the context of a considerably privatized higher

education market structure (in 2017, 84 percent of enrollment was in the private sector). In principle, we should expect better equity outcomes in Argentina than in Chile.

However, the evolution of the participation rates of the lowest income quintile in these two countries does not reflect this assumption. Chile has rapidly improved access to higher education for students belonging to the lowest strata, surpassing Argentina's net enrollment rate (NER). According to data based on National Household Surveys compiled by the Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC) in 2015, the lowest income quintile's NER was 29 percent in Chile and 19 percent in Argentina. Ten years earlier, these same rates were 13 and 16 percent, respectively. Moreover, in 2015, the ratio between the top quintile's and the bottom quintile's participation in higher education was 2.2 in Chile and 2.8 in Argentina.

These participation indicators do not necessarily imply that Chilean higher education is in all aspects more equitable than that of Argentina, but they call attention to the complexity of the equity challenge in the context of massification and differentiation of higher education. In addition, both systems show marked inequalities. In order to understand better the factors that impinge on equality, we need to examine the two issues mentioned above: the chances that lower-income students have of finishing secondary school and persisting in their undergraduate studies, and the types of institutions that they can attend.

### SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION AND UNDERGRADUATE DROPOUT RATES

The graduation rate at the secondary school level clearly explains why Argentina lags behind Chile in terms of higher education NER of lower-income students. According to OECD data, the 2015 upper secondary school graduation rate in Chile was 90 percent, while it was 61 percent in Argentina. In terms of quality, PISA results show that Chile has achieved better marks and improvements over time than Argentina, although these are still below the OECD average. Therefore, in the context of low graduation rates and poor quality achievements at the secondary school level, Argentina's open access and tuition free policies cannot foster inclusion in undergraduate higher education.

In both countries, the poor academic results of lower-income students hinder their progress in undergraduate programs and result in higher dropout rates during the first year of study. According to estimates of the Chilean Higher Education Information Service (SIES), the first-year dropout rate for the 2008–2012 cohorts were around 30 percent. The data showed greater dropout rates among lower-income students with less educated parents and students who had graduated from subsidized private or municipal/

public schools. In Argentina, comparable data are not available, but based on the Household National Survey, we calculated the global dropout rates by socioeconomic status among young people (18–30 years old). The data showed that lower-income students had a higher global dropout rate (55 percent) than those in the middle-income group (40 percent) or in the high-income group (21 percent).

#### HIERARCHICAL DIFFERENTIATION

During the past decade, both in Argentina and Chile, the most dynamic institutions in terms of undergraduate enrollment expansion have not been top-tier institutions but, rather, nonuniversity public or private tertiary institutions and private universities.

In Argentina, although most of the undergraduate enrollment is at public universities, this sector's participation in the total enrollment has decreased by almost 10 percent in one decade (from 63 to 54 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment between 2005 and 2015). The highest in-

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**Chile has rapidly improved access to higher education for students belonging to the lowest strata, surpassing Argentina's net enrollment rate (NER).**

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crease was registered in the public and, to a lesser extent, in the private, nonuniversity tertiary sector that trains primary and secondary school level teachers and offers short vocational and technical programs. In addition, some nonselective, teaching-oriented private universities expanded their enrollment faster than elite, private institutions or public universities.

In Chile, 61 percent of the 2017 undergraduate enrollment was concentrated in mostly nonselective professional institutes and in independent private universities (those universities that do not belong to the selective and higher-quality public and private Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities sector). At professional institutes, vocational degrees showed the highest growth rates between 2008 and 2017. Since 2006, and especially after the student movement of 2011, student-funding policies have promoted access to these sectors through the expansion of student loan and grant programs also covering technical education. The new *gratuidad* (tuition-free) law, enacted in 2016 and targeting low- and middle-income students, may also help expand the number of low-income students who have access to the least selective programs and institutions. This financial aid

measure does not require students to achieve a minimum score on the national college admissions test (PSU), which is still a condition for grants and loans programs.

