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Immigration and Higher Education: Competition for Talent

Daniel C. Kent

Abstract
Countries take a variety of approaches to their international students who graduate locally and seek to stay. While some offer significant time horizons to search for and acquire a job, or eliminate needed sponsorship altogether, not all are as generous. Yet in both instances, local graduates acquire experience that gives them inherent advantages, should they desire to stay after completing their studies.

As human capital becomes ever more important in a globalized, technology-driven economy, training beyond secondary school has likewise become critical for both individual and country-level economic advancement. At the same time, in nearly all rich-world economies, local birthrates have slowed to some of the lowest levels in decades or even a century. With new "cohorts" of locally born individuals having shrunk for quite some time across the rich world, higher education systems will have fewer local students to train and graduate into the economy.

The Need for Immigration
Thus, to stay economically competitive, a major factor for many developed countries has become immigration. While international migration is a well-discussed topic, what has been less examined is the direct role that higher education plays in these inflows of people and how higher education has continued to adapt to this reality. International flows of technical and sought-after talent will become increasingly relevant for the success of developed economies across the world. But of the many countries with higher education systems recruiting large populations of international students, which ones incentivize this behavior through policy, and how is this changing? As of now, there is no such comprehensive accounting of how countries approach this increasingly consequential set of policies. Higher education researchers and practitioners should take note of the emerging global trends as they continue to adapt to a changing landscape of policies and student flows.

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Policy-Based Advantages
Many countries have policies allowing international students to stay after completing their studies. Several have formal policies that either extend the legal work residency for graduates of higher education degree programs, or offer specific longer-term residency pathways for graduates. In Canada's province-based immigration system (one of the three Canadian immigration schemes), provincial governments can target prospective workers for high-need industries for long-term residency, including current university students. This means that students studying fields such as engineering may have a special advantage if they decide to apply for long-term residency while enrolled. Notably, the province-based immigration system is the fastest such scheme nationally to gain long-term or permanent residency.

Many countries in the European Union, including Austria, Italy, Spain, and Sweden, among others, allow non-EU graduates one year after studying to find a job that will sponsor them to stay. Germany allows non-EU graduates 18 months to find a job. Also in Sweden, graduates of PhD programs (which function much like full-time jobs) can count their time in the program toward a permanent residence application, reflecting the high-level and often technical nature of their programs. In most of these countries, the poststudy "work-search" visa allows graduates to be employed in the meantime before finding longer-term employment.

Some of the most generous schemes for locally graduated international students include two or more guaranteed years of living and working in the country after graduation, and include some of the most sought-after destinations for international students. The United Kingdom allows graduates of local university programs to legally reside and

work for up to two years after their graduation through the Graduate Route Visa. Doctoral graduates receive one extra year for three years in total. Both routes in the United Kingdom give graduates time to potentially switch to the Skilled Worker Visa, requiring job sponsorship to stay. Australia has a set of visas for graduating international students that allows them to stay for anywhere from 18 months to four years, depending on the region and the qualification that they hold. For some of the most highly needed occupations in Australia, this could be a direct pathway to long-term residency. New Zealand offers a similar scheme, with foreign graduates able to legally reside and work in the country for anywhere from one to three years, depending on which institution they attended and their occupational field. These generous visa benefits may, for some students seeking to stay, justify the extremely high cost of enrolling in higher education in these contexts.

Incidental Advantages

Beyond extended poststudy working or job-search time, incidental advantages to immigration also accrue to graduates of local university programs. Most countries in the European Union require a certain proficiency in the local language before or during the immigration process, especially prior to becoming a citizen. Having time, as a university student, to study these languages through full immersion and local instruction helps to remove a potentially significant barrier to settling long-term. Additional time also allows students to grow accustomed to local administrative processes, access resources, and develop a network of friends, colleagues, and supporters (and potential work sponsors) that would be much harder to get otherwise, all of which can significantly ease the path to long-term resident status.

Other incidental advantages can accrue for graduates as well. The United States, for example, recently extended the Optional Practical Training (OPT) time for graduates of STEM degree programs from one to three years, to allow them to legally reside and work in the country without needing sponsorship. This has both the overt advantage of extended nonsponsored work time, but also a massive incidental advantage: Each year that a recent graduate is in the United States, they can apply for a longer-term residency through an H1-B visa, a costly and complicated process that is rarer for employers to sponsor without thorough knowledge of a job candidate. From H1-B, recipients can apply for permanent residency status, otherwise known as a green card.

Adjusting Strategies

In recent years, both higher education institutions and countries have been adjusting their strategies to attract international students who may seek to stay beyond their studies. In the United States, a wave of MBA programs received the STEM-certification necessary to receive the additional two years on the OPT after the change was formally implemented. And after a collapse of international student enrollment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian government recently proposed extending postgraduation stays for international students, hoping to entice them back.

Of course, some countries offer much more modest policy benefits for foreign university graduates. Switzerland only allows foreigners six months to find a full-time job after completing their degree program. During this period, job seekers can legally work just 15 hours per week. And when they do find a job willing to sponsor them, employers must prove that either the job or the individual is of special economic or scientific importance to receive a work permit. Denmark offers a similar set of conditions. Policies like this may become only more common as migration crises have stretched many countries' immigration systems to the breaking point and caused a widespread backlash. New Zealand, for instance, recently limited the number of poststudy work permits that a graduate could receive to one, and limited eligible nondegree graduates to a set of highly in-demand fields.

Conclusion

Higher education enrollment and graduation are critical components of many immigrants' first experiences of new countries where they may hope to settle. For nearly all new arrivals, receiving a degree is a huge leg up in establishing roots and eventually settling permanently in a new country, should they choose to do so. While currently

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understudied, policy experts should continue to review and understand the wide array of policies and strategies that countries utilize toward local graduates of foreign origin—a topic that will only become more important as the years proceed. ◀

Pandemia: Academic Lives and COVID-19, Before, During, and Whenever After

Richard Watermeyer

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Abstract
For academics the world over, the COVID-19 pandemic has been, and remains, a source of profound and enduring disruption. Yet arguably its greatest disruptive influence has been to exacerbate, and thus force a reckoning of, the deep-seated problems that have for some time caused academics to question their future. This article presents survey findings drawn from academics in four country settings and reflections on the deteriorating state of academic life under COVID.

Surveys of academic staff administered across Australia, Ireland, South Africa, and the United Kingdom make explicit the impacts of universities' responses to the pandemic on working lives. From these studies comes the concept of *pandemia*, a state common to all: the experience of working in universities during COVID-19, and the personal and professional toll of so doing.

Pandemia

Pandemia describes and explains the impact of universities' "corporate" response to the pandemic on academic staff and provides a conceptual lens through which to comprehend the potentially transformative effects of the global crisis on the higher education community and higher education's value proposition.

There is much commonality and overlap to be found in the experience of *pandemia* across the four country settings. Survey respondents routinely articulated how their home institutions had pursued an aggressively business-like approach to managing the pandemic, which disregarded concerns of staff welfare and wellbeing. The vast majority of respondents discussed, through open-text survey responses, how rapid emergency transition to online working had resulted in severe work intensification. Such an escalation of work demands, however, was said to have occurred without appropriate recognition or response from within universities, where it was treated as a matter of individual responsibility. The absence of an ethics of care in universities, matched with unrelenting performance demands—from which the pandemic offered no hiatus—was consequently linked by respondents to widespread, yet unequally experienced deterioration of academics' physical and mental health, burnout, and staff attrition:

"COVID has intensified workload inequity as the problem of the individual. There is a lack of creative response to this crisis . . . we are trying to do the same things with fewer resources instead of rethinking, pulling back, and re-doing. Our competitive ethos is a huge problem."

Disaster Capitalism?

Institutional responses to the pandemic were also regularly compared to "disaster capitalism" and a sense that university leaders were utilizing the crisis to push through corporate agendas. Respondents, for instance, spoke of how the pandemic was being used by management elites in universities to justify the extension of their power base and corresponding marginalization of academic staff from decision-making processes. Equally, crisis conditions were discussed for legitimizing exploitative work practices:

"In my department, the 'moral imperative' of helping the Covid cause has been used to manipulate workers into accepting unreasonable demands in terms of workloads and

deadlines. As a result, my wellbeing has deteriorated to the point that I have quit my job with nothing else to go to. I expect I am not alone."

Increased Precarity

Across the board, respondents described their sense of feeling ever more vulnerable in a sector where job precarity is a systemic problem. Yet, crucially, *pandemia* was seen to represent the continuation of an existing downward trend for academics:

"The COVID crisis is not creating new problems so much as it is exposing problems - insecurity, exploitation, managerialism, unreasonable expectations, erosion of pay and conditions, threats to academic freedom - that have been steadily growing for very many years."

The experience of institutional life under COVID was described as just another chapter of academic struggle and defeat, the fading allure and atrophy of the academic profession:

"COVID and the demands of working digitally have shone the spotlight on what was already broken. And at the end of all of this, the people left suffering won't be students and they won't be university bank balances. They will be undervalued and overworked academics with no job security and certainty in employment."

Government Apathy and Increased Managerialism

Respondents' accounts are peppered with feelings of neglect, abandonment, and remonstration against abuses of power. In the Australian context, respondents discussed the apathy and hostility shown by their national government to universities and a failure to support a higher education system financially dependent on the unobstructed flow of international students:

"In Australia the COVID-19 crisis has been used by the Federal government to justify alterations (read reductions) to University funding while at my institution it has been used to 'gloss over' previous and ongoing issues of mismanagement."

Government apathy in these accounts is presented as the reason for the hardening of a corporate approach to the management of Australian universities and university leaders' eschewal of concerns of staff welfare.

In Ireland, *pandemia* is represented as part of a longstanding "crisis trajectory" that sees universities prioritizing productive efficiency and market competitiveness over the wellbeing of staff. In South Africa, the situation for academics is perhaps even more desolate. In a country with mass poverty and a failing power grid, the impact of *pandemia* is especially grave, yet equally undifferentiated from the accounts provided in Australia, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, where the pandemic is similarly attributed to increased workplace inequality, intensified managerialism, and cost-cutting measures that render academic staff ever more at risk.

From Absent Leadership, Collegiality

Yet despite, if not *because* of a prevalent cynicism of "absent" leadership, we find academics in all four countries claiming a resurgence of collegiality and camaraderie. The strengthening of collective identity and mission—in the South African context discussed as "ubuntu"—is rationalized as the response and tonic to *pandemia*. In the instance of not being "noticed" by their leaders, academics are reported to find solace and resolve by recognizing foremost their role and responsibility to each other, which in one case is described as lifesaving:

"I had a breakdown and became suicidal. The university couldn't care less. They steamroller us. If it wasn't for my awesome colleagues, I'm not sure what would have happened."

As a result of campus closures, digital platforms were also recognized by respondents for facilitating alternative and more expansive forms of collegial interactions, uninhibited by constraints of time or place.

Pandemia in Panorama

In total, *pandemia* makes explicit the manifold wicked problems of higher education and the urgency of their redress. We find further evidence of staff precarization linked especially to job casualization and the further intensification of an already highly competitive

Respondents' accounts are peppered with feelings of neglect, abandonment, and remonstration against abuses of power.

academic labor-market. Concurrently, if almost paradoxically, workforce attrition is reported, and, in the United Kingdom especially, the diaspora of academic talent to other "more favorable" international higher education settings (linked also to Brexit). *Pandemia* is also linked to an exacerbation of workplace inequality, a mental health crisis among students and staff, and a breakdown of trust in university leaders.

Yet, *pandemia* is also represented as a clarion call for a different kind of leadership, a leadership that is values-based, consultative, and shared, and that—at the most senior levels—is unafraid to confront the political hostility of populist governments. As expressed by one respondent, the pandemic presents a staging post for renewal:

"Just as in politics, very weak senior leadership (which was only focused on commercialization / bureaucratization of higher education in a very narrow and vulgar manner) and its impact were abundantly exposed by COVID-19 in my own institution, and while that in itself is quite disconcerting, I very much hope this will lead to a change in leadership (and leaders) and a new start."

A Pathway Beyond?

At a time when the contribution of higher education is so uncertain and contested, focusing on the treatment of those that form its engine and the insouciance of their leaders could not be more urgent. A continuation of the neglect experienced over the course of the last two years—and long before these—will surely otherwise result in the further degradation of academic staff, a result that even disaster capitalists will not profit from. The disruption of *pandemia* may, however, be leveraged in establishing a positive reset for higher education, with the renewal of an ethics of care within universities and espousal of human-centric leadership providing just the start. ◄

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Unpacking "Relevance" in North–South Collaboration

Ayenachew A. Woldegiyorgis, Wondwosen Tamrat, and Damtew Teferra

Innternational collaboration often assumes a variety of forms and delivery mechanisms. While diverse motivations and circumstances might underpin collaboration between, or among, North and South partners, the issue of relevance stands out as one of the most salient features in a collaborative arrangement. One of the underlying issues in international collaboration is the lack of a common understanding—beyond an academic definition—of what is relevant.

