THE DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CIRCULATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Volume 11

Higher education worldwide is in a period of transition, affected by globalization, the advent of mass access, changing relationships between the university and the state, and the new technologies, among others. Global Perspectives on Higher Education provides cogent analysis and comparative perspectives on these and other central issues affecting postsecondary education worldwide.

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The Dynamics of International Student Circulation in a Global Context

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PREFACE

This book, *The dynamics of international student circulation in a global context*, is of central importance in understanding the movement of students across borders in this era of the globalization of higher education. We are indebted to Hans de Wit, Pawan Agarwal, Mohsen Elmahdy Said, Molatlhegi Sehoole, and Muhammad Sirozi for their research. This is the first book that examines student flows from the perspective of some key sending countries. The emphasis here on south-south circulation is original and important. While the major direction of students is from south to north, there is a significant flow within the developing world. Countries like Egypt, South Africa, and India are noteworthy recipients of international students. The key concept here is circulation – the worldwide flows of students in many directions and for many reasons.

We learn here about push and pull factors, the impact of religion on flows of students, about government policies relating to foreign study, the growing impact of the European Union’s internationalization initiatives, and other aspects of a highly complex reality. Importantly, we also learn that international study is not completely dominated by the major receiving countries and that this phenomenon is both complex and multidimensional.

The collaborative project that served as the basis for this volume is an important outcome of the Fulbright New Century Scholars Program. In a joint effort to expand and build on the strengths of the traditional Fulbright Scholar Program, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and the Council of International Exchange of Scholars created the New Century Scholars Program. It holds at its core the tenet that has informed the Fulbright Program from its beginnings in 1946 – a deep belief in the importance of sharing knowledge from different cultural perspectives through academic exchange to build mutual understanding among nations and their citizens. As a new dimension of the Fulbright Program, New Century Scholars, established in 2000, seeks to move beyond bilateral exchange to multilateral engagement and multidisciplinary research collaboration in order to examine topics of global significance.

The main idea behind New Century Scholars is that the major challenges facing humankind warrant global attention and can benefit from the ideas and experience of experts from many countries. To this end, New Century Scholars work in close cooperation to advance the state of human understanding on a chosen topic of global salience. In its first three years the program addressed three major topics: (a) the Challenges of Health in a Borderless World, (b) Ethnic and Sectarian
Conflict within and across National Borders, and (c) the Global Empowerment of Women. In its fourth year, it turned its attention to global higher education.

Reflecting the importance of higher education as a global issue, in the fall of 2005, 31 New Century Scholars gathered to address the topic “Higher Education in the 21st Century: Global Challenge and National Response.” Led by Philip G. Altbach as Distinguished Scholar Leader, they organized themselves into six working groups: (a) the Academic Profession in the Age of Globalization, (b) Access and Equity, (c) Higher Education and Social Cohesion, (d) the Private and Public Mix in the Development Process, (e) the Dynamics of Student Circulation, and (f) the Emerging Global Model for Research Universities.

The decision to focus on higher education as a field of collaborative study was a natural choice for the New Century Scholars given the Fulbright Program’s longstanding role in sponsoring the movement of students and faculty among most of the world’s institutions of higher education. Under its auspices, the program has supported hundreds of thousands of exchanges and is considered the largest program of government-sponsored academic exchange throughout the world. Perceived and real strengths and weaknesses of institutions and systems of higher education around the world are a key element affecting academic mobility.

Higher education is one of the “growth industries” of the 21st century. Trying to keep up with the need for its services across the world, in developed and developing countries alike, is an increasingly daunting challenge. In developing countries that have been successful in promoting basic literacy and greater access to K-16 levels of education, the demand for greater access to higher education is becoming overwhelming. This, in turn, not only prompts outward mobility when demand cannot be met but leads to a host of problems internally. Lack of adequate funding, significant overcrowding, low quality of academic programs, and poor working conditions for faculty and administrators all combine to challenge the ability of institutions to produce graduates who are well educated and who can contribute to national development.

