

## The Impact of Globalization: A Case of Mongolian Universities

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The challenges of globalization have hit Mongolia at a time when the country started reforming the entire education system. During the 1990s, the Mongolian higher education sector was fully shaped in terms of ownership, governance, funding, and academic curriculum. By 2004, there were 183 higher education institutions, of which 47 were public, 129 private, and 7 foreign. About 82 percent of private and 61 percent of public institutions were not accredited. The government of Mongolia found higher education the most promising sector for cost sharing and shifted a part of its fiscal burden to institutions and recipients of services (i.e., students). Direct funding of universities and colleges ceased in 2003. Currently, 95 percent of the institutional budget relies on the tuition fees of students. About 60 percent of students obtain loans and grants on the basis of merit and needs.

In this changing environment, higher education institutions have been challenged to embrace global forces and compete for resources, particularly for research funding, qualified faculty, and students.

### OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION

A positive impact of globalization is increased awareness about Mongolia and widened access to resources. Since 1990, over 70 PhD dissertations and master's theses have been completed at US institutions on topics related to Mongolian studies. Over 50 ongoing research projects have been identified (see [www.mongoliacenter.org](http://www.mongoliacenter.org)).

Taking advantage of these developments, the government of Mongolia implemented 49 foreign-funded projects in higher education and human resources development. The university administrators have been able to expand internationalization from interuniversity partnerships to regional networking. Visible trends of internationalization are demonstrated in the forms of collaborative research, joint academic programs, and programs in English, enrollment of foreign students, and growth of student and faculty exchange. For example, the National University of Mongolia set up a "sandwich" program—Bachelor of International Commerce with the Agricultural University of Hebei in China—and summer programs in Mongolian studies, biodiversity, anthropology, and

archaeology. The growth of foreign students averages 15 to 20 percent a year, and the annual contribution to a university budget is about US\$200,000. Currently, 20 foreign faculty members are working on a long-term basis and about 60 joint research projects are ongoing. Every year, approximately 200 foreigners visit the university.

Eventually, globalization has heightened competition. The penetration of foreign educational institutions into Mongolia has threatened local universities that are far behind the global higher education market leaders from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, as well as behind some innovative Asian universities. In the mid-1990s, Russian universities set up their branches in Mongolia. Later, Dutch and Australian universities established MBA programs in affiliation with Mongolian institutions. Recently, South Koreans invested in the foundation of three private colleges. Parallel to foreign investment, an increasing number of Mongolian students have left for overseas studies. According to the source, 740 students were studying in the United States in 2003, an increase of 29 percent compared to the previous year. Three hundred other students study in Japan, and 184 are enrolled in graduate programs in Korea.

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While institutions from overseas compete for recruitment of students through educational advisory centers, embassies, and alumni, those who physically entered and set up branches in Mongolia compete for local funds, scholarships, acquisition of land, and other real estate. With private support, South Korean Khuree University started construction of a new campus, and another Buddhist organization got land for building an educational center in the most expensive zone of the city near Bogd Khan Mountain, a mountain registered as a Biosphere Reserve in UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Program. International organizations and companies, too, intensify the competition by employing and outsourcing faculty and young scholars and offering adult education, youth programs, and overseas degree programs.

In the face of such attractive offers and resources, Mongolian universities, lacking modern educational facilities and promising work and career opportunities, face difficulties to retain faculty members. The country is facing a growing outflow of young scholars and a smaller number of returnees from countries like Japan, the United States, and Germany. Between 1999 and 2003, 313 faculty members of the National University of Mongolia were studying and working overseas,

and 390 made short-term visits. During that period, only 56 faculty members returned.

Unfortunately, universities in Mongolia are not fully aware of the challenges of globalization and a greater role of internationalization. Not only small private colleges but also the largest research universities are struggling to develop a strategic plan for internationalization and to allocate necessary resources. Institutional human capacities to handle internationalization strategies are scarce and weak, and in most cases the university administration drives the process. International activities focus on short-term objectives and are funded on crisis basis. A response to internationalization differs from college to college within the university campus. Some faculty members perceive internationalization as going abroad and others are psychologically unprepared for change.

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#### IMPACT OF BRAIN DRAIN

Foreign-educated scholars are the source for global positioning of Mongolian science and education. They are, too, internationally sought for research and development (R&D) positions. It is noteworthy to say that R&D is flowing from country to country with scientists who generated that knowledge and through information technology and transnational companies making multiple passages worldwide and settling down wherever they find growth of demand or profit. The process has been reinforced with the World Trade Organization and economic growth in Asian countries, which are increasingly becoming able to afford not only ready products and technology but also to attract highly qualified professionals.

Having trained their faculty and students overseas, Mongolian universities hope to contribute to the future growth of the country and enhance their presence in global academic circles. However, when this critical mass of trained scholars stays in host countries, institutions are not rewarded with ability to integrate into the world scientific community and the sizable economic gains that could be possible through technology and product innovation. As a consequence, brain drain reverses the expectation of universities for a "stronger organization through better people" into constant lack of management, teaching, and research personnel. And, the goal of becoming a "top world university" turns into a remote vision.

To reverse the outflow of scholars, better working conditions, rewarding salaries and promising careers must be offered for highly skilled people. However, while competing needs within society do not allow the government to invest in

R&D (presently, 0.3 percent of GDP) and the country's businesses have not achieved a level that empowers them to invest in research and philanthropy, the country's spending on science and higher education will hardly increase. Universities, too, being dependent on tuition fees, are not able to offer conditions comparable to the international level.

#### WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Collaboratively, international development organizations, government, and national higher education institutions must take actions to maximize benefits of globalization. The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other foundations should broaden programs encouraging the establishment of international and regional professional associations and networks in developing countries and programs nurturing joint research with comparative and international perspectives. These programs will help scholars maintain contacts with their colleagues, contribute to the global dimension of scientific issues, and have positive effects on R&D innovation in developing countries. Financing of infrastructure development and laboratory renovation must be a part of the programs.

When local funding and foreign aid are scarce, the Mongolian government should seek possibilities for cost sharing between the government, international agencies, and universities. Institutional strengthening could be achieved by identifying key areas of development and exploring university initiatives for internationalization. The current interuniversity collaboration and exchange as well as dual, sandwich, and off-shore programs have shown sufficient credibility in terms of cost-efficiency and effective outcome. Support for these innovations will reverse the image of Mongolian "low-quality" education to internationally "matching quality" education. ■

## A Latin American Private University Strives To Become "World Class"

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Latin American countries are facing the challenges of social and economic development in an international context