In general, relevance relates to how the operation and outcomes of a certain intervention align with the needs, requirements, and priorities of beneficiaries. It is directly related to the objectives of a collaborative project, and is often about the degree to which objectives are in keeping with the priorities and needs of users. And relevance has also to do with expediency—a typical issue for key stakeholders, especially funding parties.

What this means in practice in terms of academic collaboration remains vague. Whose needs and interests are to be prioritized? Who establishes the priorities? Who sets the criteria against which the relevance of a project or program is to be measured? Who makes the assessment (often loaded with value judgements)? How, by whom, and from what sources is data obtained to assess relevance? How are the temporal and spatial realities

Abstract

"Relevance" is a prevalent term in the lexicon of international academic collaboration. Yet, its true practical meaning remains elusive. Who determines what is relevant? How is relevance assessed? What underpins the notion of relevance in different contexts? These are some of the questions that emphasize the difficulty in having a shared understanding of relevance in academic collaboration. Any attempt to address this challenge will first have to explore the factors contributing to it.

of relevance understood and treated? These are some of the questions that highlight the difficulties in developing a shared understanding of relevance in academic collaboration.

Inequality, the Common Evil?

Rhetorically, it is often argued that the needs and priorities of the South should be the basis for establishing cooperative partnerships between partners in the North and the South. However, inequality in resources and the relative positions of partnering institutions in the global structure of knowledge production and dissemination have been blamed for creating a structural problem where one party wields significant leverage to influence—or even dictate—what happens within collaborative relationships.

In reality, such supply-oriented power dynamics commonly result in northern institutions dominating the dialogue when setting the agenda and defining the main areas of interest and relevance, including for their southern partners. More often than not, North–South partnerships fail to accommodate multiple voices to establish goals and performance indicators based on the local realities of all partners. Nonetheless, it is worth acknowledging that relevance is always relative to multiple stakeholders even within a region or an institution.

Rankings Set Boundaries

Power disparity presents itself in the relative position of partner institutions in global, regional, or local rankings. On the one hand, institutions tend to form collaborations with their peers, as defined by their position on the ranking tables—institutions at the top tend more often to collaborate with those in their own league.

On the other hand, those who are positioned lower in the tables still tend to prefer collaborating with those higher up, even at the risk of being considered "junior" partners. This can be traced back to the perceived advantages that a presumed "senior" partner may bring to the partnership in terms of resources, expertise, experience, and visibility.

Omnipresent Bias and Inequity

Power relations are affected by epistemological realities that often promote one form of knowledge as superior to another, as well as by economic imbalance resulting from material and financial inequality between the partners. For a variety of reasons, including those outlined above, funding agencies appear to be predisposed toward specific types of institutions to lead collaborative initiatives. This includes, but is not limited to, the role of managing and disbursing funding and other resources. It is common for collaborative relationships to be organized in such a way that institutions in the Global North are primarily responsible for managing and disbursing funds—a key role in the collaboration scheme. When privileging this type of arrangement, funding agencies reinforce, through their bureaucratic processes, structural inequality in academic collaborations—which in turn breeds hegemony.

These forms/sources of inequality produce power imbalances between partners, which affect how and by whom relevance is defined, shaped, and measured in a collaborative engagement.

Established Priorities

The third HEFAALA Symposium in Addis Ababa in April 2022 explored various trends and future paths that could alleviate obstacles in academic collaboration in relation to relevance. (HEFAALA stands for Higher Education Forum for Africa, Asia and Latin America.) One approach to address the contentious issue of relevance in collaborative engagements is to align activities and goals with already established priorities. For instance, priority areas such as the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and Agenda 2063 of the African Union offer frameworks of established priorities within distinct focus areas that can be cascaded from the continental all the way down to the local level.

Networks as Mediators of Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships between networks of institutions with comparable aspirations and goals are considered to be one way to mitigate the impact of rankings. Networks can facilitate collaborative relationships between diverse member institutions and provide

a framework or a governance structure to define how collaborations operate. It is crucial to emphasize that networks are also vulnerable to the challenges of inequality and power dynamics mentioned above. However, because of their long-term nature (as opposed to one-off projects) and broader institutional mechanisms, they tend to provide a more suitable structure for balanced collaboration.

Aligning Research Goals
Collaborative initiatives integrated with research goals are cited as good ways of generating relevant activities and outcomes. The research component is expected to generate evidence about which concerns should be addressed and which practical measures are likely to function best in various contexts. This has become a growing area of attention among funding partners. As a result, structuring collaborations in such a way that problem/goal identification, execution, and project evaluation are based on evidence, helps ground collaborative initiatives on local realities, and hence mitigates the challenges associated with relevance.

Reforming Funding Regimes
Finally, reforming funding mechanisms and instruments has been proposed as a possible way of addressing the inherent inequities and bias that exist in resourcing and operating collaborations. As a platform for policy dialogue, the HEFAALA symposium recommended this issue in particular as one of its future thematic foci. Furthermore, HEFAALA was encouraged to continue interrogating the current global structures of knowledge creation and distribution, as well as the methodologies used to define and assess relevance in North–South collaborations. The development of a publication/citation database geared toward knowledge production and dissemination in the Global South was also mentioned as a viable HEFAALA project to explore, as was the promotion of localized centers of excellence and indigenous knowledge and culture.

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The Global Longitudinal University Enrollment Dataset (GLUED)

Elizabeth Buckner

Abstract
Existing cross-national data on higher education participation has many limitations: It is collected primarily at the national level, combines short-cycle tertiary education with university enrollments, and lacks disaggregated data on the private sector before 1998. The Global Longitudinal University Enrollment Dataset (GLUED) seeks to address these limitations. The dataset compiles and estimates institution-level enrollment data on universities worldwide from 1950 to 2020. This article discusses the advantages that GLUED offers researchers of higher education.

How large was the private university (i.e., ISCED 6+) sector globally in the 1970s? And has the recent growth of private higher education occurred primarily in new private universities or through expanding enrollments in existing institutions? These are just some of the questions that scholars of private higher education are raising to better understand the growth of private higher education worldwide and its consequences for higher education landscapes, policies, and students.

However, until now, it has been difficult for scholars of higher education to put recent growth in perspective relative to earlier eras. This is due to a lack of data on private higher education before the year 2000. This article discusses the many problems with data on university enrollments and introduces a new dataset that seeks to advance the study of universities cross-nationally, over time.

The Lack of Data on Higher Education Enrollments by Sector

Existing data for studying private higher education cross-nationally has many limitations. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS) began collecting data on the private share of tertiary enrollments worldwide in 1998. However, in 1998, data was only available for 14 countries. By 2005, data on the private share of tertiary enrollments was available for 72 countries. UIS data peaks in 2015, at which point an estimate is available for 127 countries, after which data becomes scarcer again, most likely due to natural lags in reporting. By 2020, estimates are only available for 54 countries. Another issue with UIS data is that it depends on national or federal government reporting, which means that there are some countries for which data is never available, including my own country, Canada.

Moreover, UNESCO definitions for "public" and "private" do not always correspond with national definitions or popular understandings of public and private higher education. The consequences of this are apparent for countries such as the United Kingdom, where private universities are listed as comprising 100 percent of all enrollments in all years.

As a result, scholars interested in more accurate estimates of private higher education that better align to popular understandings and government policy turn to data sources such as the Program on Private Higher Education (PROPHE). The PROPHE website offers detailed country estimates based on UIS, as well as government sources and country-level experts in cases when government data is not available. However, one limitation with PROPHE is that, as of now, data is only available publicly for 2010, which makes it difficult to track long-term trends.

A third limitation of existing datasets is that available data on private higher education combines short-cycle tertiary education (i.e., ISCED 5) with universities (i.e., ISCED 6+), meaning institutions that offer bachelor's and/or advanced degrees. Yet, decades of scholarship in higher education has documented the distinctive characteristics of universities, which are much more likely to be research oriented, participate in global rankings, and which tend to enjoy more academic freedom. For those of us interested specifically in universities as a social institution, the conflation of short-cycle tertiary institutions with universities is a major concern.

The issues related to private higher education are shared by researchers of higher education more generally: Most of the publicly available data on higher education is calculated at the national level, combines short-cycle enrollments with university enrollments, and has only been widely available in recent years.

Introducing GLUED–Beta Version

Clearly, there is a need for better data on sector-specific enrollments in universities over time. The Global Longitudinal University Enrollment Dataset (GLUED) is a new dataset that seeks to do this. The three main advantages of GLUED are that it represents a near-census of universities (ISCED 6+) worldwide; that data is collected at the institutional level, which will allow researchers to investigate organizational-level phenomena; and that for many institutions, raw and estimated enrollment data is available starting in 1950.

Constructing GLUED has taken many years. The data was collected at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto and generously funded by a grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. Between 2018 and 2020, a team of research assistants manually entered enrollment data on thousands of universities from hard-copy volumes of both the Europa World of Learning and the International Association of Universities (IAU)'s World Higher Education Database. This data was supplemented with data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for the United States, recent enrollment data from the digital version of the World Higher Education Database hosted by IAU, and student enrollment data scraped from Wikipedia. All data was extensively checked and cleaned. Missing data for prior years was estimated based on institution-specific growth rates or institutional characteristics, and calibrated to align to published sources at the global and country levels.

GLUED specifies the name and institutional characteristics, including estimated student enrollment data at five-year intervals, of 15,263 institutions in 185 countries and territories.

GLUED specifies the name and institutional characteristics, including estimated student enrollment data at five-year intervals, of 15,263 institutions in 185 countries and territories. A second country-level data, with sector-specific enrollment data totaled to the country level, is also available.

GLUED also includes a number of other useful variables on institutional characteristics, merged from various sources, including sector (i.e., public/private), founding year, and whether the institution is PhD granting or not. The university sector is self-declared—meaning whether it is public or private—in the original sources by the institution, based on institutional control or ownership, and GLUED adopts that definition. The dataset does not distinguish between for-profit or nonprofit universities, nor does it capture whether a university is religious or not, but this is something that future versions of the dataset may be able to add.

Finally, one of the exciting features of GLUED is that it also includes the geographic location (i.e., GPS coordinates) of each university, scraped from Google Maps. This data can be used to map universities geographically in the dataset and visualize the growth of universities worldwide, and may be of use to researchers for a wide range of purposes.

The dataset is currently in its beta version, during which dataset cleaning and missing value estimation are finalized. The dataset will be published in early fall 2022 on the University of Toronto's Dataverse, and will be accessible through Borealis, the Canadian Dataverse Repository, at the following permalink: https://doi.org/10.5683/SP3/P0D1KE. ◄

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You Are Here: UNESCO's Higher Education Roadmap

Alma Maldonado-Maldonado

Abstract
This article analyzes the UNESCO decision to present a Roadmap document at the end of the Third UNESCO World Higher Education Conference instead of a declaration. It problematizes its content and also highlights the aspects that are missing, which are mainly the actions that could be driven by states, governments and societies. On the one hand the Roadmap could be seen as a sign of openness but on the other a mark of weakness.

The Third UNESCO World Higher Education Conference took place in Barcelona, Spain, on 18th May 2022. This was the first time that it was moved from the main UNESCO headquarters in Paris. This edition of the conference occurred 13 years after the second, held in 2009, while the first conference took place in 1998. The participants of the first two conferences adopted world declarations that had varied impacts.

For the most recent conference, UNESCO decided to present a *Roadmap* instead of a declaration. Although declarations have had significant impact in some areas, questions have been raised regarding the extent to which their content signifies pure rhetoric and zero effect. While some declarations can be quite impactful, others have been more subdued. Nevertheless, the decision to introduce a roadmap was an interesting move. Contrary to previous formal and solemn declarations, which were signed by all country members and called for action at different levels, the *Roadmap* has significantly different characteristics.

The *Roadmap* is informed by various insightful documents that were produced in advance by groups of experts around the world (i.e., *Knowledge-driven actions: Transforming higher education for global sustainability*; *Reimagining our futures together; A new social contract for education*; and *UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science*). These documents, as well as the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications* and other official documents on the Sustainable Development Goals, are frequently referred to throughout the report. This methodology is often applied by international organizations—UNESCO never starts from scratch.