In many ways the topic of this volume reflects these issues in its focus on student circulation. Students, whether supported by government sponsored scholarships or through their families’ or their own resources, will constantly move in the direction of educational opportunities. What is not so clear is how the map of student circulation will be configured as more nations strive to build better higher education infrastructure and by doing so may not only be able to retain their own students who previously sought higher education elsewhere but also become regional centers for higher education opportunity. Ultimately, the dynamic growth of higher education worldwide will have a significant impact on student circulation in the coming years. This book encourages us to reexamine our traditional assumptions about where students will go for higher education as more nations vie to become magnets for the flow of students.

Philip G. Altbach and Patti McGill Peterson
HANS DE WIT, PAWAN AGARWAL, MOHSEN SAID, 
MOLATLHEGI SEHOOLE AND MUHAMMAD SIROZI

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study about dynamics in international student circulation has been undertaken in the context of the 2005–2006 Fulbright New Century Scholars Program “Higher Education in the 21st Century.” It is the collective result of five scholars from different parts of the world who concentrated their joint efforts on making an analysis of current international student flows.

This introduction will describe the objectives, methodology, and structure of our study. It will be followed by a conceptual chapter on the context of the internationalization of higher education, a chapter dealing with the dynamics of international student circulation, and four country reports from the South (Egypt, India, Indonesia, and South Africa) and two from the North (Europe and the United States). A comparative analysis of international student circulation and the international dimension of higher education, including recommendations, will conclude the study.

The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of international student circulation and the internationalization of higher education in a global context, to assess its implication on higher education in different nations and regions, and to create a framework for action at the institutional, national, and international levels.

To achieve this purpose, it is essential to address, discuss, and analyze the dynamics and patterns of international student circulation with particular reference to four countries (Egypt, India, Indonesia, and South Africa) which, as countries in the South, are perceived to be primarily on the sending side of student mobility, and two in the North (Europe and the United States), which are perceived to be primarily but not exclusively on the receiving side. (For the purposes of this examination, we treat Europe as a single entity, except where individual countries are noted.)

We will perform detailed trend analyses of inward and outward student mobility based on primary and/or secondary data in the context of the countries under consideration. Analysis of new push and pull factors in global and specific national contexts; preliminary analysis of other trends such as the growth of transnational distance education programs representing new forms of delivery; the growth of foreign providers of higher education; trends in faculty mobility; and brain circulation are factors also addressed in this research. Thematic factors addressed in this research are the implications of students’ mobility on internationalization policies and practices at both national and institutional levels involving quality assurance, accreditation, academics, curriculum, and cultural aspects. Our study
focus is degree-seeking international students and their movement both into and out of target countries, a movement we refer to collectively by the term “international student circulation.”

We probe the accuracy of existing assumptions about international student mobility, especially the views that it occurs primarily in South-North and North-North directions; that South-South flows are rather marginal; that the economic rationale for student mobility has become so dominant that virtually no other rationales are salient; and that the growing presence of national and international providers of higher education, as well as opportunities for distance education will reduce the need for international student mobility. On the basis of our studies, we question the accuracy of all of these assumptions.

The rationale for the study is that student mobility has long been the most important factor in the process of higher education’s internationalization. At present, there is in the world an increasing unmet demand for higher education as a consequence of demographic trends, the need for new degree and diploma programs, and the need for lifelong learning. But one can observe also an increase in numbers and types of new providers: corporate universities, for-profit private institutions, media companies, and education brokers. Other developments are the emergence of new, innovative delivery methods: distance and e-learning, franchises, satellite campuses, twinning arrangements, and joint degree programs. These developments might impact the way inward and outward student mobility flows are changing and how the internationalization of higher education is evolving in relation to these changes.

The objectives of the study are:

- To provide an overview of trends and issues in international student circulation in four countries in the South (Egypt, India, Indonesia, and South Africa), and two in the North (Europe and the United States).
- To analyze country the changes in international student circulation over the past 10 to 15 years and identify trends and issues.
- To place these developments/trends and issues in the context of changes in higher education and its international dimension in each of the countries.
- To conduct a comparative analysis among the six countries with respect to international student circulation according to trends and issues in the international dimension of higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The national studies, although having their own structure and focus related to the specific context in each country and region, follow a common outline as much as possible.
National/Regional Studies Outline

1. Overview of national higher education system and trends
We provide a short description of the higher education sector: level and type of institutions; key stakeholders; key data (number of institutions, number of students, number of faculty, funding); extent of public and private provision; and challenges and issues facing higher education in a global and regional context. We also include a short description of key economic and demographic indicators, relevant for the scope of the report.

