

IHE at 100: 25 Years of Evolution in International Higher Education

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The publication of the 100th issue of *International Higher Education* (IHE) provides a unique opportunity to reflect on the contributions made by the periodical during its first 25 years in operation. In this article, we summarize key findings from a comprehensive analysis of all of the articles included in the first 99 issues of *IHE* (a grand total of 1,459 individual articles), focusing particularly on our geographic reach, our thematic coverage, and the profile of our contributing authors.

Abstract

In this article, we summarize key findings from a comprehensive analysis of all of the articles included in the first 99 issues of *International Higher Education*. We find that the articles in *IHE* represent a very broad geographic reach, both in terms of article focus and author affiliation, and cover a wide variety of topics. However, some topics and regions have hardly been covered and deserve attention in future issues.

Global in Reach and Authorship

The mission of *IHE* is to provide informed and insightful analysis of topical issues affecting higher education systems around the world. We have, therefore, always been very concerned with our global reach, aiming to include contributions from countries that are less frequently covered in the global literature, as well as discussion of the major players on the international stage. Analysis of the first 99 issues demonstrates that we have been successful in achieving this goal, with our 1,459 articles being well distributed across the various world regions. East Asia and the Pacific is the region with the greatest coverage (267 articles), with Europe and Central Asia following closely behind (with 253). We have also published more than 100 articles focused on countries in North America (145), sub-Saharan Africa (132), and Latin America and the Caribbean (125). A substantial number of our articles (more than 200) are also best classified as being “global” in their scope, given that they deal with issues of relevance to multiple regions of the world. Although East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin American and the Caribbean have all been substantial sources of contributions since our founding, there have been some changes in our geographic distribution over the years, with the number of titles on North America declining and the number of contributions from Africa increasing, particularly in the last 10 years. This latter trend is in no small part due to the support for Africa-focused contributions that we have received from the Carnegie Corporation over this period. We have also seen an increase, in recent years, of articles that explicitly compare two or more regions of the world, in relation to a particular topic. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, a region that has only featured in 56 articles, less than 4 percent of our total output. South Asia is also less well represented, with 70 articles published in the first 99 issues.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the story is less balanced when it comes to specific countries within these broad regions. Certain countries tend to dominate the global literature on higher education, and the pattern is similar in *IHE*, with, for example, over 30 percent of articles on East Asia and the Pacific focusing on China; 75 percent of articles on South Asia focusing on India; 16 percent of articles on Europe and Central Asia focusing on the United Kingdom; 13 percent of articles on sub-Saharan Africa focusing on South Africa; and half of the articles on Latin America and the Caribbean focusing on one of four countries (Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Mexico). The United States is also our most frequently discussed country, although this dominance was more pronounced in the first years of publication and has declined significantly in recent issues. However, despite the dominance of a small number of countries, it is important to profile one significant contribution of *IHE* over the years, which is the sheer range of countries represented. Our first 99 issues have included at least some coverage of most countries in the world, with 111 individual countries being explicitly represented in at least one article to date. We have also published a number of articles that are regional in focus and/or that profile particular groups of countries (e.g., the “BRICs”—Brazil, Russia, India, and China).

In addition to prioritizing coverage of a broad range of contexts, *IHE* has long been concerned with the global reach of its authorship. Whenever possible, the editorial team seeks to invite authors to contribute to *IHE* who themselves live and work in the countries under discussion, so as to avoid some of the clear global imbalances that exist in most international publishing. We have not always been successful in this regard, as evidenced by the fact that nearly 40 percent of our articles were written by an author based in the United States. However, the fact remains that over 60 percent of *IHE* articles were written by non-US-based authors, with more than 40 contributions coming from each region in the world (and some regions contributing very frequently, e.g., Europe and Central Asia with 296 contributions and East Asia and the Pacific with 176). The trends over time are also generally encouraging, as we have seen a marked rise in contributions from authors based in regions such as South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. It is also important to highlight the fact that our analysis “counted” individuals in terms of their affiliation at the time of writing, so many of the authors counted as “American” are not American of origin but were, rather, contributing when working or studying at a US institution. However, there are also less encouraging trends

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that must be acknowledged, particularly a dramatic decline in the number of contributions from authors based in the Middle East and North Africa since 2001.