The *Roadmap* begins with a discussion of the current convulsive state of the world, emphasizing facts such as climate change, armed conflicts and the resulting increase in refugees, growing income inequality, and the decline of democracy as a value in societies. Obviously, the COVID-19 pandemic finds its own space in the document. It further

informs readers about the characteristics of changes that have recently been adopted in systems and institutions. Next, the *Roadmap* presents UNESCO's vision for the sector, followed by the "Principles to share the future," and suggestions on ways to reinvent higher education. Finally, the *Roadmap* proposes a series of initiatives.

Among the different topics included in the six sections of the *Roadmap*, the following five recurrent ones attract significant attention.

Democratizing Participation: The Challenge of Access to Higher Education

Article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights puts forth that "admission to higher education should be based on the merit, capacity, efforts, perseverance and devotion, shown by those seeking access to it." However, ways to reduce inequalities among those enrolled in higher education institutions are a recognizable challenge. The *Roadmap* does a commendable job in addressing criticism regarding the idea of merit and takes a bold position in mentioning that higher education is an integral part of the right to education and a public good. If this were a world declaration, some countries might have refrained from signing it, as already observed at the second conference. Considering access, however, the main challenge is not the one presented in the *Roadmap*; rather, it is the action that needs to be undertaken. The *Roadmap* suggests building sustainable higher education systems that respond to the new demographic characteristics and social demands faced by countries, but it struggles to find a direction in terms of ways to accomplish this aim. Evidently, action has been a noteworthy limitation of UNESCO.

The Importance of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications

Unlike the topic of access, the Global Convention, which was unanimously adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 40th session on 25 November 2019, has a well-defined aim. It was signed by 16 states (out of 193)—four short of the total number of signatures needed for it to be enforced. If it gets the required signatures, it could be considered an initial success for the sector, resulting from decades of work by UNESCO. The Convention is a response to issues of academic mobility, educational options for refugees, and ways to grant recognition for students' learning. However, despite the enthusiasm for the Convention shown in the Conference and the *Roadmap*, four years after its adoption, it is still not clear whether it will attain the necessary support to become an effective instrument for its purposes.

Encouraging Lifelong Learning Experiences

This is a transformation that includes incorporating inter- and intradisciplinary approaches in higher education systems. Stepping away from traditional expectations regarding age and full-time/part-time enrollment of students, the *Roadmap* emphasizes the relevance of lifelong learning experiences as a goal in higher education. It further highlights that higher education needs to provide a holistic learning experience (including the transmission of integrity, values, and ethics). It insists that education cannot be narrowly focused on the sole acquisition of professional skills.

Recognizing the Role of Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Production

The *Roadmap* recognizes not only the importance of producing relevant knowledge but also that of technology. The use of technology, which was particularly significant during the first years of the pandemic, is here to stay. The *Roadmap* refers to the document on Open Science—which emphasizes making multilingual scientific knowledge available, accessible, and reusable for everyone—as a potential answer to current challenges. This is consistent with the requirement for higher education to become more socially responsible. Also, the document underscores the role of innovation and addresses— perhaps insufficiently—the scarcity of resources in higher education institutions around the world that are suffering from reduced public funding. However, the suggestion that everybody needs to find their own way is too inconclusive to help countries build their own scientific capacities.

Cooperation vs. Competition

The *Roadmap* insists that the route that higher education must take—especially in the so-called Global South—is to persevere in building cooperation. Indeed, one of the principles of *Reimagining our futures together* is to look for excellence through cooperation rather than competition. Encouraging cooperation over competition is a commendable principle, but countries and institutions have always been competing—whether this is accepted or not. What has been problematic is finding a constructive balance between competing and cooperating.

Neither Original nor Innovative—Just Showing "You are Here"

Presenting a roadmap instead of a declaration could be interpreted as a sign of openness (moving away from the principle of "one recipe for all," as in other international organizations). But it might also be emblematic of UNESCO's weakness—of its lack of leadership in opting not to publish an official declaration for the Third UNESCO World Higher Education Conference or to produce a document with sufficient power to send a clear message to states, governments, and societies around the world.

The *Roadmap* is a valuable document that synthesizes primary debates in higher education today, but cannot be considered original or innovative. It is an effective map that helps us locate our current position ("you are here"), but falls short of being a powerful navigational system with sufficient coordinates to guide us to our destination. The absence of concrete goals and lack of support for previous initiatives prevent the *Roadmap* from being a strong instrument to help bring about a restored, reinvented, more integrated, and improved higher education sector. ◀

The Roadmap *insists that the route that higher education must take—especially in the so-called Global South—is to persevere in building cooperation.*

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Missing from UNESCO's Roadmap for the Future: The Research Mission of Universities

Philip G. Altbach and Hans de Wit

Does UNESCO think that the traditional research mission of universities is relevant in the twenty-first century? Apparently not. *Beyond Limits: New Ways to Reinvent Higher Education*, the roadmap proposed for the World Higher Education Conference, which recently concluded in Barcelona, Spain, only very marginally and mostly indirectly mentions the research mission. Downplaying, or indeed almost entirely forgetting, the university's role in research is a huge lapse—and does not serve science, scholarship, or the future of higher education well. Nor is much said about several other central issues for higher education—among them financing the academic enterprise and the burgeoning private higher education sector. Another lapse is internationalization—which is included, but the emphasis is almost exclusively on mobility, recognition of qualifications and partnerships, with no reference to internationalization of the curriculum at home or global learning for all. Emphasizing higher education as a public good and human right sounds nice, but seems rather naïve when it ignores two key themes: massification, resulting in a rising private sector; and the knowledge economy, resulting on the one hand in increased inequality and on the other in the increased need for research. On the positive side, much else is usefully highlighted—academic freedom, sustainability, a holistic student learning experience, inclusiveness, diversity,

Abstract

The 2022 UNESCO Roadmap for the Future only marginally mentions research—while this is a central mission of universities. It is entirely appropriate for most universities to focus mainly on teaching and applied service to society and the economy. Yet, while research-intensive universities are only a small minority worldwide, they are immensely important to global science and innovation. Their function and role do not deserve to be ignored by UNESCO.

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Downplaying, or indeed almost entirely forgetting, the university's role in research is a huge lapse—and does not serve science, scholarship, or the future of higher education well.

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and other worthwhile and important themes. What is also positive is the call for more research on, and innovation in, higher education associated with capacity development.

It is worth reminding UNESCO, and perhaps the global higher education community in general, that research, especially basic research, has been a central responsibility of universities since the establishment of the University of Berlin in 1810. Traditionally, the core functions of the modern university are teaching, research, and service. UNESCO seems to have forgotten about the importance of research. This is particularly problematic in the science-based world of the twenty-first century, which includes the centrality of the university in the social sciences and humanities, key to understanding culture and society and providing the social context of the hard sciences.

As *Beyond Limits* illustrates, the contemporary university has been asked to take on ever more responsibilities, often in an environment of decreased resources. Governments, the media, and others are constantly asking academia to "reinvent itself" to serve these manifold purposes, in many ways moving an institution that has been remarkably successful over centuries away from its core responsibilities. Ignoring the importance of research in this process is dangerous: The global challenges threatening our societies, emphasized in the UNESCO declaration, require on the contrary increased attention on, and resources devoted to, research and research collaboration.

The Complexity of the Research Function

The contribution of universities to research production and to the advancement of science and society is unquestionable, and is crucial in basic research. One of many illustrations of this contribution is the development and advancement of mRNA vaccine technology, which led to the rapid success of COVID-19 vaccines. The Nobel prize-winning scientists who did the basic research were based in universities and research institutes—and their discoveries were the basis of the applied technology used for the vaccines. There are endless additional examples.

Universities are the central drivers of research, but, in some countries, they are not the only homes of research. China, France, Germany, Russia, and some other countries have separate, publicly funded research institutions, which are increasingly collaborating or even merging with universities. In the era of massification, not all universities are research focused. Indeed, only a small number of universities, the majority in the Global North, are research intensive. In the United States, there are perhaps 300 universities that are seriously engaged in research. In Australia, the Group of Eight are research intensive, and the United Kingdom has its "Russell Group." It is entirely appropriate for most universities and most academics to be focused mainly on teaching and applied service to society and the economy. Yet, the "world class" research-intensive universities, although being only a small minority, are immensely important to global science and innovation. Their function and role in the global knowledge system do not deserve to be entirely ignored by UNESCO.

Given UNESCO's traditional emphasis on the Global South and the role of education in socioeconomic development, attention should have been paid to the role of research universities and building research capacity in that region, to serve local needs and break the dominance of the North in that respect.

Research and research-intensive universities are central to higher education and, crucially, to the future of society and the survival of the planet. ◢

North–South Cooperation in Higher Education: Revisiting International Aid Flows

Francesc Pedró

T he absence of higher education from the debates around the international development agenda may hide the relative importance that the sector has for international development aid, and no longer reflect developing countries' policy priorities. Traditionally, international aid has played a vital role in financing development initiatives in countries facing structural constraints. Foreign aid, particularly in the form of official development assistance (ODA), has been used by wealthy countries to assist least developed ones by stimulating economic growth, improving living standards, and even building more robust institutions. But not much is known about the actual flows supporting higher education and their relative importance.

Missing Higher Education in the International Development Agenda
Over the past decades, a consensus has developed about prioritizing universal basic education and, increasingly, preschool education. Such a consensus emerges from the international community's commitment to enforcing the right to education, and draws on the evidence of universal basic education's role in development. This primary emphasis has relegated higher education to the margins of the international policy debates about development.

However, data shows that higher education is the education subsector that benefits the most from international aid, well beyond basic and secondary education. In 2019, one-third of all official development aid for education went to postsecondary education. This fact may look surprising at first glance, given that international debates focus mostly on basic education and, yet, it is an indication of several facts converging.

On the one hand, in low-income countries, the proportion of each cohort that gets access to higher education yearly ranges from 9 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa to 52 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to UNESCO data on target 4.3 of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 for 2018. These figures are indicative of the transition from elite to mass higher education. Fifty percent gross enrollment is taken to indicate a country entering the so-called universal higher education stage—considered by UNESCO a dimension of the right to education and lifelong learning opportunities.

On the other hand, recent evidence suggests that the return of the investment in higher education is relatively high not only for the individual, but also for society and the economy at large, with some researchers claiming that private and public returns are equivalent in size. Public investment in higher education creates well-documented externalities that, among other things, contribute to socioeconomic development through health and civic outcomes, not to mention their direct effect on the labor market and, as a result, contributing to an environment fostering more knowledge-oriented economies.

Yet, these economic analyses do not show the complete picture. No other education subsector has more potential than higher education to contribute to each SDG, mainly through the combined three missions that universities pursue: teaching, research, and contribution to social and economic development. Further, low-income countries need to enlarge their professional and scientific capacities, both in the public and private sectors, to generate and manage their avenues to socioeconomic development; again, no other subsector is better positioned to do this than higher education. How well is this reflected in the current flows of international aid?

Abstract
This article provides an exploratory overview of international aid devoted to higher education, including its relative importance compared to other types of aid, its main characteristics and geographical distribution patterns, as well as a list of main donors, recipients, and channels. It sets a common and global baseline that may contribute to a global, evidence-based reflection and debate around this topic including all stakeholders, and to changes in the current paradigm.

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> *International aid flows have been heavily skewed toward universities, leaving marginal financial aid to tertiary technical programs, in spite of the particularly important role played by technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in developing economies.*

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This article builds upon Galán-Muros, Chacón, and Escribens, Exploring international aid for tertiary education: recent developments and current trends. *Caracas, UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education, 2022.*

The Current Flows of International Aid for Higher Education
ODA targeting higher education (HED) represented 2.7 percent of total ODA flows in 2019; this is USD 5.2 billion, as highlighted in a recent report by the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education launched at the Third World Higher Education Conference (Barcelona, May 2022). The analysis draws on data from the OECD and other sources to estimate the amount and types of aid flowing between donor and recipient countries.

Over the past years, international aid flows have been heavily skewed toward universities, leaving marginal financial aid to tertiary technical programs, in spite of the particularly important role played by technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in developing economies. Such a trend brings forward discussions on the degree to which the design of international aid balances local recipient needs within global environments.

Flows follow a strong pattern from Global North to Global South, with Germany and France as the main donors. An overview of the main recipients of HED ODA reveals that upper-middle-income countries capture most of the funding, despite their ability to raise domestic resources. China (as a country) and Asia and the Pacific (as a region) top the list. In other words, middle-income countries received about 70 percent of that aid in 2019, far more than the share going to the lowest-income nations (12 percent). China alone received 8 percent of tertiary aid, even though it is also becoming a substantial donor itself.