2. National policies with respect to the internationalization of higher education
We describe main policies, trends, and issues with respect to the international dimension of higher education in each country, including the implications of international and regional developments on national policies (e.g., GATS) and referring to institutional strategies for internationalization, including cases of both private and public higher education. We also deal with policies about student immigration and differential fees and admission procedures for international students compared to national students.

3. Overview of the extent of the foreign presence in higher education: providers and forms of delivery
This overview briefly surveys the presence and trends in student numbers of foreign branch campuses, franchise operations, joint and double degree programs, and distance education.

4. Developments in international student circulation
We explore general trends in different types of faculty and student mobility, other than international student mobility of degree-seeking students: study abroad for home degrees, study visits, foreign language training, faculty mobility, etc. We present data that provides the most specific possible picture, identifying trends, specific elements of student mobility, inward and outward circulation, and the number of students studying abroad broken down by level, discipline, and gender.

5. Challenges and critical issues of international student circulation
We analyze the implications of the information in the previous four sections: changing rationales, brain drain/brain gain issues, the impacts of regional and international agreements, the influence of new providers and new forms of delivery, aid and trade concerns, cooperation and competition developments, new push and pull factors for student mobility, implications of quality assurance and accreditation, etc.

Framework for Comparative Analysis
For the purpose of this study, we designed a framework by which to understand the push and pull factors that may play a role in international student circulation by country/region and in comparative perspective. The push factors are here to
be understood as those factors that stimulate students to study abroad for their
degree (outward mobility). The pull factors attract students to come into a country
to study for a degree (inward mobility). This framework is based on earlier studies
on international student flows (see Chapter 2).

This framework functions as a list of indicators to identify factors that push
students to go (or not go) to study abroad for a degree, and what factors pull students
to come (or not come) to study in a specific country. This approach is different from
other studies that use push and pull factors together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We hope that this study contributes to the better understanding of the current status
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Muhammad Sirozi).
1. THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

This introductory chapter deals with the meanings, rationales, and approaches to the international dimension of higher education. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a better understanding of the internationalization of higher education in a global context and to assess its implications for higher education in different nations and regions.

The rationale for this study is that student mobility has long been the most important factor in the process of higher education’s internationalization. At present, there is in the world an increasing unmet demand for higher education as a consequence of demographic trends, the need for new degree and diploma programs, and the need for lifelong learning. But one can observe also an increase in numbers and types of new providers: corporate universities, for-profit private institutions, media companies, and education brokers; and the emergence of innovative delivery methods: distance and e-learning, franchises, satellite campuses, twinning arrangements, and joint degree programs. These developments might impact how inward and outward student mobility flows are changing, and how the internationalization of higher education is evolving in relation to these changes.

This chapter examines the changing context of the internationalization of higher education over the past 10 years as a basis for understanding the changing dynamics in international student circulation.

CHANGING DYNAMICS IN THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The landscape of international higher education has been changing over the past 10 years (De Wit, 1995, 2002; Knight & De Wit, 1997, 1999). It appears relevant to look at the consequences of this changing landscape to understand the current status of the internationalization in higher education. An overview of recent research on the internationalization of higher education provides interesting views on their evolution.

1 I thank the other members of Research Group 5 of the New Century Scholarship Program, Fulbright, “Higher Education in the 21st Century”: Mohsen Said (Egypt, chair); Muhammad Sirozi (Indonesia); Pawan Agarwal (India); and Molatlhegi Sehoole (South Africa), as well as the Chair of the NCS program, Philip Altbach. Research Assistant Laura Rumbley (both at the Center for International Higher Education, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts) and Anthony Welch, University of Sydney, 2006 Visiting Scholar at Boston College.