Broad Thematic Coverage, With Some Important Gaps

We also classified each article by primary theme, in order to understand the range of themes discussed in *IHE*, as well as any trends over time. The first finding in this regard is the broad diversity of themes represented in the first 99 issues. We have published articles on higher education finance; privatization; policy and governance; the academic profession; access and equity; quality and accreditation; rankings and world class universities; research and publication; students and student services; the “third mission”; types/models of university; and North–South relations, as well as a broad range of articles focused on topics that would broadly be classified as “internationalization” (i.e., mobility of students and faculty; internationalization strategies; cross-border and transnational education, etc.)

Many of these themes have been very well represented over the years. Internationalization has been our most popular topic, with 317 titles (over 20 percent) falling in that category, and has also increased quite significantly over the past 10 years. Other themes that have featured in a significant number of contributions include privatization (137), quality and accreditation (120) and finance (105).

Over time, we have seen an increase in articles on access and equity (although this was particularly pronounced between 2006 and 2010, rather than in the most recent decade), on research and publication, and on rankings and world class universities. Other themes, such as the academic profession and finance, have declined in popularity in recent years. Some of these peaks are likely historical in nature (e.g., a spike in articles about globalization in the years directly after the millennium; a rise in articles focused on the relatively new phenomena of rankings and “world class universities” in the past decade; a much more recent spike in the number of articles focused on the interference of politics in higher education). Others are likely to be due to trends in the broader higher education literature (e.g., the rising focus on access and equity). Others still are due to the activity of particular groups or authors, who have contributed significant numbers of articles on their topic of focus. One clear case of this is the Program for Research on Private Higher Education (based at the University at Albany – State University of New York), which has produced a considerable number of articles for *IHE* on private higher education over the years. However, not all of the trends can easily be explained, including trends of no change. There has not, for example, been any significant increase in the number of articles focused on higher education finance, despite significant attention devoted to the topics of student financing and the impact of budget austerity in many countries in recent years.

Our thematic analysis also showed some significant gaps. The theme of students and student services, for example, has hardly received any coverage in the first 99 issues (only 12 articles, which represents less than 1 percent of the total). There have also been very few looking at the “third mission” of higher education (35) or at North–South relations (39). These areas represent important topics for our field, so an increased focus in future years would be a welcome development.

An Increasingly Diverse Authorship

The last area of focus for our analysis was the diversity of our authorship. Aside from geographic diversity, which was discussed above, we also investigated the institutional affiliation and gender of our contributing authors.

Although, unsurprisingly, the vast majority of authors are based at educational institutions (generally universities), roughly 25 percent of *IHE* articles have been written by authors from other kinds of institutions (i.e., nonprofit organizations, higher education associations, government agencies, and private companies). It is also significant to note that over 20 percent of *IHE* articles are coauthored. Of these coauthor pairs or groups, more than half represent multiple institution types (for example, one author from a university and one from a government agency). A sizable number of these include at least one author from a nonprofit organization. As a number of single-authored contributions

(more than 75) have also been submitted by authors from nonprofits, it is clear that the nonprofit sector has featured substantially in our authorship over the years.

Another interesting trend to note is that the number of female contributors has increased over time. In total, roughly 30 percent of the articles submitted by authors with a known gender were authored (or coauthored) by women, and this proportion has grown significantly over the years. There is a regional dimension to this, however, with women being much more highly represented in certain regions than others. Nearly 50 percent of contributions from Europe and Central Asia, for example, come from women, whereas women contributed less than 15 percent of the articles from sub-Saharan Africa.

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Conclusion

In summary, we can conclude that *IHE* has done a remarkable job ensuring that its content has remained both geographically diverse and thematically rich over its first 25 years in operation. It has also provided an important contribution by giving voice to a broad range of scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners working in the field of international higher education, including a sizable number from outside the United States and Western Europe. Indeed, this diversity, both in terms of content and contributing authorship, has increased over time. However, there is more to be done in the future to ensure that we continue to diversify our work, representing countries that are less frequently discussed in the global literature, featuring topics, such as the “third mission,” which are crucially important but have received little coverage to date, and encouraging contributions from authors from all regions of the globe. The focus on higher education’s contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals in this issue is a promising start. ▲