

penchant for technology and the psychographic characteristics that fundamentally influence their information-seeking behavior.

It shows that universities may be underutilizing technology and some of their other most important assets in recruiting international students. For example, more than two-fifths of the respondents (42%) stated that either one of the university network (community members)—including faculty, admission officers, current students, and alumni—had the largest influence on their application decisions. In contrast, only 11 percent of the respondents indicated that “educational consultants” had an impact.

Another challenge is due to the limited national data on international students. The available data is not only outdated but also suffers from definitional issues, making it difficult to project forecasts for new source countries in the next three to five years. This is especially detrimental, as it takes several years of developing and building relationships to recruit international students from new source countries.

In my previous article in *IHE*, *Preparing for Emerging Markets*, I argued that instead of intentionally looking into key source countries to engage within the next several years, institutions are responding to short-term student demand, and are missing the opportunity to cultivate the best-fit opportunities (<http://bit.ly/EmergingRecruit>).

## CONCLUSION

Expanding international student populations on university campuses while maintaining the goals of cost, quality, and diversity is a complex optimization problem. It requires assessment of institutional goals, priorities, and capacities; investigation of student needs, profiles, and experiences; and, finally, mapping institutional and individual needs through a comprehensive strategy.

In a postrecession environment, an increasing number of higher education institutions are interested in attracting the next wave of international students. However, institutions must recognize the complexity and volatility of international student decision-making processes, and should invest in developing evidence-driven enrollment strategies. The quick-fix international student enrollment strategies are neither informed nor sustainable. In sum, it is important to “zoom-out” to look into big picture megatrends, but then to “zoom-in” as well, to see the applicability and relevance of these trends at the institutional level. ■

# Kazakhstan’s Bolashak Scholarship Program

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Emerging economies have increasingly realized the connection between human capital investment and economic prosperity. They are looking at more advanced countries for best practices to reform the tertiary education system at home. Among the approaches is sending students to study abroad on government-sponsored scholarships. This practice, which often entails a considerable financial investment by the home nation, is expected to accelerate the development of human capital.

Kazakhstan’s Bolashak Scholarship is one example of a long-standing government-sponsored international scholarship program. In 1993, the Kazakhstan government launched Bolashak (Kazakh for “future”) Scholarships to send students to attend colleges and universities abroad. About 100 students received the scholarships annually until 2005, when the number increased over time to average 800 per year.

In an effort to maximize program effectiveness, program administrators have made various changes in the design over the past 20 years. Based on our review of program characteristics and outcomes, we identify five lessons for how this government-sponsored scholarship program has accomplished its goal for promoting human capital development.

## SPECIFYING STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

Wise investment of limited government funds for maximum return has always been a challenge in scholarship design. One approach is to match the educational priorities of the sending country, with the academic programs available overseas. A recent examination of international scholarship programs shows that 45 percent of 183 government sponsored scholarship programs in 196 countries with specific academic priority areas.

Prior to 1997, when Bolashak had no guidelines on the areas of study, scholarship recipients were concentrated in humanities and social sciences, and the number of recipients in science and engineering remained extremely low.

The Kazakhstan government responded by creating a list of priority areas of study in 1997, giving weight to applicants in the majors identified as highly relevant to the

strategic development of the country. To further encourage applicants in science and engineering majors, the government also had lowered language requirements and offered applicants English-language courses. These alterations were designed to produce qualified specialists in line with the government's overall priorities for diversification and industrial development of the economy.

#### IDENTIFYING DESIRED INSTITUTIONS

A second lesson learned pertains to the types of institutions that students attend and the ways to recognize the asymmetric education provision between home and overseas institutions. Studying abroad allows students to enroll in programs that are not available or are of lower quality than in the home institutions. Funding bodies seek to support students enrolled in leading institutions abroad, in hope of providing greater access to high-quality higher education. In accordance with this rationale, the Bolashak program, as well as 85 percent of government-sponsored study-abroad programs offered worldwide, limit students' destination institutions.

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The initial design of the Bolashak program did not restrict the choices of institutions by recipients, and thus it could not prevent them from studying at dubious institutions. The need for the Kazakhstan government to carefully appraise the quality of overseas institutions was exacerbated during the recent global financial crises, when many institutions worldwide lowered their entrance requirements to recruit more fee-paying students.

To better meet the aims of the program, the program's administration developed a list of recommended higher education institutions, compiled from the *Times Higher Education* Rankings and QS World University Rankings, to ensure that scholarship recipients would study at universities approved by the program. With these changes, the number of universities recommended for Bolashak students decreased from 630 in 2007 to the current number of 200.

#### ENSURING TRANSPARENCY

To be perceived as prestigious and available to top students, a program like Bolashak must ensure that the limited scholarships are awarded to recipients in accordance with its merit-based principles.