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The international dimension and the position of higher education in the global arena are more dominant in international, national, and institutional documents and mission statements than ever. The 2006 International Association of Universities (IAU) survey (Knight, 2006a, pp. 41–42) indicates that 73% of the participating higher education institutions give internationalization a high priority, 23% a medium priority, and only 2% a low priority. John Scott (2006) predicts in that respect that “rapid globalization and modern society point toward a future internationalization mission for the university as a service to the body of world-wide states” (p. 33). One wonders whether that will be a general trend in higher education or will apply only to a limited number of institutions. One can further question what type of internationalization will define the mission of these universities. But it is undeniable that internationalization has become a core element in higher education, at all levels.

MEANINGS

What do we mean by the internationalization of higher education? First, we must recognize that many different terms have always been used in connection with the internationalization of higher education (De Wit, 2002, pp. 109–116). In both the scholarly literature and in the practice of higher education’s internationalization, it is still quite common to use terms which address only a small part of internationalization and/or emphasize a specific rationale for internationalization. Many of the terms used are curriculum related: “international studies,” “global studies,” “multicultural education,” “intercultural education,” “peace education,” etc. Many others are mobility related: “study abroad,” “education abroad,” “academic mobility,” etc. Our study fits within the second group and, at the appropriate point, defines international student circulation in that context. Here, I focus on the broader term, “internationalization of higher education,” essential for the context of our study.

Over the past 10 years, a whole new group of terms are emerging that were not actively present earlier in the debate about the internationalization of higher education. These terms are more closely related to the cross-border delivery of education and result from globalization’s impact on higher education. They include: “borderless education,” “education across borders,” “global education,” “offshore education,” and “international trade in educational services.”

In 2002, I stated (De Wit, 2002) that “as the international dimension of higher education gains more attention and recognition, people tend to use it in the way that best suits their purpose” (p. 14). This tendency is even more pronounced in view of this further proliferation of activities and terms.

The most commonly used definition of what we mean by internationalization at the institutional level is Jane Knight’s (1997): “a process of integrating an international and cultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution” (p. 8). This definition, although commonly accepted

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2 The IAU study also shows a remarkable difference in this respect compared with National University Associations (49%) and national government bodies (46%) (Knight, 2006a).
THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

as a useful working definition for internationalization at the institutional level, has come under question as a consequence of changes in international higher education over the last decade. An example is the criticism by Ninnes and Hellsten (2005, p. 3) that Knight’s 1997 definition did not incorporate such elements as the export of education. Another example is Ravindu Sidhu (2006), who critiques Knight’s definition:

Its weaknesses lie in its inherent generality and ambiguity. It does not, for example, prelude a largely one-way transmission of knowledge from West-North to East-South. It is unclear what constitutes an international/intercultural dimension, which is as likely to include the trite and superficial as the profound and complex. (p. 3)

Sidhu is correct about the definition’s generality and ambiguity; but any other definition – for instance, one that would prelude a largely one-way transmission or one which includes export of education – would be a subjective and rationale-based definition. As long as that limitation is made clear, such an approach would be appropriate but its conclusions would lack more general application than the specific issue it addresses.

Unquestionably, the internationalization of higher education is changing. A historical survey of the 20th century up to the present reveals several stages of development in the internationalization of higher education institutions. The debate about globalization and internationalization and the recent, rapid evolution of cross-border activities in higher education have strengthened the tendency to explain and define the internationalization of higher education in connection to a specific rationale or purpose. In the past, “international education” was the most frequently used term, synonymous with “the internationalization of education”; but more recently, “globalization” has become more common as a term related to or even synonymous with “internationalization.”

GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

The globalization of our societies and economies has an impact on higher education and, as a result, on its international dimensions. Higher education is increasingly influenced by globalization but also is becoming a more vigorous actor in globalization. The internationalization of higher education is one of the ways a country or an institution responds to the impact of globalization, but also the internationalization of higher education is itself an agent of globalization. Higher education is not only passively responding to globalization but has become an active player in the global arena.

One can summarize in three ways how globalization and higher education are linked to each other. First, there is an increasingly unmet demand for higher education in the world. On the one hand, we see countries that, because of demographics, have a greater demand for access to study than their own higher education institutions can absorb. In such situations, their students study abroad. Such demographic trends characterize the developing world, producing an enormous unmet demand.
In contrast, Europe, for instance, because of its aging population, has a shortage of students, especially in fields like the sciences, so there is a strong trend for Europe to absorb students developing countries who cannot be absorbed by institutions at home. Demographic trends are very important, and they are changing constantly around the world.

