

leged children and Cornell University's recently launched International Architecture and Rural Development major. Almost as old as the UN itself, MUN is a UN-supported, externally managed educational simulation of UN experience and academic competition for university and high school students. MUN teaches UN principles and protocol, develops research and debate skills, and broadens participant knowledge on diplomacy, international law, and global politics. MUN conferences with thousands of participants are held annually throughout the world. UN internships, available through the UN Secretariat, specialized agencies and regional centers for graduate students with majors related to UN topics, are another component of UN IHE programming. Students offer unpaid labor in exchange for work experience and academic credit within a branch of the UN. UNAI, MUN, and the UN internship programs all seek to educate university students on UN activity, objectives, and careers, ideally fostering more socially responsible youth.

Other UN IHE non-degree programs include collaborative faculty exchange and curriculum development. The UNESCO university twinning and networking scheme, for instance, promotes a series of faculty chair positions and networking communities within universities around the world. This program involves 650 institutions in over 120 countries and drives higher education and research capacity building through sponsorship of exchange opportunities in areas related to UNESCO fieldwork—education, sciences, culture, and communication. Additionally, several other UN agencies with expertise, information, and educational experience in particular areas are beginning to partner with universities on projects that broaden curricula. Examples include the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IA-CA—a UN Office on Drugs and Crime-INTERPOL project that offers a broad professional training curriculum and executive graduate course in Anti-Corruption Studies) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's guides for food security, statistical analysis, and online curriculum development. These capacity development services have been widely accessed by developing country institutions.

KNOWLEDGE DIPLOMACY POTENTIAL

UN international higher education knowledge diplomacy activity spans a broad mix of programming and is still relatively new. Nevertheless, regarding its potential for advancing UN and member state ideals and goals, several observations can be made. The UN does not have higher education delivery in its mandate or experience base; therefore, any UN university program is dependent on host government endowments and external resources. This is expensive and sometimes unsustainable. Also, the UN's degrees are not yet prominently recognized and its university-oriented research is not its most widely disseminated and utilized

product, which raises questions of cost-benefit justifiability.

UN IHE endeavors yield most when tied to projects and issues immediately relevant to national economies, academic institutions, and professionals rather than to UN-generated agendas. Thus, the non-degree granting UN brokering of IHE professional and information exchange seems a more natural and cost effective fit. Countries on both sides of the equation have embraced UN provision of funding, networking, information, documentation, and publication for IHE exchange and there is significant room for expansion of these activities. That UN information, experience and infrastructure can be beneficial to international higher education programs is certain; less clear is how the UN can best package and market these resources for optimal impact. ■

The Changing Landscape of International Education Research

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Given the uneven landscape of higher education around the world, it is not surprising that research on international higher education has its own topography. It is concerning, however, that large areas of the research terrain in international education have yet to be charted.

A recent analysis of data from the IDP Australia Database of Research on International Education has shown that research on international education is predominantly focused on the Anglophone world—with over 53 percent of all research published between 2011 and 2013, looking at English-speaking countries. Similarly, research on international education is strongly associated with the higher/postsecondary education sector, despite the multisector nature of international education itself. Students are also the predominant focus of this research, rather than the faculty who teach them, the industry and business sectors that subsequently employ them, or the broader internationalization agendas of their institutions.

Mirroring the findings of the third global inventory of higher education research centers/institutes and academic programs—published by the Boston College Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) in 2014, this analysis from the IDP Database of Research on International Education points to a concentration of international education research on a small number of countries and on a narrow range of topics. As such, just like the skewed global landscape of higher education, it appears that the landscape of international education research is neither flat nor fully explored.

DATA COLLECTION

This analysis is informed by data held in the IDP Database of Research on International Education, which contains details of more than 13,300 books, articles, conference papers, and reports on various aspects of international education from around the world. As part of a recent project undertaken by the International Education Association of Australia under the banner of its International Education Research Network initiative, detailed analysis was undertaken of the 2,511 database records relating to research that had been published in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

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Naturally, certain caveats apply to this analysis. Given its Australian origins and sponsorship, the coverage of Australian material in the Database of Research on International Education is comparatively strong. However, the database has always referenced research published in other countries, and the capture of non-Australian research has increased steadily overtime. That being said, at this time only English-language materials are referenced.

The following findings are based on a detailed analysis of database records, including keywords or phrases, country of focus, research method, and publication type. Unless otherwise specified, data are presented in aggregate across the three years.

KEY FINDINGS

About 3,831 separate keywords are recorded for research published in 2011, 2012, and 2013—with an average of 7.3 keywords attributed per record. Although 63 percent of these keywords are only used once or twice, an analysis of the most-common keywords points to hot topics in international education research and shifting trends in research focus overtime. As such, based on the 21 keywords/phrases that are deployed over 200 times, the principal focus of this research has been on international students in higher and postsecondary education, with a secondary focus on internationalization and study abroad/student mobility (for domestic students). Year-on-year trends show continued growth in the use of these particular keywords, while other leading keywords (such as “educational markets” and “cultural differences”) are in marked decline. Other leading keywords showing steady usage overtime include “educational policy,” “student attitudes,” “globalization,” and “student experience.”