Just under three-quarters of the disbursed ODA for HED was dedicated to scholarships and imputed student costs. This emphasis on scholarships can help achieve SDG target 4.b, which calls for increasing the volume of ODA flows given as HED scholarships, particularly to least developed countries, small islands, and African nations. More specifically, the proportion of ODA for tertiary education going to Africa was lower than a fifth (18 percent) in 2019, down from 31 percent in 2002. The declining share of ODA directed toward Africa, which has the lowest human development indicators and is also likely to become home to the world's largest number of youth in 2050, reflects the urgency for the international community to enhance its evidence-based collaboration mechanisms to better target those left behind.

Reliance on these types of aid, which are closely related to international mobility, may raise questions regarding their impact on the development of recipient HED systems, since those resources are reinvested within donor countries. In other words, much of that financial aid is spent in donor countries. This paradox opens an important space for debate on shared purposes, commitments, norms, and standards established in the way in which aid is given, bringing to light the importance of providing access for those populations whose realization of the universal right to education is most at risk.

Implications
Although evidence on HED-related outcomes is quite limited, there is enough data to state that the efficiency of HED ODA allocation, and thus its impact, can be enhanced. An efficient and impactful international aid flow to HED represents an opportunity for higher education institutions in the Global South to increase student access and attainment, enhance the quality and relevance of their education, offer their graduates international education experiences, or improve their research processes and outcomes. However, this cannot be fully achieved only by unilaterally transferring funds with a top-down approach, as this can perpetuate dependency and global hierarchies that prevent mutually beneficial international cooperation in HED.

The pandemic will for sure have a negative impact on international aid for education development, and the resulting context may make it even more difficult than before to rethink whether higher education should be a priority in debates and resulting strategies—at least, at first glance. A more thoughtful approach, yet, would consider the potential effects of not embedding higher education in the international development agenda, not only for economic recovery and development but also for equity in post-pandemic higher education.

Higher Education amid Crisis in Sri Lanka

Raveenthiran Vivekanantharasa and Gerardo Blanco

Abstract
The current economic and social crisis in Sri Lanka has caused many challenges in the national higher education system. Despite much effort and investment, all aspects of higher education in the country, including teaching and learning, funding, facilities, and access, have been severely affected, creating significant uncertainty for the future.

Even though Sri Lanka is a lower-middle income country, there has been a considerable concern for higher education, along with significant progress, since independence in 1948. The Sri Lankan higher education system comprises 17 government universities, 20 university-affiliated institutes, five other government universities, 11 advanced technological institutes, seven advanced technological institute sections, and 10 private universities and institutes. Sri Lanka allocates a substantial portion of its budget to education. The 2022 budget for education is over LKR 157.6 billion (roughly USD 436 million), a major increase from LKR 126.5 billion in 2020.

The planning activities to improve the higher education system at the national level ended in failure with the most recent economic collapse. Sri Lanka's economy faces acute foreign currency shortage, looming debt repayments, high inflation, and food, fuel, and medicine shortages. These pressures resulted in nation-wide protests and an unstable political system that triggered an economic recession. As a result, universities, colleges of education, technical colleges, advanced technological institutes, and vocational education centers in the country have been affected in unprecedented ways.

Closures of Higher Education Institutions

Sri Lanka temporarily shut down state universities and other higher educational institutions in the capital, Colombo, and other main cities, due to a prevailing fuel crisis and a collapsing economy. Even after the toppling of the president and the prime minister and the installation of a transitional government, the University Grants Commission asked that universities hold in-person activities only three days per week, due to the cost of fuel. These interruptions of academic activities at most universities are adding to the learning losses resulting from the pandemic. Roughly 70 percent of academic activities of all higher education institutions remain online. These closures and the partial reopening have affected enrollments for the new academic year. Students who got through the advanced level examination for entry into higher education are being assigned to different streams than those they had selected.

Since 1945, Sri Lanka has maintained a free education policy. However, due to the economic crisis, access to higher education is limited as a result of either a lack of physical facilities or internet access for online learning. In addition, unprecedented increases in the cost of petrol (33.1 percent) and diesel (64.2 percent) have made transportation unaffordable for most academics and students. The Sri Lankan government stopped foreign import and export transactions to address the crushing trade deficit faced by the country. As a result, institutions face shortages of supplies and equipment for academic activities. For instance, printing paper is being rationed. Students have been badly affected by rising prices of food, medicine, accommodation, and transportation.

Students pursuing higher education through the few private higher educational institutions in the country are facing many challenges with the steep increase of tuition. While the number of Sri Lankan students abroad had swelled in recent years, roughly doubling in the five years leading up to the pandemic and reaching more than 30,000 in 2019, the shortage of foreign currency and the depreciation of the Sri Lankan rupee (by over 30 percent as of April 2022) have also adversely affected those students. These problems threaten some private universities with closure, due to lack of enrollments, and outward mobility will also become unaffordable.

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In the midst of the severe economic crisis and political instability, wide segments of Sri Lankan society, including teachers and students, took to the streets and ousted the government.

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Impact of the Crisis on Online Teaching and Learning

After remaining closed for over a year during the COVID-19 pandemic, universities resumed learning activities on a limited scale, contingent on adherence to health guidelines. However, the economic crisis forced all universities, schools, and higher educational institutions to close again and continue their activities online. For a lower-middle-income country, this is a major drawback because students living far away are not capable of accessing online teaching and learning. Poor internet connectivity, unstable power grids, and lack of access to devices are some of the main obstacles. In a country where more than 70 percent of students have no access to the internet or to electronic devices, online study is not a viable solution. Furthermore, due to fuel shortages, networks stopped functioning temporarily and network access was frequently interrupted.

Foreign Aid and an Ongoing Higher Education Crisis

According to UNICEF, more than 5.7 million people in Sri Lanka require humanitarian assistance. While the economic crisis made foreign aid more necessary than ever before, the protests and social unrest that ensued forced the closure of many humanitarian programs. In coordination with the International Monetary Fund and other development partners, the World Bank is advising the government on appropriate policies to restore economic stability, but does not plan to offer new funding to Sri Lanka until an adequate macroeconomic policy framework is in place.

In the midst of the severe economic crisis and political instability, wide segments of Sri Lankan society, including teachers and students, took to the streets and ousted the government. With the selection of a new president and a transitional government, it remains to be seen what steps will be taken to help the country recover from the cascading impacts of the pandemic and the economic crisis. In this new context, private higher education is at risk, along with other segments of the economy, and the outward flow of Sri Lankan students will likely stop, except for those most privileged. New strategies for higher education management will be key to address the root causes of the economic, social, and political crises in the long term. ◣

Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 advocated radical reforms in Indian higher education. Introducing a Common University Entrance Test in central universities is one such measure, expected to save students time, energy, and costs and tackle the issue of steep cut-offs in colleges and universities. But it may lead to a proliferation of coaching companies, limiting access for students from vulnerable backgrounds. It may also limit universities' autonomy in selecting students, and erode diversity.

Introducing a Common University Entrance Test in India

Emon Nandi

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 calls for a major transformation of Indian higher education through a regulatory overhaul and by fostering competition among public and private higher education institutions. Following up on the NEP 2020, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has already initiated reforms that have serious long-term implications on students, faculty, and institutions. Introducing a Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for undergraduate/integrated and postgraduate programs in universities is one such measure. This has serious implications for access, quality, and diversity in a hugely diverse federal country like India. Postsecondary entrance examinations are controversial and important everywhere. The current debate in India thus has global significance.

What Is the CUET?

Central universities in India are funded by the central government and are under the purview of the ministry of education. Currently, there are 54 central universities. Universities and colleges usually admit students on the basis of their grades in the 12th standard examination, or through entrance examinations conducted by the institutions. The CUET seeks to alter the existing admission process by conducting a single entrance examination for general courses at any participating university across the nation. It is a computer-based test consisting of multiple-choice questions in three sections (language, domain-specific, and general), to be conducted in 13 languages.

In 2021, the UGC advised all central universities to adopt the Central University Common Entrance Test (CUCET) for admitting students to undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) courses. The responsibility for conducting the test was assigned to the National Testing Agency, an independent body under the ministry of education. However, only 14 central universities decided to adopt the CUCET last year. This year, the UGC enforced the CUCET at all central universities and advised other universities to adopt the system as well. Accordingly, the test is now renamed Common University Entrance Test (CUET). Eventually, 12 state universities, 11 deemed universities, and 19 private universities adopted the CUET for UG admissions. By May 2022, over 1,151,319 candidates had registered for the CUET–UG for admissions for the academic year 2022–2023. Registration for the CUET for PG admissions is taking place at the time of writing this article.

Possible Positive Implications

The UGC argues that the CUET will benefit students immensely, allowing them to take a single-window test to seek admission to any course at the participating universities. Earlier, students had to apply to the universities and their affiliated colleges separately. They had to pay application fees to each institution and appear for multiple entrance examinations. The CUET will save them time, energy, and money.

Next, the CUET will tackle the issue of variation in grades across several regional and national boards of school education. In India, the 12th standard examination is conducted by several boards that have very different grading systems. To leverage their own students, some boards often inflate grades in the final examination. As a consequence, a steep rise in cut-off marks was observed in recent years for UG admissions, especially in reputed institutions. For instance, in 2021, Hindu College, affiliated to the University of Delhi, set a minimum of 99 percent cut-off for students to get admitted to the bachelor of economics program. Similarly, another college, the Miranda House, set the cut-off at 99.25 percent for political science. This cut-off system was inevitably biased against students coming from boards with a very strict grading system. However, universities participating in the CUET can still set a minimum percentage of marks in the 12th standard examination as eligibility criterion.

In addition, the CUET enables students to apply for any course, irrespective of the subjects studied at the higher secondary level. However, eligibility depends on the requirements specified by the universities. The CUET also provides an opportunity for students who did not do well in the 12th standard examination. As there is no minimum grade required for appearing for the CUET, they can now seek admission to their preferred universities based on their CUET scores.

Apprehension

There are a few pertinent issues that have fostered apprehension in the academic community about the efficacy of the CUET. First, Indian universities vary widely in terms of their history, reputation, quality, size, specializations, objectives, and purposes. So far, universities and their respective departments had the freedom of setting their own admission criteria according to the specific competencies that they wanted to see in their students. This is particularly important for disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, for which centers or schools may have very different approaches. Therefore, the CUET restricts their autonomy to select students best suited to their courses.

Second, the CUET is most likely to cause a proliferation of coaching companies, as observed with other national level examinations. In India, more than one-fifth of students across all education levels opt for supplementary private tuition outside their formal

The CUET is most likely to cause a proliferation of coaching companies, as observed with other national level examinations.

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institutions. This phenomenon is referred to as "shadow education," which runs parallel to the formal education system. The tendency among students to resort to private coaching increases considerably at the higher secondary level, in preparation for the national level entrance tests for engineering and medical programs. Accordingly, it is expected that the CUET will also lead to a mushrooming of private coaching institutions for generic courses. Some coaching institutions started advertising for their CUET-support services the day after it was formally announced by the UGC. As for other national examinations, this could be an impediment for students from vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds, who cannot afford to pay for private coaching.

Third, the CUET undermines the role of school education at the higher secondary level, as the 12th standard board examinations cease to have a role in admission to UG programs. The 12th standard grades will still remain relevant, however, for admission to all other institutions than the 66 universities who have opted for the CUET. But the UGC expects all universities to adopt the CUET eventually. This move will limit the role of school education in shaping students' future career paths. The UGC argues that the CUET will reflect a high correlation between 12th standard grades and CUET scores. But the CUET is based on a syllabus designed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training, which is mostly followed by national boards. Regional school boards follow a different syllabus, and this will pose a challenge for their students to score well in the CUET.

Concluding Remarks

A national level entrance test is a prerequisite for accessing higher education in many countries. The unique challenges that it poses in India have their roots in its exam-oriented colonial education system. Given India's digital divide and unequal social structure, a computer-based standardized test consisting of only multiple-choice questions will limit students' ability to think and share their perspectives. This straightjacketing will erode diversity among higher education institutions. Instead of initiating a standardized test across the nation at this moment, focusing on improving quality and access in public schools and higher education institutions could be a better approach to improve the Indian education system. ◄

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Juggling between Market, Modernization, and Ideology: Internationalization of Higher Education in Central Eurasia

Murod Ismailov, James Harry Morris, and Carole Faucher

Abstract

Transnational academic mobility is considered the key element of the internationalization of higher education. One region that is often overlooked in such discussions is Central Eurasia. In this analysis, we propose that, unlike in other former Soviet republics, the internationalization of higher education in this region depends on a complex configuration of market forces, modernization, and ideology.