In sum, massification in both countries has improved the access of new generations of lower-income secondary school graduates to less selective and lower-quality programs in the public and private sectors. The vertical stratification among higher education institutions has increased as a result of a lack of communication channels and mobility pathways between them.

#### CONCLUSION

Given the complexities of massification and institutional differentiation in higher education, it is not possible to analyze the equity of a given system by focusing only on general policies regulating access and state or private funding mechanisms. When focusing on secondary school and undergraduate dropout rates and on the programs and institutions that lower-income students attend, striking inequalities may appear. To conduct this type of analysis, it is necessary to produce more and better indicators accounting for quantitative and qualitative transformations of the student body, as well as for the institutional stratification occurring as a result of increasingly massified and heterogeneous secondary school and higher education sectors—developments that are occurring throughout Latin America.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10950> ■

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## Development of the Credit System in Kazakhstan

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it became essential for Kazakhstan to increase the quality and competitiveness of its higher education. Its aim was to become a part of the European or American systems, and/or an OECD member, in order to enhance the recognition of its researchers and faculty, and of their work. It took a long journey before Kazakhstan achieved its goals. All educational reforms in Kazakhstan, including changes in the structure or content of education, as well as credit system

development, were issued through legislation. For example, the Law on Education (2007) specified the basic principles of the national educational policy. It also addressed issues of transition in the credit system.

The credit system at Kazakhstani universities is unique. It has evolved from a time when graduates of the Soviet educational system were required to prove their qualifications and degrees by calculating or converting their learning hours into international grading systems—the US system and later the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). This was a big challenge because the Soviet system did not have any credit-based learning.

#### HISTORY MATTERS

The desire of a developing country to learn from advanced countries entails both borrowing and importing new ideas and policies. These processes occurred in Kazakhstan in relation to the United States and certain European countries such as Sweden and Germany. In the 1990s, as a result of US engagement in different projects in Kazakhstan, Kazakhstani higher education institutions (HEIs) started implementing the American credit system. In the 2000s, the ministry of education introduced new Kazakhstani credits that differed from the US model. The main difference was in the number of hours per credit for the bachelor's, master's, and PhD programs. The current national model of credit system consists of a number of scales of evaluation. It was created in line with international standards by preserving Kazakhstan's own political, ideological, economic, social, and cultural background.

#### LEARNING LESSONS

After the introduction of the US credit system, HEIs in Kazakhstan looked toward Europe, exploring and identifying similarities between their system and those of European universities. By establishing a working group in response to a directive from the ministry of education, HEIs studied the policies and practices of 50 universities that implemented a credit system in the United States, Europe, and Asia. Several Kazakhstani HEIs implemented the credit system as a pilot. Some of the terminology (such as “office of the registrar”) and pedagogical practices and roles such as advisers, tutors, and teachers guiding students on their independent work, were unknown to the local educational system at that time. Exploring and engaging with foreign universities allowed Kazakhstan to adopt some of their practices.

#### INFLUENCE OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Integrating into the European educational space became a key direction of Kazakhstan's educational policy. In 2010,

the country became a member of the Bologna Process (BP). In practice, changes had already occurred before formally adhering to the Bologna Declaration. For example, in the 2003–2004 academic year, HEIs in Kazakhstan introduced the credit system and the two-level degree system as an experiment. (The adoption of ECTS and the degree system does not relate directly to the influence of the BP. It also occurred through the implementation, in Central Asia, of a number of EU programs such as the Trans-European Mobility Program for University Studies [TEMPUS], Erasmus Mundus, and Erasmus+). Finally, ratifying the Lisbon Convention in 1997 helped Kazakhstan in the process of mutual recognition of qualifications with other participating countries.