In terms of geographic focus, each record in the database identifies (where relevant) the country or region that is the subject of the research. This does not necessarily match the location of the researcher(s), although there is a strong correlation between the two. Over the three years in question, 142 separate countries/regions are listed. Of these, 35 percent only feature once, while the six most popular countries/regions (Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Europe, and Canada) are listed over 100 times each. Analysis of year-on-year trends for these six countries/regions points to an increasing focus on the United States and the United Kingdom, with a corresponding drop for Australia. No doubt, this partially relates to the growing inclusion of non-Australian research in the database. Trends relating to China, Europe, and Canada are generally flat.

From a regional perspective, 23.9 percent of all research is focused on Asia or on an Asian country, second only to Oceania with 28.2 percent. Europe (21.2%) and North America (16.8%) follow closely behind, while other continents feature very little. Just under 10 percent of all international education research is centered on Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

In terms of research method, international education research is undertaken in both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Case studies and interviews are particularly popular methods (with 20.6% and 17.6% of all records respectively); however, when combined, a range of quantitative methods—including surveys, student surveys, questionnaires, and statistical analysis—make up 26.5 percent of all research methods. Year-on-year trends nevertheless indicate that quantitative methods have become less popular overtime, as have interviews, with a strong surge in the use of case studies and comparative analysis between 2012

and 2013.

In relation to a publication type, the publication of choice for international education research is the journal article, with 49.3 percent of all publications. Book chapters (16.3%) and research reports (15.1%) are the next most popular avenues for publication. Journal articles have shown continued growth year-on-year—to the detriment of other publication types, for which trends are flat or in decline.

Given its interdisciplinary nature, international education research can be found in a very wide range of publications—420 separate journals and 199 separate publishers of research reports feature in the 2011–2013 data. The leading journals in this field, however, are the *Journal of Studies in International Education*, the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, and *Higher Education*, as well as *International Higher Education* (Boston College CIHE) and NAFSA's *International Educator* magazine. With six books to its credit, the Institute of International Education is the most prolific publisher, while the British Council, the Institute of International Education, and various Australian government departments have published the greatest numbers of research reports.

CONCLUSION

Just as it is a complex endeavor to gather comparative international data on higher education research centers and programs, it is equally hard to gain an accurate picture of research on international education. Although analysis of data from the IDP Database of Research on International Education is a useful starting point, a range of caveats exist in relation to the quality and rigor of the data.

Yet, this analysis provides an indication of the scale of international education research in recent years and has allowed conclusions to be drawn on trends in research topic, method, and publication type. The findings point to an uneven landscape for international education research. While the future contours of this terrain remain to be mapped, subsequent analysis incorporating 2014 data should help to identify changing trends in the landscape of international education research. ■

The Many Traditions of Liberal Arts—and Their Global Relevance

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The liberal arts are seeing a modest revival globally. In the struggle between specialization on the one hand and general or liberal education on the other, specialization has mostly won. In much of the world, higher education study is organized to prepare people for the workforce and most often for specific professions. Further, highly specialized curricula predominate in many countries—a student enters a particular faculty and nearly all of the classes are oriented toward a specific discipline, leading to graduation with specialized knowledge in that field. A few countries, such as the United States, have maintained some commitment to the idea of education for broader knowledge and intellectual competencies—the underlying concept of liberal education.

Yet, quite surprisingly, the idea of liberal education has taken on new salience in the global higher education debate. This has occurred for several reasons. There is increasing recognition that both the labor force and educated individuals require “soft skills” as well as vocationally relevant content-based knowledge. These include the ability to think critically, communicate effectively and efficiently, synthesize information from various academic and cultural perspectives, and analyze complex qualitative and quantitative concepts, among others. Further, the 21st century economy no longer ensures a fixed career path. University graduates face a diverse, complex, and volatile job market. The specialized curriculum is no longer adequate to prepare people for the new knowledge economy requires capacity to innovate and there is growing consensus that this capacity requires broader range of knowledge that crosses disciplinary boundaries—perhaps a revival of the idea underlying the European medieval universities.

So far, the modest global resurgence of liberal arts education is largely but not exclusively concentrated in the elite sector of higher education, although with considerable variation among institutions.

LIBERAL EDUCATION

There is no universally accepted definition of liberal education. Most think of it in terms of an approach to knowledge as well as in more detailed curricular terms. Liberal



In addition to our Web site and Facebook page, we are now tweeting. We hope you will consider “following” us on Twitter!