With a combined population of nearly 100 million (with over 60 percent under the age of twenty-five), the countries of Central Eurasia—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan— provide a unique case for the internationalization of higher education (HE).

A Thorny Path

After breaking free from the Moscow-dominated Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s, these countries have approached their internationalization policies in different ways—some actively expanding university exchange programs with universities in the West (like Georgia and Kyrgyzstan), some expanding ties with Russian universities (such as Armenia and Tajikistan), and some halting such efforts altogether (like Turkmenistan).

Unlike the former Soviet Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which joined the European Union in 2004 and integrated into its intraregional Bologna framework, the path toward integration with international educational systems has become thorny for the republics of South Caucasus and Central Asia. This process can be explained through a "triad" of market forces, modernization, and ideology.

Market Forces

As they look into strengthening ties and forming alliances with universities abroad to offer international exposure to their students and faculty, the new universities in the region are adopting development models similar to business institutions. Unlike conventional public universities, these institutions seek to improve their students' hard, soft, and cross-cultural skills. For example, the TEAM University in Uzbekistan, founded by a group of local entrepreneurs in academic partnership with London South Bank University, promises to deliver practice-based, academically challenging, and socially relevant education. Another privately held institution, the Kazakh–British Technical University, founded in Almaty in collaboration with the University of London and the London School of Economics and Political Science, states that a world-class education makes its students competitive in the global markets, as reflected in their placements in multinational companies and the world's top universities.

Another important push factor for encouraging links with prestigious universities abroad is to keep top talents at home and stop the brain drain. An example is Nazarbayev University and its partnerships with Cambridge University and the National University of Singapore. The national scholarship scheme, Bolashak, invests less in students going abroad and more in those studying at Nazarbayev University.

The region is witnessing a slow but steady growth of institutions, such as Alterbridge University and the European University in Georgia, seeking to position their countries as credible international knowledge economies and using the universities as a means of fulfilling nation-building objectives. What these universities have in common is an emerging strategy to prepare their students for future work in a fast-evolving, highly competitive international workplace. The focus on international higher education helps these universities to increase their value and economies of scale and bring in financial resources to support their future growth. Their recognition by local governments and among the population is an indication of a trend toward marketization of education in the region.

Normalizing?

Transparency and academic integrity are often taken for granted in the contexts of Western universities. These values are nurtured slowly, especially in the former Soviet countries. While corruption in higher education has many manifestations, in the Central Eurasian context it is often evidenced in the form of shady monetary transactions in exchange for academic benefits among some faculty, students, and administrators. Deeply rooted in the Soviet-style administrative malfunction, and coupled with a lack of financial resources to incentivize quality teaching and transparency, corruption continues its journey to the present day and is most prevalent in government-run universities.

What does corruption have to do with the internationalization of higher education? There is a growing realization among the region's modernizers that decent faculty salaries or criminal charges against wrongdoers cannot alone discourage corruption, and that the problem should be addressed in new ways. One approach that governments appear to be taking is supporting the creation of foreign university branches. These are typically managed, or comanaged, by well-paid expatriates. Uzbekistan alone invited a dozen of universities to open satellite campuses, including the University of Westminster, Inha University,

> *Any discussion of a post-Soviet transformation, including in higher education, would be incomplete without a discussion of hegemony and ideology.*

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Webster University, Politecnico di Torino, Singapore Management University, and others. The long-term vision is to internalize the best practices related to academic integrity and transparency that these universities have in place, and use these lessons to eventually modernize the entire educational ecosystem. The internalization of best practices is further facilitated through regular faculty and student exchanges abroad. While some universities, such as the Kazakh–American Free University, encourage open dialogue or take targeted action plans to eradicate corruption in higher education, the internalization approach taken by some governments—nurturing a culture of academic integrity—might be more effective in the long run.

Moving Along… Alone: Why Does Ukraine Matter?

Any discussion of a post-Soviet transformation, including in higher education, would be incomplete without a discussion of hegemony and ideology. Trade output aside, long after the demise of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin continues to wield its influence in the region by creating joint university campuses across Central Eurasia. Some examples include the Russian–Tajik Slavonic University, the Kyrgyz–Russian Slavic University, the Russian–Armenian University, and the recently established branch of MGIMO University in Uzbekistan. Although these moves might technically represent cases of internationalization, given that they are politically lubricated and aimed at cementing Russia's political and ideological hegemony in the region, these projects will fall short of modernizing the region's educational ecosystem or promoting international higher education.

In the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022, and to a lesser, but not negligible extent, given the Belarus president's remarks about the possible inclusion of Central Asian republics in the Russia–Belarus Union (i.e., a modern version of the USSR), the countries of the region will carefully weigh the long-term consequences of Russia-led "internationalization of education." Partly understanding these dangers long before the 2022 invasion, and partly driven by the wider trends of democratization, pluralism, and market-led modernization, some governments are allowing the parallel establishment of Western-style institutions. What the examples of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, the American University of Central Asia, the Kazakh–American University, and the Georgian–American University signify is that the debates of internationalization in Central Eurasia cannot be detached from the recurring narratives of ideology and hegemony.

In sum, the future of international higher education in Central Eurasia appears to rest on a complex triad of influences—market forces, modernization, and ideology. Due to significant historical/political and socioeconomic similarities among Central Eurasian states, this three-fold proposition helps to understand the future directions of international higher education in the region. ◢

Internationalization of Medical Education—Concepts and Approaches for Action

Anette Wu

Abstract
The need for internationalization of medical education (IoME) is heightened amid the COVID-19 pandemic. IoME is the process of purposefully integrating international, intercultural, or global dimensions into medical education. Innovative and inclusive approaches are utilized in IoME in order to increase global healthcare collaboration and improve the health of all people worldwide.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has presented opportunities for internationalization of medical education (IoME). IoME promotes international healthcare understanding and cooperation, minimizes healthcare nationalism, and equitably improves the health of all people worldwide. In line with the broader definition of internationalization of higher education, it can best be described as the process of purposefully integrating international, intercultural, or global dimensions into medical education in order to enhance its quality and prepare all graduates for professional practice in a globalized world. Thus, physicians regard themselves as part of a worldwide medical community and solve healthcare issues in a collaborative manner. Although IoME is a global phenomenon, understandings and perspectives of the Global North have traditionally dominated and therefore addressed only a narrow spectrum of activities transpiring globally. Motivations for internationalization of medical education have focused on three major models. The first two, the market and social transformation models, have their limitations.

The Market Model: Competition as a Driver for Internationalization

With its focus on competition, the market model is often practiced in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). Countries and institutions aim to improve their world ranking in science and clinical care through the lens of the Western world. Competition as motivation for internationalization has immediate and measurable successes, but incurs the risk that once certain achievement milestones are reached, interest in IoME is lost. This model is characterized by inward thinking with respect to educational activities, which can foster, and result in, nationalism. This ultimately increases the risk of healthcare nationalism, as countries try to compete for global leadership and disregard the common goal of improving the health of all people worldwide. In addition, actors turn away when spotting a competitor in the market (as exemplified by the relationship between China and the United States in recent history). As such, the market model is rather unsustainable and its motivation is counterproductive to what IoME attempts to achieve.

The Social Transformation Model: Doing Good

The social transformation model, dominant in the Global North and emphasizing the humanitarian aspects of IoME, is rooted in altruistic and compassionate values. This model is predominantly realized via student outbound mobility, particularly to LMIC. However, this format does not fully realize the vision of social transformation of IoME in practice. Research has shown that one-sided, short-term student mobility to LMIC, as currently practiced in the Global North, is inherently unjust and not inclusive in many ways. It tends to create a burden for the low-resource host countries and is ethically problematic when students are sent to a culturally diverse environment without proper preparation (e.g., when medical students from the Global North volunteer to work in neonatal units in Sub-Saharan Africa). There appears to be a lack of reporting on the voices of the Global South in the current body of literature. Formats cater primarily to the needs of students from the Global North, and mobility programs are generally only accessible to a minority of privileged students at select institutions. The above excludes the majority of students and thus is not in line with the vision of general accessibility in higher education. Furthermore, in times of pandemics and conflicts, these mobility programs are not a safe way to educate students.

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Physicians regard themselves as part of a worldwide medical community and solve healthcare issues in a collaborative manner.

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This article is based on findings from the following article: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40670-022-01553-6#citeas.

The Liberal Model: Working on a Common Goal

The liberal model, adapted from other areas of higher education, fosters international understanding and collaboration via "soft diplomacy." Medical students act as goodwill ambassadors (e.g., via the Fulbright or Rhodes program). However, current publications do not give evidence that this model is applied in medical education. Considered a by-product of the other two models, it has rarely been described as the sole or even partial motivation for international activities. Therefore, an important purpose for globalizing medicine has not been fully appreciated. In certain countries, it is now increasingly incorporated (e.g., via the Erasmus program), but innovative and socially equitable multilateral approaches, which consider the needs of the Global South as well as the Global North and provide students with a broader view of healthcare, are still limited in scope. While the liberal model may not show an immediate effect on healthcare, given current events, with ongoing conflicts and nationalism in healthcare, IoME enacted through the liberal model can significantly facilitate international understanding and healthcare change and should be implemented further.

What Comes Next?

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that healthcare nationalism limits us in improving the health of all people worldwide and prevents us from acting together as a global medical community. It is important to educate our graduates to think differently. Medical educators need to look at their international activities through a different lens, with the liberal model in mind and by educating our students to become ambassadors and global citizen physicians. Formats of IoME need to be increasingly aligned with this motivation and purposefully integrate activities where students can participate in multilateral exchanges, learn how to understand and respect the practice of medicine in other countries in a culturally sensitive manner, and feel that they are part of a global medical community without dominating others with their own, predominantly Western, views. These activities can be virtual, include international student exchanges, shared international faculty members, and joint teaching materials, and can also occur through student mobility programs where students act as ambassadors of their countries.

The above activities are equitable and aim to reach *all* students. A fundamental principle of internationalization of the curriculum, and therefore of IoME, is the promotion of universal access to international experiences and education for all students. Focusing on international activities "at home" better reflects the tenets of IoME through a more inclusive approach wherein all students, irrespective of socioeconomic background, university of attendance, or country of origin, gain access to experiences and content that have relevance beyond national borders.

Conclusion

Heightened healthcare nationalism is detrimental to the health of all people worldwide. With the support of IoME, healthcare providers view themselves as part, and act as members, of the greater global community. When international healthcare collaboration is promoted, healthcare nationalism wanes and the health of all people worldwide can improve. ◢

Changing Geopolitics of International Student Mobility: Implications for Central Asian Students

Yusuf Ikbal Oldac

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Anglophone and Western countries have traditionally been dominant international study destinations. However, flow patterns in international student mobility (ISM) are not static. International data repositories such as UNESCO indicate that international students increasingly choose to study in countries other than Anglophone and Western contexts, although these destinations are still prominent. The world is witnessing a pluralization of destination countries.

Central Asia—a region made up of five countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, according to United Nations categorization—provides a stark example illustrating this pluralization trend. For outbound students from this region, traditional destination countries are not top study destinations. Instead, three nontraditional destinations have been surpassing traditional destinations by large numbers, especially since the 2010s. These are Turkey to the west, Russia to the north, and China to the east of Central Asia, forming a geopolitical triangle with Central Asia at its center.

Abstract
Especially starting in the 2010s, China, Russia, and Turkey have become top destinations for Central Asian students, significantly surpassing all traditional Anglophone and Western destinations. In this article, these three countries are called the "triangle" countries, since they form a geopolitical triangle to Central Asia's east, north, and west. They have achieved considerable success in increasing their international student numbers, but due to tremendous ongoing geopolitical changes, the future of this success is uncertain.

Central Asia and the Triangle Destination Countries

Central Asia has a strategic geopolitical importance, especially in the Eurasian context. Due to its central location, the region has traditionally been essential in connecting East and West—think of the historical silk road—and it is still key to the movement of goods and ideas, in both directions. Thanks to its connectivity with the West, China sees it as a crucial part of its Belt and Road initiative and has made significant investments in the region.

Central Asian countries are also post-Soviet countries that were once part of the same governance structure with Russia, the heir of the Soviet legacy today. The Russian language is prevalent in the region. Hence, these countries are important for Russia to maintain its sphere of influence, a reason for why they are designated as the Commonwealth of Independent States by Russia.

The region is also important for Turkey, as it is home to (mostly) Turkic people who share ethnolinguistic and religious commonalities. This argument has been further strengthened after the announcement of the Organization of the Turkic States in November 2021 in Istanbul, which included multiple agreements to integrate the region in domains such as education, economy, and logistics.

