

Cross-Border Education: Not Just Students on the Move

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Over the next 20 years the demand for higher education will definitely outstrip the capacity of some countries to meet domestic need. The Global Student Mobility 2025 Report, prepared by IDP Education Australia, predicts the demand for international education will increase from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million in 2025.

By all accounts these staggering figures present enormous challenges and opportunities. As students continue moving to other countries to pursue their studies, they will remain an important part of the international dimension of higher education. But student mobility cannot satisfy the hunger for higher education within densely populated countries wanting to build human capacity and thus fully participate in the knowledge society—hence the emergence and exponential growth of cross-border education programs and providers. These new types of providers, forms of delivery, and models of collaboration will offer students education programs in their home countries.

PROGRAM AND PROVIDER MOBILITY

During the last few years, the movement of education programs and providers across national boundaries has created a hotbed of activity and innovation. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (www.obhe.ac.uk) tracks these new developments and recently reported on the following initiatives. Laureate Education (formerly Sylvan Learning Systems) has purchased (fully or in part) private higher education institutions in Chile, Mexico, Panama, and Costa Rica and owns universities in Spain, Switzerland, and France. Dubai has developed a “Knowledge Village” in the Dubai Technology and Media Free Zone; and to date the London School of Economics, India’s Manipal Academy of Higher Education, and the University of Wollongong from Australia are offering courses through franchising agreements and branch campuses. Phoenix University has become the largest private university in the United States (owned and operated by the Apollo Group company) and is now operating or delivering courses in Puerto Rico, Canada, the Netherlands, and Mexico. The Netherlands Business School (Universiteit Nijenrode) recently opened a branch campus in Nigeria, and Harvard is developing two branch-campus initiatives—one in Cyprus and the other in the United Arab Emirates. Jinan University will be the first Chinese university to open a branch campus outside of China—in Thailand.

Three Canadian universities are formally working with the

Al-Ahram Organization, a large private conglomerate, to establish the Al-Ahram Canadian University, in Egypt. The Canadian University will complement the German, American, and British universities that are already operating in Egypt. The franchise agreement that offers the distance MBA program of Heriot-Watt University from the United Kingdom, through the American University in Egypt, illustrates the complexity of some of the new arrangements among partners. Another example involves the partnership between the Caparo Group, a UK firm with interests in steel, engineering, and hotels and Carnegie Mellon University (US) to set up a new campus in India. In terms of volume alone, in 2002, Australian universities had over 97,000 students enrolled in 1,569 cross-border programs, as of June 2003, Hong Kong had 858 degree-level programs from 11 different countries operating in SAR, and Singapore had 522 degree-level programs from 12 foreign countries.

In addition to these few examples, hundreds of new initiatives have developed in the last five years. Higher education providers, including institutions and private companies, deliver their courses and programs to students in their home countries using a broad range of delivery modes. New programs are being designed and delivered in response to local conditions and global challenges, and new qualifications are being conferred. Clearly it is no longer just the students who are moving across borders. The world has now entered a new era of cross-border education.

THE NEED FOR RELIABLE DATA

There is a serious lack of solid data on the volume and type of cross-border programs and provider mobility. Institutions and national education systems have invested a lot of effort to gather reliable data on student mobility, but only in the last five years are countries and international organizations starting to track program and provider mobility. Australia, New Zealand, and, more recently, the United Kingdom have been gathering statistics from their recognized higher education institutions on cross-border education provision. The lack of common terms and systems of gathering data creates a huge challenge in trying to compare this data. Moreover, the paucity of information from both sending and receiving countries on program and provider mobility creates an undesirable environment of

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speculation, confusion, and often misinformation. This can undermine confidence in the quality and dependability of cross-border education provision and impedes the analysis needed to underpin solid policy and regulatory frameworks.

ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

The national-level issues related to registration and licensing of cross-border providers, quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications affect individual providers and, especially, higher education institutions. The quality of academic programs starts with the provider delivering the program. Most higher education institutions employ adequate quality assurance procedures for domestic delivery but not necessarily for all the aspects of cross-border delivery. Working cross-culturally in a foreign regulatory environment and, potentially, with a partner can raise new issues—including academic entry requirements, student examination and assessment procedures, workload, delivery modes, adaptation of the curriculum, quality assurance of teaching, academic and sociocultural support for students, title and level of award, and others. Quality issues also need to be balanced with the financial investment and return to the source provider. Intellectual property ownership, choice of partners, division of responsibilities, academic and business risk assessments, and internal and external approval processes constitute only some of the issues the higher education institutions need to resolve.

The growth in the volume, scope, and dimensions of cross-border education may provide increased access and promote innovation and responsiveness of higher education, but these developments also bring new challenges and unexpected consequences. The current realities include the fact that unrecognized and rogue cross-border providers are active, that much

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of the latest cross-border education is driven by commercial interests, and that mechanisms to recognize qualifications and ensure quality of the academic courses and programs are still not in place in many countries. These realities present major challenges to the education sector. It is important to acknowledge the huge potential of cross-border education but not at the expense of academic quality and integrity. Higher education is not the only sector that needs to look at ways to guide, monitor, and regulate the movement of education programs and providers. It needs to work in close cooperation with other sectors and to play a pivotal role in ensuring that cross-border education reflects and helps to meet individual countries' educational goals, culture, priorities, and policies. ■

International Students at Indian Universities

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Transnational movement of students is obviously the most visible and, perhaps, most significant manifestation of the internationalization of higher education. Since the early 1990s the number of students crossing their national borders for acquiring knowledge and skills has steadily increased. The number of students entering developed countries has shown a considerable rise. Unfortunately, this has not happened in the case of India, which has the third-largest higher education system in the world and, therefore, is a potential exporter or provider of education, at least to the Third World.

Presently, international students from about 125 countries are pursuing various undergraduate, postgraduate, and research programs in India at recognized universities and institutions. The countries that provide the international students can be grouped into two categories: first, developed countries that are technologically advanced and economically strong and have good facilities for higher education and training (e.g., the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, countries of the European Union, and Japan); and second, the less-developed and developing countries that have limited facilities for education—not only in professional fields such as engineering, medicine, and management—but also in science, humanities, social sciences, commerce, and law.

Data collected by the Association of Indian Universities over the period 1992–1993 to 2003–2004 suggest the number of international students coming to India steadily increased during the first half of the 1990s, with a peak of over 13,000 being achieved in 1993–1994. Subsequently there was a steady decrease, with a marked fall occurring in 1996–1997; by the end of the millennium the number had halved. This trend was probably due to the fact that while many developed countries, and especially the United Kingdom and Australia, were aggressively marketing their educational ware, India was inactive in this regard. However, the number of international students increased during 2001–2002, after India adopted a more positive approach, possibly suggesting a reversal of the trend.

More than 95 percent of international students in India come from the developing countries of Asia and Africa. The countries that sent the most students in 2003–2004 are Malaysia, Nepal, Iran, and Kenya (about 500 each), followed by Mauritius, Sri Lanka, the United States, and Ethiopia (over 300 each). Significantly, during 2003–2004 there has been an increase in the number of students from East Asia, the Middle East, South and Central Asia, Southeast Asia, northern