A third lesson learned by the Kazakhstan government was the need for transparency. Between 1993 and 1997, there were no concrete rules governing the award of the Bolashak Scholarship. The lack of information and publicity, coupled with the limited number of awarded scholarships, generated a negative image of the program and triggered wide criticism, regarding the fairness of the selection process. The general public believed the program was tailored specifically for the offspring of the political elites. It was not until 1997, when the requirements for awarding scholarships were announced, that the Bolashak Scholarship gained acceptance by the public. Recent interviews with stakeholders show that transparency is in place.

#### RESTRUCTURING SUPPORT FOR THE LEVEL OF STUDY

Given the limited funds available, the level of study to support is a fourth lesson. In 2011, the eligible degree levels went through restructuring: scholarships to undergraduate students ended but scholarships for research and teaching staff were added. The latter initiative has already produced benefits related to the internationalization of curriculum, academic publishing, and joint research projects.

Several factors prompted this change. The age of undergraduate scholarship recipients (between 17 and 19) was perceived by policymakers as psychologically immature for studying abroad. In addition, employers provided conflicting feedback on preferred levels of study: some believed that undergraduates' longer stay in host countries would benefit their language skills, while others preferred more advanced skills of master's degree graduates. The total cost of supporting one undergraduate student significantly exceeded that of a postgraduate student. The opening of Nazarbayev University, an English-language university with international faculty offering high-quality fully funded undergraduate education in Kazakhstan, also contributed to the elimination of funding for undergraduate education.

#### REQUIRING THE RETURN OF SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

A fifth lesson pertains to incentivizing the scholarship recipients to return to the home country after they graduate. There has always been anxiety over losing government-sponsored scholarship recipients to their hosting countries, since the rationale to the scholarships is the recipients' future contributions to the home countries.

The Bolashak program addresses this concern by only awarding scholarships to individuals who can provide collateral immovable property equivalent in value to the schol-

arship or provide up to four guarantors who will assume financial liability for the government's investment, should the recipient not return to Kazakhstan. To fulfill their obligations, upon completion of their degrees, recipients are required to work in Kazakhstan in the field of their degree specialization for five years. After that, the contract is considered fully executed, and the Bolashak administration releases the collateral.

As drastic as it may seem, this approach has succeeded to guarantee the return of the scholarship recipients. Only 1 percent of scholarship recipients has not returned to Kazakhstan since the Bolashak Scholarship program began.

#### CONCLUSION

The aim of the Kazakhstan government's Bolashak Scholarship is to invest in human capital development and ensure that this investment creates a long-lasting impact on the country's development. The program has gone through significant changes in the past two decades. The heart of the changes relates to the alignment of personal choice, industrial needs, and the country's strategic development.

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## International Students in Indian Universities

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In the new millennium, Indian higher education has shown noteworthy growth, with the number of universities increasing from 266 in 2000–2001 to 700 in 2013–2014 and the student strength going up from 8.4 million to about 20 million. At the same time, the international student population has increased globally from 2.1 million

in 2001 to 4.3 million in 2013. The growth in the number of international students in India, from about 7,000 in 2000–2001 to a little over 20,000 in 2012–2013, is, in comparison, anaemic, and not commensurate with either the growth of the Indian higher education system or with the global growth in international student mobility.

#### DATA FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

The Association of Indian Universities has been collecting information on international students in India since 1994. However, there has always been a significant shortfall in returns. Hence, the association, in its periodic reviews, has placed emphasis on evaluating trends in terms of percentages and has downplayed the absolute numbers. For the latest survey on international students, covering the academic year of 2012–2013 requests for information were sent out in August 2013 and the responses received from 121 universities till the end of May, 2014, were evaluated.

During the academic year 2012–2013, in the 121 institutions covered by the survey, 20,176 international students were pursuing diploma, degree, and research programs. A liberal guesstimate is that the figure could rise by 10–15 percent when returns from all institutions having international students are received. The number is small, compared to the 200,000 Indian students presently studying abroad, and minuscule, compared to the total Indian student population of 20 million.

#### WHERE STUDENTS ARE COMING FROM

Traditionally, the source for international students in India has largely been the countries from Asia and Africa, and this continues to be the case. However, over the last two decades there has been considerable change in the relative contributions of these two regions. Compared to the mid-1990s the share of Asia has increased, in 2012–2013, from about 45 percent to 73 percent, while that of Africa declined from 48 percent to about 24 percent. Significantly, South Asia and the Gulf Region continue to be the most important providers, but new areas have emerged in Central Asia and East Asia. There is very low representation from the Americas, Europe, and Australasia. It can be argued that, in the case of India, international student mobility is more an example of regionalization than of internationalization.

#### PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

In 2012–2013 seven Indian universities had more than 1,000 students with the largest number, 2,742, coming from Manipal University—a private institution. Out of these universities, three are self-financing (private) universities, and the other four are public, affiliating-type universities. Significantly, in the case of the latter group the international students are largely in the affiliated self-financing