Central Asia has a strategic geopolitical importance, especially in the Eurasian context.

Student Mobility Trends

Comparative trends based on UNESCO data indicate that Russia has been the top destination for Central Asian students since 2000, the earliest available data. The latest available number for Central Asian international students in Russia was 172,449, in 2019. By contrast, Turkey and China are relatively recent destinations for Central Asian students. Turkey emerged as a significant destination country starting from around 2010, when the number of students from Central Asia increased by more than 540 percent to 44,224 in the 10 years leading up to 2019.

China is another rising destination for Central Asian students. Data from the Chinese ministry of education indicates that China has become the third most popular destination for ISM from this region, with 18,450 students in 2018. In comparison, in 2019, the United States attracted 5,827 Central Asian students, the United Kingdom 2,863, and Germany

6,355. This shows that the triangle countries significantly surpass traditional Anglophone and Western destinations for ISM from Central Asia.

An Uncertain Future

Although the triangle countries have achieved considerable success in attracting international students from Central Asia, current momentous geopolitical changes raise uncertainties as to whether this trend will continue.

With the war in Ukraine, Russia's top position in attracting Central Asian students might be threatened. However, we must be careful in drawing conclusions here. The isolation of Russia, especially in the Western world, does not seem to apply as strictly in other parts of the world, including Central Asia. None of the Central Asian countries backed the UN motion on Ukraine. They either abstained or did not vote at all. The recent embargoes, expected to affect the Russian economy in the mid-to-long term, may have a stronger impact on Russia's ability to attract students from the region. Along with the prevalence of the Russian language and the ease of obtaining visas, Russia's comprehensive scholarships and job prospects after graduation have been strong drivers for student mobility from this region. The embargoes may affect the latter significantly in the coming years.

For China, what is creating uncertainties is its relative closing to the world due to its zero-COVID policy. International students have been blocked from entering the country for more than two years. Some students had to graduate without physically being in their schools for years. And at the time of writing this article, those who did not leave China for fear of not being able to return are now in strict lockdowns if they are in cities like Shanghai and Beijing. Central Asian countries do not follow such strict policies against COVID. Turkmenistan might be the strictest among them as the country is closed for international travel, but until now, there has been no strict lockdown inside the country. At the time of writing, there are signs of improvements in China on easing student visas, but no significant steps have been taken yet. Any policy change from China on this issue will help enhance its attractiveness for ISM.

For Turkey, the main uncertainty for attracting ISM from Central Asia is its economic woes. The comprehensive scholarships provided by the Turkish government are important drivers. However, the country is facing a serious devaluation of its currency, with the inflation rate hitting 70 percent in April 2022. The scholarships may become less attractive after these developments. Aside from this, Turkey may currently be in a relatively better position than Russia and China, as it did not close to ISM during the pandemic and is not facing harsh embargoes from a significant part of the world.

Conclusion

While the triangle countries face serious challenges in maintaining their success in attracting ISM from Central Asia, they may still keep their position as the top three destinations for the region by large numbers compared to any other country. This is because no specific policy is currently being produced by the rest of the world to attract more students from this geopolitically important region. The competition will likely stay within the triangle countries. ◢

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In-Person or Virtual Study for International Students in the United States?

Mirka Martel

Abstract
Throughout the past two years, international students at US colleges and universities have grappled with what kind of educational experience they would be offered as part of their international exchange. This article provides an overview of two years of data regarding international students' mode of study at US institutions and reflections on in-person and hybrid study in international educational exchange.

Throughout the past two years, international students at US colleges and universities have grappled with what kind of educational experience they would be offered as part of their international exchange. While traditionally, international educational exchange meant gathering a passport and luggage in order to travel to one's desired study destination, the last two years have introduced the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, health and safety, and the opportunity, or more often the necessity, to pursue study online from abroad. Where does this leave international students and their choices? And how have US colleges and universities adapted their role as hosts in the past two years?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* reported a steady increase of international students coming to the United States for degree study and Optional Practical Training (OPT). Despite growing competition from other countries, the complexities of US policies, and the cost of study, in the 2018–2019 academic year, just before COVID-19, there were over one million international students at US colleges and universities. And, like many international students worldwide, these students were on campus, studying in person.

Virtual Adaptations and Their Effects on International Student Enrollment in 2020–2021
Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the mode of instruction shifted. In the fall semester of 2020, almost all US institutions (99 percent) offered hybrid instruction, and most students began their studies online from abroad. *Open Doors* reported 914,095 international students studying at US colleges and universities in the 2020–2021 academic year, a 15 percent decline from the previous year. In our analysis, the mode of instruction was a factor in international students' decisions to continue or pause their study plans.

Over half of all international students enrolled in degree programs (53 percent) attended classes online. Only 41 percent of new international students, or students enrolled in a US institution for the first time, were able to attend classes in person. The share of international students beginning their studies at the undergraduate level (35 percent) or the non-degree level (27 percent) was even lower.

For some students, the option to defer admission or take a leave of absence was preferable, allowing them to start their program in person in a consequent term. *Open Doors* 2021 reported 47,499 international students who deferred their studies to a future year, compared to just 9,249 international students in 2019–2020. In addition, 10,354 international students took a leave of absence in 2020–2021, compared to 3,817 the year before. Many considerations go into taking a leave of absence, well beyond the realities of COVID-19. However, the difference between 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 demonstrated the impact of COVID-19 as an exacerbating factor causing more international students to take a break from their studies.

Return to In-Person Study
In the fall of 2021, US colleges and universities were resolute in their plans to resume in-person study. With the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations in the summer of 2021, a primary focus was a commitment to the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff on campus. This extended to international students, as most US institutions indicated in the summer of 2021 that they would offer COVID-19 vaccinations to all students, including international students. This also meant an opportunity for international students

In the fall semester of 2020, almost all US institutions (99 percent) offered hybrid instruction, and most students began their studies online from abroad.

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traveling from places where the vaccine was not yet available to pursue their studies with their health and safety in mind.

The shift to in-person study was evidenced in our data as well. The *Spring 2022 Snapshot on International Educational Exchange* indicated that in the spring of 2022, 89 percent of US institutions reported most of their international students on campus. Over half of all institutions (55 percent) reported *all* their international students on campus last spring.

Most US institutions are reporting increases in applications for the 2022–2023 academic year, particularly master's colleges and universities (76 percent), doctoral universities (73 percent), community colleges (68 percent), and liberal arts colleges (51 percent). These same institutions are also focusing on in-person study; almost all (96 percent) plan to offer international students in-person study in the United States. There continue to be options for hybrid study for students who may not be able to travel due to COVID-19: 66 percent of institutions noted offering students deferment to the spring of 2023 (down from 77 percent last year), while only 32 percent noted that they would offer online enrollment to international students until they could come to campus in person (down from 47 percent last year).

Several factors are contributing to these trends. They include the preference of institutions and students for in-person study. However, this trend also aligns with US immigration policies, which have adapted due to COVID-19. Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) guidance, first issued in 2020, allowed international students to "engage in distance learning more than regulatory limits due to the continuing public health concerns created by COVID-19." While this guidance for continuing students has been extended, new international students beginning enrollment for the 2022–2023 academic year will not be able to enroll in fully virtual programs. They will be able to enroll in hybrid programs "with some requirement for in-person learning." This guidance, updated for the 2022–2023 academic year, provides some flexibility for international students who may not be able to attend all classes in person, allowing them to participate in hybrid study within the regulations for students in the United States on nonimmigrant student visas.

Hybrid Study and Future Options for International Mobility
An overview of the findings from the past two years offers several takeaways for options for international students moving forward. First, both institutions and students seem aligned in their commitment to prioritize in-person study. Recent studies from IDP Connect and the College Board indicate that most international students prefer to study in person in the United States.

There is room, however, to explore hybrid options for international students. This could include international students beginning their studies online from abroad or options for international students to take online classes while in the United States for their academic program. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most US institutions offered hybrid teaching before COVID-19. Almost all the institutions that reported hybrid teaching before the pandemic plan to continue this approach in future semesters. Of those that did not offer virtual instruction before COVID-19, the majority (54 percent) plan to offer hybrid classes in future semesters.

This speaks to a broader shift to flexible teaching and learning that will likely remain at most US institutions, and this flexibility should extend to international students. This will require a coordinated effort among US colleges and universities and the US government to offer hybrid options as part of the international education experience. As mentioned above, the commitment to in-person international student study is clear. What remains to be seen is the possibility of hybrid options that complement, rather than replace, the in-person experience. ◢

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Will China Remain a Top Player in the International Education Market?

Qiang Zha

Abstract
Chinese students are still motivated to study abroad, yet, in five years or so, their motivations might weaken. This is primarily due to economic slowdown, changing domestic conditions, and geopolitical decoupling.

Until recently, China was a top source country in the international education market, with hundreds of thousands of outbound students headed for Western universities. In some countries, universities rely on admissions of Chinese students as a major source of revenue. With the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on China's economy, and with shifts in geopolitical currents and China's ideological left turn, it is legitimate to wonder whether China will remain a major sending country of international students—at the undergraduate level in particular.

Chinese Students Are Still Motivated to Study Abroad
In a 2011 article, "Study-Abroad Fever Among Chinese Students," I mentioned the following important reasons behind this phenomenon: escaping overheated competition, ushered in by the steep hierarchy among Chinese universities and the concomitant inequality of learning experience and outcomes; seeking to optimize educational returns, which boost both human and career development, rather than merely obtaining a credential; and blindly "following suit," especially among China's social elites and government officials, who since the 1980s have set the model of sending their children abroad.

Arguably, these motivations have to do with dissatisfaction with the overall quality of Chinese higher education and seeking to achieve better educational returns—or perceptions of those aspects. Chinese higher education might have improved since my article was published, but it has not gone through fundamental changes. Nowadays, the "double-first-class" initiative has replaced Projects 985 and 211, and the number of elite universities that receive support has grown to nearly 150 (from around 110 under Projects 985 and 211). Yet, they still constitute only a small portion of China's 1,270 universities, and are thus extremely selective. The resource gap between elite universities and other institutions is no less than in the past. Among other universities, approximately half have been founded since the 2000s, with many still building up their pathways and hardly able to provide quality education. Social Darwinism continues to prevail in China, and graduates from elite universities are extraordinarily privileged in the job market. Many local governments put in place preferential policies and seek to attract elite university graduates with incentives, which in turn boosts the economic and symbolic capital of having graduated from an elite university.

A Changing Employer Landscape for Returnees
Major changes have been observed in China in recent years, mostly aligned with economic concerns. One is that returnees are losing their competitive edge in the domestic job market. On the one hand, domestic employers prefer hiring Chinese elite university graduates over returnees, as they often seem to better adapt to work styles and expectations in the Chinese context and bring with them extensive social networks from their *alma maters*. On the other hand, foreign university degrees and returnees no longer enjoy the reward of scarcity. In 2021 alone, over 820,000 returnees sought jobs in China. They are often offered salaries far below expectations, not likely even to pay off their study abroad expenses.

Meanwhile, study abroad has become a burden for an increasing number of Chinese households. Wage-earning families (those making the equivalent of USD 15,000–45,000 annually) now constitute the largest group (40 percent) sending their children abroad. Middle-income families (earning USD 45,000–75,000 annually) make up the second

Study abroad has become a burden for an increasing number of Chinese households.

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largest portion (16 percent). Altogether, wage-earning and middle-income households form the bulk of sending families, and they manage on a budget (many on a tight one) to finance the studies of their children abroad, in a context of rising tuition fees everywhere for international students. These households tend to be sensitive and vulnerable to economic slowdowns or downturns, and right now feel a greater burden. In the long run, Chinese families are expected to have two or more children as a result of a lift in the family planning policy—which will further weaken their capacity to finance studies abroad for their children.

The Undermining Facilitators of Study Abroad

Most of those "blindly" following study abroad fads are likely to lack genuine motivation and strong qualifications, and may require extra/external support, such as language training and application preparation counselling provided by professional agencies like New Oriental—which are now going through a decline and cutting down their services. Interestingly, those agencies are not only essential facilitators for many students studying abroad, but also popular employers of returnees. As such, their business downturn may have an impact on Chinese students studying abroad.

The same applies to international schools in China, which have been booming in the past two decades and fast growing to 900 or so, with a constant enrollment of 600,000. These schools form an alternative schooling track to regular schools, preparing students exclusively to study abroad from as early as middle school. They are now required to undergo reforms, which involve being converted into regular private schools and not being allowed any longer to use "international" in their names and prepare students exclusively for study abroad. Those registered as educational/training agencies (which used to be practiced as a fast track or a detour to setting up international schools on Chinese soil) are being suspended. And the use of foreign curricula and textbooks in these schools is submitted to control. Following a severe shortage of foreign teachers (owing to China's strict COVID-19 policies), international schools are expected to wither as well, which in turn will affect those preparing to study abroad from a young age, who are arguably the most determined.