Furthermore, as a consequence of the impact of globalization, a new demand for new degree and diploma programs is emerging. The demand is much higher now than 15 years earlier for interdisciplinary studies and IT-related programs, etc. Globalization implies that higher education has to respond to what is happening in society and industry. It does so by creating all kinds of new degree and diploma programs.

Moreover, there is an unmet demand for higher education because of strong pressures toward lifelong learning. It is no longer the case in this global economy that a student goes from high school to university, and then into the labor force, his or her education finished. On the contrary, there is a great need for continuing education, and universities must meet that demand coming from industry and society.

Second, the number and types of new providers has grown. With the exception of countries like the United States where there has always been a combination of public universities and private universities (private meaning not for profit), public universities have dominated higher education. But an increasing number of private and for-profit universities are entering the higher education arena at the national level – notably in Asia and Latin America, but also increasingly also on an international scale.

The third recent development is the emergence of all kinds of innovative delivery methods for higher education. The traditional model was that each country had a university subsidized by the government, which delivered traditional classes. Currently, however, e-learning is flourishing, universities are setting up franchise operations abroad, universities have satellite or branch campuses abroad, and they are involved in joint degree programs. One can see a whole new area, described by such terms as “transnational education” and “cross-border education.” Cross-border education began, primarily, with the movement of people; now programs and institutions are also crossing borders.

Given these developments, the connection between higher education and trade policy has come to the forefront in the debate about internationalization and globalization in higher education. Trade in higher education is not completely new; but the identification of education as a service in the context of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has become an expression of this development’s increased importance. As Jane Knight (2006c) notes:

The introduction of GATS serves as a catalyst for the higher education sector to examine how trade rules may or may not influence higher education policy; and secondly, to determine whether the necessary national, regional and international
education frameworks are in place to deal with the implications of increased cross-border education, including commercial trade. (p. 57)

Ulrich Teichler (2004), Knight (2005), Scott (2006), Altbach (2006a, 2006b) and others address the complex relationship between globalization and internationalization of higher education. Peter Scott (2006) observes that both internationalization and globalization are complex phenomena with many strands, and concludes that “the distinction between internationalization and globalization, although suggestive, cannot be regarded as categorical. They overlap, and are intertwined, in all kinds of ways” (p. 14). Altbach (2006b) defines globalization as “the broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable in the contemporary world” and defines internationalization as “specific policies and programs undertaken by governments, academic systems and institutions, and even individual departments to support student or faculty exchanges, encourage collaborative research overseas, set up joint teaching programs in other countries or a myriad of initiatives” (p. 123).

Elsewhere, Altbach and Knight (2007, pp. 290–291), addressing the changing landscape of internationalization of higher education, state:

We define globalization as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement. Global capital has, for the first time, heavily invested in knowledge industries worldwide, including higher education and advanced training. This investment reflects the emergence of the “knowledge society”, the rise of the service sector, and the dependence of many societies on knowledge products and highly educated personnel for economic growth.

Ulrich Teichler (2004) states that “globalization initially seemed to be defined as the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education, related to growing interrelationships between different parts of the world whereby national borders are blurred or even seem to vanish” (p. 23). But he also notes that, in recent years, “globalization” has replaced “internationalization” in the public debate on higher education, resulting at the same time in a shift of meaning: “The term tends to be used for any supra-regional phenomenon related to higher education . . . and/or anything on a global scale related to higher education characterized by market and competition,” while internationalization is “the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education relative to an increasing frequency of border-crossing activities amidst a persistence of national systems, even though some sign of ‘denationalisation’ might be observed” (pp. 22–23).

Teichler also sees a growing emphasis on marketization, competition, and management, a trend also stressed by others (Schapper & Mayson, 2005; Tuinamuana, 2005; Reinalda & Kulesza, 2005). Reinalda and Kulesza (2005) note:

Since the end of the last century, a shift in higher education has taken place from the public to the private domain, parallel to an increase in international trade in education services . . . . These developments enhance the significance of the education market as an international institution, but also contribute to changing