ECTS is a component of the BP, which standardizes grading systems in order to facilitate student mobility in Europe. A major benefit of joining the BP for Kazakhstan was the introduction of credit-based learning, resulting in mobility and the flexibility of learning elsewhere. Kazakhstan attempted to make a correlation between the US credit and ECTS, trying to overcome the practical and philosophical difficulties associated with developing a national model of credit system.

#### NATIONAL MODEL OF CREDIT TRANSFER BASED ON ECTS

The current Kazakhstani credit system is a combination of the American and European systems. It uses certain calculations including one ratio for the undergraduate level and another for the master's and PhD levels. In Kazakhstan, a credit consists of three components: class hours, independent work of bachelor's and master's degree students under the supervision of faculty (tutorials), and a student's independent work. For practical reasons, Kazakhstan moved toward a system under which one contact hour would be counted as a learning hour, to facilitate the return of students who had been on study abroad programs in Europe. Although this compromise represents an adjustment of the established European system, it did help institutions such as KIMEP University—which currently use the American *modus operandi*—to get closer to the ECTS model. Another example is Nazarbayev University (NU), which emphasizes the American model of higher education. The academic framework at NU is a hybrid between the American and the British frameworks, although the NU also complies with Bologna principles.

#### CONCLUSION

Kazakhstan has the ambition of bringing its higher education system at par with the developed world. Since 1991, the higher education system has been steered through a

transition period. The Kazakhstani government has sought to align the higher education system with international standards through a series of reforms. These reforms established academic mobility, a diploma supplement, and a three-level degree system. The academic community endeavored to implement a new model of education with new terms and titles, by copying foreign experience and adapting Western models of education to the Kazakhstani context. The credit system was adjusted to facilitate mobility

and the employability of its graduates abroad. Academics combined the Soviet, European, and American systems of higher education, incorporating and assimilating selected practices, while preserving national, cultural, historical, and linguistic characteristics in one national credit model customized to the national context.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

(Editor's note: We welcome suggestions from readers for books on higher education published especially outside of the United States and United Kingdom. This list was compiled by Jean Baptiste Diatta, graduate assistant at CIHE.)

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## NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM CIHE

- Liu, Xinyan. Language of Instruction in Higher Education. *CIHE Perspectives* No. 10. This report showcases research undertaken by Xinyan (Sissi) Liu, a student in CIHE's Master of Arts program in International Higher Education. It is a joint product of CIHE and the International Association of Universities (IAU), and addresses how language is playing out in higher education institutions and systems around the world, in an age in which the English language so effectively dominates the global landscape of politics, economics, and highly cited research. [https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/schools/lsoe/sites/cihe/CIHE%20Perspectives%2010\\_18\\_DEC2018\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/schools/lsoe/sites/cihe/CIHE%20Perspectives%2010_18_DEC2018_FINAL.pdf)
- Rumbley, Laura E., and Hans de Wit, eds. Innovative and Inclusive Internationalization: Proceedings of the WES-CIHE Summer Institute, June 20–22, 2018, Boston College. *CIHE Perspectives* No. 11. This issue is the result of a cooperation between World Education Services (WES), headquartered in New York, and CIHE, and is based on the findings of the 2018 WES-CIHE Summer Institute on Innovative and Inclusive Internationalization in Higher Education. The collective result of the research by MA and PhD students provides meaningful insights into internationalization of higher education as perceived and studied by the next generation. <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/schools/lsoe/sites/cihe/Perspectives%20No%2011%20%20Jan%2011th%202019%20FINAL%20TO%20PRINT.pdf>
- Wu, Yan, Qi Wang, and Nian Cai Liu, eds. *World-Class Universities: Towards a Global Common Good and Seeking National and Institutional Contributions. Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, Volume: 42. Based on the findings of the Seventh International Conference on World-Class Universities, World-Class Universities provides updated insights and debates on how world-class universities will contribute to the global common good and, in doing so, will balance their global, national, and local roles. <https://brill.com/abstract/title/39594>. ISBN: 978-90-04-38963-2 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004389632>



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