The Influence of Geopolitical Tensions

Shifting geopolitical currents are likely to influence the disposition of Chinese students to study abroad. Amid rising tensions between China and the West, a Pew Research Center survey revealed that negative views of China hit historic highs in many countries. Notably, the following main destination countries for outbound Chinese students record a high percentage of unfavorable views about China: Japan (87 percent), Australia (86 percent), the United States (82 percent), Canada (74 percent), Germany (74 percent), the United Kingdom (69 percent), and France (68 percent). Such negative opinions aggravate latent Sinophobia (or anti-Chinese sentiment) in those societies, which in turn exacerbates the already existing segregation and ghettoization of Chinese students and deteriorates their learning experience and outcome. The US government has now taken steps to prevent Chinese students from pursuing graduate degrees or research programs presumably relating to sensitive technologies, on national security grounds. Those programs are generally in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, and promise better returns in the hegemonic STEM knowledge-based economy. Allies of the United States are likely to follow suit. While the ripples of such "push factors" may spread slowly, Chinese parents and students may start reflecting on the value and risks of studying abroad—amid fears of an overall decoupling between China and the West.

Concluding Remarks

Chinese students are still motivated to study abroad—the fever may still last for a while—but as explained above, their motivations may become weaker. A research report by China International Capital Corporation indicates that there are now approximately 8.5 million Chinese households earning an annual income of USD 30,000 or more, constituting the backbone of the study abroad phenomenon. Benchmarked against 1.6 million Chinese students currently studying abroad, and a cumulative sum of 3.8 million returnees in 2009–2019, there is still room for growth. At least, those who prepare to study abroad

from a rather young age are likely to go ahead. The study-abroad fever is expected to reach a turning point in five years or so. Some might argue that China's current harsh COVID-19 policies could prompt people to flee the country, but this would probably be a short-term trend. What could make the turning point come sooner is China's economic downturn. ◄

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For Chinese International Students: Stay or Return, That Is the Question

Yingyi Ma and Chongmin Yang

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U S Secretary of State Anthony Blinken delivered his first major speech on the Biden administration's China policy on May 26, 2022. Unlike the Trump administration, which considered banning all Chinese students from studying in the United States, the Biden administration has shifted from considering Chinese students to be threats to appreciating them as talents, as indicated by the following statement from Blinken's speech: "We're lucky when the best global talent not only studies here but stays here – as more than 80 percent of Chinese students who pursue science and technology PhDs in the United States have done in recent years." But is the high stay rate applicable to all Chinese international students in the United States? The answer is no. In this article, we argue that while America still holds attraction to Chinese students, the appeal is eroding, especially for students in non-STEM fields.

There are no national statistics about the stay or return rates of Chinese international students in the United States, for degrees lower than the doctoral level. The China Statistical Bureau reported that the return rate of Chinese international students increased from 14 percent in 2002 to 82 percent in 2019. In other words, over the past two decades, China's brain drain problem has decreased considerably. This figure is not broken down per host country or degree type. So, what happened to those Chinese students who graduated with degrees lower than PhDs, and other than STEM?

Abstract
China continues to send the largest number of international students to America. The question is to what extent Chinese students stay in the United States after completing their education. At the micro level, the answer depends on the level of education and field of study. At the macro level, it depends on US immigration policy and the opportunity structure of the Chinese domestic market.

Levels of Education and Fields of Study
Yingyi Ma's book *Ambitious and Anxious: How Chinese College Students Succeed and Struggle in American Higher Education* analyzes the wave of Chinese undergraduates who started enrolling in American colleges and universities around 2006 and who have outnumbered their graduate counterparts since 2014. A chapter examining stay-versus-return intentions notes that around 60 percent of the students surveyed planned to return to China after completing their studies. Also, a major motivation for Chinese students for studying in the United States is to strengthen their credentials, so that they can return to the Chinese labor market with a competitive advantage.

Further, fields of study matter. Chinese students in STEM fields are more likely to stay in the United States than their peers in the humanities and social sciences. International students fill the needs of the fast-growing tech industry in the United States. Also, knowledge and skills in STEM fields are less contingent on social and cultural contexts, which explains the higher return rate of students with non-STEM degrees.

The research and writing of Ma's book were completed before the end of the Trump administration. What has changed since then? What has remained the same?

The China Statistical Bureau reported that the return rate of Chinese international students increased from 14 percent in 2002 to 82 percent in 2019.

Pandemic Gloom

The most important change has been brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, which upended international student mobility and, more broadly, transnational mobility. For Chinese students in the United States, the pandemic gloom was exacerbated by worsening US–China relations and the stringent COVID policy restricting international flights to China. Unsurprisingly, the number of Chinese students coming to study in the United States is trending downward. Many are worried about a looming cold war between the United States and China; moreover, rising anti-Asian racism, and, in some instances, gun violence in the United States, have dimmed the appeal of studying there.

With fewer Chinese students in the United States and an increasingly fraught relationship between the two countries, it is reasonable to conclude that the heyday of Chinese students' staying in the United States after completing their studies is past.

Visas and Immigration Policy in the United States

However, potential counterbalancing changes are arising from the Biden administration's immigration policies regarding STEM talent. The US government has expanded the list of STEM fields by making students in 22 additional fields eligible for three-year optional practical training (OPT). Non-STEM OPT is only one year. OPT is not a guarantee for an immigration pathway, but it enables international students to work legally in the United States after completing their studies, potentially lowering their return rate. More importantly, it has given international students additional time to secure an H-1B visa, the type of work visa that allows employers to sponsor a work-related immigration pathway toward permanent residency.

Currently, the expanded list of STEM subjects incorporates many emerging cross-disciplinary fields, such as data analytics and business analytics, which have attracted many international students. This could entice more Chinese students to study science and technology in US graduate schools and stay in the United States as immigrants. Chinese students in the humanities and social sciences do not benefit from this policy change and are expected to return to China in higher numbers.

"Involution" in China

What has remained the same is that the Chinese middle class continues to be dissatisfied with domestic education, which fuels the need to study abroad. A new buzz word, *involution*, which started to circulate on the Chinese internet around late 2020, captures feelings about a combination of social ills and, ultimately, frustration over endless competition in school and work life. The term comes from anthropology and refers to a phenomenon in which greater input does not produce proportionately more output. The concept fits the current Chinese society, where intense competition in education and the economy entails enormous input of effort and money, but fails to generate a comparable output, such as access to good colleges and jobs (See also Qiang Zha, "China's Academic Profession Hit by 'Involution,'" in IHE # 107). The "involuted" Chinese society spurs those with resources to improve their education and career prospects by obtaining a well-regarded foreign credential. The upshot is that the United States will continue to attract Chinese students because of its colleges and universities, which are the best in the world, but Chinese students are increasingly looking to other countries, such as the United Kingdom, because of increasing geopolitical and other risks of studying in the United States.

In the long term, whether Chinese students with US degrees return to China or stay in the United States depends largely on the opportunity structure of China's domestic education and labor market and on US immigration policy. Meanwhile, the current hypercompetitive nature of Chinese society does not bode well for homegrown talent, who will continue to seek ways to exit the system and look for opportunities elsewhere. ◢

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Commercial Monopoly or Open Research: China's National Knowledge Infrastructure

Lijun Fan and Lili Yang

Abstract
Developing research databases is a double-edged sword. Research databases may promote knowledge exchange, but their monopolistic/oligarchist practices are also building walls. Taking as an example the largest research database in China, the China National Knowledge Infrastructure, this article discusses the growing boycotts against the commercial monopoly of research databases in academia and reflects on the future of open research. It calls for concerted efforts from the whole research community.

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T wenty-first century academia is marked by the wide use of academic research databases and their dominance in academic publishing. English-speaking researchers are familiar with major databases, including Web of Science and Scopus. In many non-English speaking regions/countries, databases in local languages have emerged to serve the needs of local researchers. A distinctive example is the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the largest research database in China.

These databases have made significant contributions to promoting knowledge dissemination and academic exchange. However, their development is a double-edged sword. High commercial pricing and suspected monopoly/oligarchy are *de facto* building walls between academia and the general public, and are against open research. While calls for open research are growing clearer and louder worldwide, various players, both inside and outside academia, are facing difficulties in making it a reality. This article focuses on ongoing efforts in China in favor of open research, in response to the dominance of CNKI, and reflects on possible approaches to promoting open research.

CNKI and Its Dominance in China

As the largest knowledge collection and sharing platform in China, CNKI has been an important player in the development of Chinese academia. Established in June 1999 by Tsinghua University and its affiliated business, Tongfang Co. Ltd., then a state-owned company, CNKI was founded with the aim of supporting knowledge innovation, learning, and application. CNKI was recognized and strongly supported by China's central government at its inception. It was listed as a key innovation project in the field of science and technology and was included in the China Torch Program, a national plan to develop China's high-tech industry. CNKI was transformed from a state-owned entity into a private company in 2014, and it became a limited liability company controlled by state-owned enterprise in 2019. Despite these multiple transformations, CNKI has maintained its dominance in the field of academic resources in China. The operating model of CNKI is to purchase academic material (including papers, yearbooks, dissertations, and newspapers) from publishers, journals, and universities, and sell digital knowledge products through subscriptions and relevant services. CNKI does not publish journals or papers.

As of 2022, CNKI includes more than 95 percent of all officially published Chinese academic resources and more than 200 million domestic and international journal documents, making it the dominant player in the Chinese academic resource market. Its website displays a database of over 1,600 overseas institutional customers from 60 countries and regions, and 32,000 institutional customers from various industries in the Chinese mainland. CNKI also actively participates in the evaluation of academic journals in China. Each year, it publishes the *Annual Report on the Impact Factor of Chinese Academic Journals*, which is often referred to in performance reviews at Chinese higher education institutes. All these practices make CNKI a seemingly inseparable part of Chinese academia. Notably, the development of CNKI is *per se* also a sign of the pluralization of languages in global academic publishing, which is conducive to increased global epistemic diversity and justice.

High commercial pricing and suspected monopoly/oligarchy are de facto *building walls between academia and the general public, and are against open research.*

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Boycotts against CNKI in China

Despite the success of CNKI, there are growing concerns about its monopolistic practices. In April 2022, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), a top research organization in China, announced its decision to end its subscription to CNKI and search for alternative databases as a replacement. The main reason behind the decision was the increase in subscription fees requested by CNKI. According to Wuhan University of Technology, which temporarily suspended its subscription to CNKI in 2016, its subscription fees to CNKI soared by 132.86 percent from 2010 to 2016. This increase is reflected in CNKI's revenue. The 2021 *Financial Report* of Tongfang Co. Ltd. shows that CNKI's revenue was USD 192 million, with a gross margin of 53.35 percent. (Yet, CNKI's revenue falls short of its international counterparts, an indication of the high level of profit of commercial research databases in general. For example, in 2019, Elsevier's parent company RELX, which runs one of the largest research databases in English, Scopus, had a revenue of USD 9.8 billion, compared to CNKI's revenue of USD 149 million. But the difference might partly be due to Elsevier's publishing of journals, which brings in significant revenue.)

This tossed stone raised a thousand ripples. Shortly after CAS' announcement, CNKI's high subscription fees became a headline in China, attracting wide criticism. It reminded the public of continuous attempts by Chinese higher education institutes, in recent years, to boycott CNKI. In the past decade, at least six universities, including Peking University and Wuhan Institute of Technology, temporarily suspended their subscriptions to CNKI. But none of these suspensions lasted long: All institutions resumed their subscriptions after failing to find adequate alternatives.

Nonetheless, these efforts were not totally in vain. After negotiations, CNKI agreed to reduce subscription fees for certain institutions, though not substantially. For example, Nanjing University managed to get a reduction of USD 7,460 from the budgeted price of USD 161,136 for the 2022 subscription fees. In May 2022, the Chinese government launched an antimonopoly investigation against CNKI. While the investigation was still in progress at the time of writing this article, it was hoped that public attention and the investigation would bring about changes and open the field to new players.

These efforts are not unique to China. In January 2017, German universities and research institutions criticized the high pricing policy of Elsevier and had rounds of negotiations with the company in order to cut down subscription fees. In June 2020, MIT put an end to its negotiations with Elsevier regarding a new journal subscription contract of around 700 journals, which would have cost more than USD 2.7 million.

Calling for Open Research: Common Good vs. Profit Making

As a result of the obstinate monopolistic/oligarchic practices of large research databases worldwide, an essential question emerges: What is the future of open research and how can it be achieved? We argue that a major obstacle to open research is the tension between the common-good nature of knowledge and the profit-making nature of commercial publishers and research databases.

The discussion above shows that isolated efforts by single institutions often lead to failures. As the common-good idea suggests, only concerted common efforts by the whole research community could arguably make a difference. This calls for all institutions and researchers joining hands in promoting open knowledge sharing. There have already been repeated attempts in this regard. For example, the emergence of free and open academic exchange platforms, including ResearchGate, Stanford University's HighWire E-journal Press, and the University of Michigan's Thesis Repository, points to possible means to bypass high-pricing research databases. However, such platforms can face copyright problems. Dealing with such problems is key. In addition, though the common-good idea does not necessarily require the state to get involved, it is still within the state's remit to fight against monopoly and promote the common good. The next question is to what extent the state should get involved in order to maintain an autonomous research space. ◢

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Delivering Mental Health Education to University Students in China

Yi Li, Qi Wang, and Lizhou Wang

In the past two decades, university students' mental health has become a matter of increasing public concern in the rapidly changing Chinese society. The ongoing pandemic and campus-wide quarantines have further raised alarms over student well-being. Many Chinese universities have endeavored to promote mental health education and have made counselling services widely available for students. In July 2021, the ministry of education (MOE) reiterated the importance of student well-being in a note titled "Strengthening Students' Mental Health Initiative," and further developed mandatory mental health courses for all undergraduate students. Despite a strong top-down policy push, and efforts at the university and faculty levels, challenges still exist.

Mental Health Education in the Chinese Higher Education Context

In China, university students are considered a "vulnerable group," prone to experiencing mental health challenges. Studies have found that depression and anxiety were prevalent among Chinese university students, and their mental well-being is considered more at risk than among the general population. A meta-analysis of 113 studies, mainly conducted between 2005 and 2020, with nine studies before 2004, estimated the overall prevalence of depression among Chinese university students to be 28.4 percent (n=185,787, with a 95 percent confidence interval from 25.7 percent to 31.2 percent). Another study conducted in 2020 reported that 41.1 percent of university students in China (n=89,588) experienced anxiety symptoms during the COVID-19 outbreak. Research suggested that students' mental distress and disorders were associated with various factors at the individual (personality, interpersonal relations, ineffective coping strategies), family (living away from home amid many life changes, parenting), school (academic stress, future employment and career planning, achievement expectations), and societal (dramatic social, cultural, and economic changes, fierce competition) levels.

In response to these issues, both the Chinese government and universities have endeavored to promote student well-being since the early 1990s. Over the past three decades, a range of government policy documents have been issued to expand and deepen the mental health education reform and regulate its goals, approaches, and curriculum. To meet students' mental health needs, a "four-in-one" working model is currently adopted in Chinese universities to integrate mental health subject teaching and learning, practicum, counselling services, and crisis prevention and intervention. Further, the MOE advocates strengthening the role of classroom teaching and instruction in developing mental health education.

Similar to many higher education systems in the world, mental health education and services are an integral part of university education in China. They are usually organized and managed under the division of student affairs. One notable feature of mental health education in China is its focus on nurturing a "holistic person" (*quanren*). These educational courses and services intend to raise students' awareness of mental health problems, improve their coping strategies in case of a mental health crisis, and guide them in the design of their own growth paths and in preparation for challenges in an increasingly complex world. Essentially, mental health education, complementary to moral and civic education, should equip students with moral values, intellectual skills, physical capabilities, as well as with aesthetics, which has been considered the core value of Chinese university education.

Abstract
Over the past two decades, the mental health of university students has become a matter of increasing public concern in China. Universities have been developing mental health education and services to support students. A recent notice from the ministry of education reiterates the importance of mental health education and promotes such courses as a core module for all students. This article reviews strategies, challenges, and implications related to promoting student well-being at Chinese universities.

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Effective mental health education should put students in the center and understand the causes and roots of their anxiety.

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Challenges in Promoting Mental Health Education

One of the biggest challenges is ensuring a sufficient number of qualified teachers to deliver mental health education and services. A 2018 policy document by the MOE advocated for more qualified teachers with counselling and professional backgrounds, and for a teacher–student ratio for mental health education of no less than 1:4000, with at least two full-time teachers at each university. In practice, however, the supply of qualified instructors and counsellors varies widely among universities. Due to the large size of the student population, universities are still lacking qualified instructors and counsellors to deliver programs and provide counselling services to the whole campus. Currently, most of the counsellors and course instructors are recruited on a part-time basis from other departments within the university, and not necessarily with backgrounds in mental health or behavioral science.

A second major challenge concerns the tendency, among students, not to seek help. This is largely related to the lack of systematic education on mental health, which in turn limits students' understanding and awareness of mental illnesses, possibly resulting in diagnosis and treatment delays. Students' hesitation, if not resistance, concerning professional healthcare is also caused by cultural stigma, which views mental health and related issues as a source of shame. Students may also be afraid of possible consequences in terms of their academic evaluation and career development if they admit to suffering from, or being diagnosed with, mental health conditions.

In the past decades, various strategies have been adopted to tackle these challenges, including diversifying mental health education and services, increasing the number of professionally trained counsellors and instructors, and providing on-the-job training on student well-being to faculty. In addition, in recent years, the MOE has encouraged offering mandatory mental health courses to all undergraduate students to enhance mental health awareness and understanding.

Delivering Mandatory Mental Health Courses

China is believed to be one of the first higher education systems to deliver mental health courses as a compulsory module (consisting of two credits with 32 to 36 credit hours) for all undergraduate students. Based on information from the MOE in November 2021, more than 2,000 out of 2,738 regular higher education institutions (HEIs) in China are now offering mental health courses as a compulsory module. Among these HEIs, more than 1,600 also provide elective courses in related areas.

Though still at an early stage, initial evaluation and research show that after taking these compulsory courses, the majority of students find themselves equipped with basic knowledge and literacy on mental health, which raises their awareness of possible problems and challenges. As a result, they are willing to seek professional help, and their communication skills and coping strategies for stress and emotion are improved to some extent. However, there are still questions and doubts on the effectiveness of the course modules and mental health services in general. In particular, the course content is not entirely up-to-date to meet students' actual needs and issues, and the teaching is largely "one size fits all" and does not go into great depth, in part due to the large size of classes.

Effective mental health education should put students in the center and understand the causes and roots of their anxiety. Educators need to understand the drastic effect on students of the uncertainty that they face concerning their future prospects, in the context of the country's rapid socioeconomic development. The COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably caused stress and impacted on university students' physical and emotional well-being over the past two years. Educators need to keep an open mind, reflect on students' needs, set clear goals, and explore innovative and rigorous teaching approaches when delivering mental health education and services. ◢

Are Global University Ranking Tables Still Valued in China?

Futao Huang and Gerard A. Postiglione

Abstract
The suitability of global university rankings for China's national conditions and the institutional character of its universities is currently being reconsidered. Three leading universities have opted out of the rankings. However, there is no clear evidence to show that this is part of a wider trend. Western rankings are still valued and used as a means to attract high-level talent and bestow a world-class brand on more Chinese universities and disciplines.

Recently, the withdrawal of Lanzhou University, Nanjing University, and Renmin University in China from major global ranking tables has attracted great attention at home and abroad. One cannot help but wonder whether these withdrawals will be part of a wider trend leading to a chain reaction among Chinese universities. Many university administrators, researchers, and policy makers wonder what this might suggest—if withdrawing from university rankings and the ranking industry in its existing state reflects a government strategy to redefine the concepts of world-class university and world-class discipline and increase the global influence of Chinese universities. They also wonder if this move could be a basis for setting new indicators to assess which Chinese universities and disciplines should be listed in the next round of the Double World-Class University and World-Class Academic Discipline Project (China's latest excellence initiative that aims to transform over 40 elite Chinese universities into first-rate global universities and more than 100 academic disciplines into first-rate global ones by 2050).

Reasons for the Withdrawal

There are good reasons for Chinese universities to leave the current global rankings. First, the rules for ranking the quality of universities and disciplines were developed without considering China's reality and national conditions. On an April 2022 visit to Renmin University, President Xi Jinping made it clear that constructing Chinese world-class universities cannot simply employ foreign universities as the standard. Rather, the way to build world-class universities should take account of how they take root in China.

Second, the extreme volatility across different university rankings is often criticized by university heads and members of the academy. This unexplained volatility has created doubt about the scientific objectivity, as well as the credibility, of peer rankings. For example, Nanjing University is ranked #135 in U.S. News & World Report's Ranking, #105 in *Times Higher Education* Ranking, and #131 in QS in 2022. This is similar to the other universities that opted out of the rankings.

Third, unlike other leading Chinese universities like Fudan, Peking, Shanghai Jiaotong, Tsinghua, and Zhejiang, the progress made by Lanzhou, Nanjing, and Renmin over the past two decades did not elevate them in the rankings. For these three universities, a withdrawal from the rankings may very well be the best way to avoid unjust weight on staff morale and to see their institutional reputation tarnished in the eyes of their students' families. Finally, the status quo rankings detract from the academic prestige that these three universities enjoy within the national system, where their real strength and global prestige is reflected.

For example, Renmin University is the first university built directly by the Communist Party during the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Modeled on its USSR counterparts during the Sino–Soviet partnership in the 1950s, it continues to be one of China's leading universities. Its reputation and the entrance examination scores of its undergraduate students are viewed as inferior only to Tsinghua University and Peking University. Its ranking in the top 500 makes little sense. But due to its focus on the humanities and social sciences, it scores lower on indicators of overseas students and scholars and international journal publications. Similarly, Lanzhou University has been one of China's leading universities since the 1990s, but gets a paltry rank of 559 in U.S. News & World Report's ranking and between 751 and 800 in QS in 2022. Lanzhou University's location in the economically underdeveloped northwest region puts a limit on its number of inbound overseas students and faculty, hence on its international visibility and influence, which lowers its performance in related ranking indicators. It is not

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There are good reasons for Chinese universities to leave the current global rankings.

surprising that these universities see little benefit in providing data to ranking companies, when it only brings them a negative impact.

It is worth noting that none of China's universities has said that they would refuse to be ranked by the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) based in Shanghai. ARWU is known to use the most objective indicators, obtained from third-party data, not directly from the universities themselves. That makes them less subject to peer reviewers who might, consciously or unconsciously, have personal whims about China's universities. Equal in status with QS and *Times Higher Education*, ARWU was created and established by Chinese researchers in 1998, soon after President Jiang Zemin announced that China would build world-class universities. Further, according to China's own Best Chinese Universities Ranking, Nanjing, Renmin, and Lanzhou are listed as #5, #18, and #40 respectively in 2022. This contrasts with their positions in Western rankings.

The Value of Rankings in Practice
It is difficult to predict if other Chinese universities will take the same approach by the time this article appears. Except for a recent news report indicating that the president of Henan University of Science and Technology, a provincial level public university, would not provide data to global university ranking companies, no other Chinese universities have followed suit so far. Rather, in practice, global rankings are still used as an important indicator for Chinese universities.

High rankings can have a positive effect on the recruitment of high-level talent, including postdoctoral researchers and young academics with doctorates from overseas countries. Graduates of prestigiously ranked universities have better employability and opportunities for advanced study. This is not only true for top-tier national universities like Fudan, Peking, Tsinghua, and Zhejiang. Top-tier provincial universities increasingly emphasize that applicants for postdoctoral posts and assistant professorships should earn their doctoral degrees from top-ranked universities at home and abroad. For instance, the recruitment announcement for young academics in the College of Education of Guangzhou University states that only those who received their doctoral degrees from the top 200 foreign universities can apply for special support programs and specially designated funding schemes. The city of Shanghai is offering permanent residence and social insurance for study abroad personnel, but only to graduates from the world's top 500 universities in rankings of U.S. News & World Report, *Times Higher Education*, QS, and ARWU.

In summary, the rise in the global rankings of China's leading universities at a pivotal time in China's international positioning is accompanied by a growing dissatisfaction over the negative effects produced by ranking agencies. This has led to a questioning of the usefulness of rankings and their lack of grounding in China's circumstances. There is increasing debate about the rules of university rankings, the fundamental difference between Western and Chinese higher education, and how to capitalize on the increasing global impact of China and its universities. However, until there is a better alternative to the status quo Western rankings, their value remains beneficial in attracting high-level talent, not only from foreign universities, but also domestic institutions of higher learning. One thing is certain: While remaining a useful reference and helping China to build great universities and disciplines, in the coming years, the rankings will not enjoy the same attention there as in the past. ◢

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