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What Enables and Sustains Corruption in African Universities?

Jonathan D. Jansen

Abstract
Corruption in universities is not something new. But what happens when corruption becomes endemic to institutional life? What sustains the corrupt practices that lead to chronically unstable universities? This article describes the operations of two important concepts that explain ongoing corruption in African universities: institutional capability and institutional integrity.

What if a university is seen by its surrounding community not as a place of higher learning, a site for generating impactful research, or a forum for new ideas, but rather as a highly visible and concentrated resource to be embezzled?

My research on corruption in South African universities certainly did not start with that question in mind. I was initially interested in understanding why chronic dysfunction persisted in a sample of higher education institutions; in other words, why did that set of universities experience constant turmoil marked by often violent student protests, frequent campus shutdowns, ongoing governance dysfunction, and a high turnover in campus leadership?

Interventions did not seem to help. When a public university becomes and remains unstable, the minister of education in South Africa would appoint an assessor to determine the causes of instability and, following a report, would appoint an administrator to take over the governance and/or management functions of that institution for one or more years. The goal is to reset, to fix urgent problems, to place the university on a more stable path forward. In most of the universities that I studied, there would often be relapse, and the cycle of instability and its morbid symptoms (protests, shutdowns, etc.) would recur with devastating consequences for the academia. Why?

I have discovered that the core of chronic dysfunction was an almost single-minded focus across university stakeholders (students, faculty, governors, vendors, etc.) on illicitly accessing the resources of these multi-billion rand institutions. At first glance, the run on institutional resources, from infrastructure grants to the theft of symbolic resources such as degree certificates, made material sense. Several of the more rural universities were located in, and surrounded by, impoverished communities living in shacks, where unemployment was very high and opportunities slim. But there was something much more sinister going on.

Connecting the Inside with the Outside

Over the past two decades, the broader South African society has descended into corruption on an industrial scale, especially in the context of state-owned enterprises—such as various public utilities, from the national train system to the main electricity supplier. Several books have been written on "state capture" to describe the phenomenon where powerful private interests manipulate the rules and regulations that govern public resources for their own benefit.

Against this background, it was always going to be unreasonable to expect universities—as public entities of sorts—to be spared the rampant corruption within the state. Stakeholders from other public entities such as cash-strapped and dysfunctional municipalities sat in the governing bodies (councils) of universities. Students and staff were connected to external vendors who were determined to gain access to tenders bypassing institutional rules. In short, there were corrupt networks connecting people inside and outside universities, so that every substantial resource was under close attention of corrupt individuals.

The next task was to examine in more detail not only how this corruption in universities was enabled but also how it was sustained. I found two mechanisms that kept corrupt institutions under constant threat of collapse. One was institutional capability and the other institutional integrity.

Institutional Capability

The question of institutional capability did not, however, simply boil down to "the lack of" things such as ability to govern/manage/administer a modern university; that would have been a limited problem, one that could easily be solved through training and development. It was that these institutions were rendered incapable by corrupted members of the university community. For example, while there were institutional rules established for everything, from the correct ways to tender for university services from catering to gardening, there were parallel rules created enabling corrupt individuals to compete in circumvention of, and despite, formal arrangements. Over time, those informal, unofficial rules became the institutional norm with the result that all the systems, from finance to human resources, were rendered incapable in the irregular bid for resources. A current example from recent times must suffice. Prominent politicians who are in touch with professors inside universities have subverted the admissions requirements for first-degree programs so that members of political elites who only had a secondary school qualification could directly jump to study for a postgraduate diploma or degree without any further vetting by the institution. Two parallel sets of institutional rules—one for the majority and another one for the corrupt minority—exist to this day within some of the institutions studied.

Institutional Integrity

The question of institutional integrity is related to the regnant values of an institution.

The question of institutional integrity is related to the regnant values of an institution. Once again, I stumbled upon this concept when I compared institutions that remained stable and functional despite their own crises with those that had collapsed under the same pressures. What distinguished the two kinds of universities was that the former had a strong sense of scholastic identity and of institutional values such as academic integrity. Indeed, universities with high levels of institutional integrity kept the academic project at the core of all their deliberations at every level of governance, management, and administration. Any threat to the academic project would be dealt with swiftly. There were strong, uncompromising rules in place that emphasized academic honesty in the day-to-day dealings of the university.

The opposite happened in universities with low levels of institutional integrity: Rules were constantly in flux and open to negotiation, there were seldom consequences for bad behavior, and leadership was often complicit in breaking the rules. In questions ranging from the procurement of millions of rands for a new IT infrastructure to the state-funded student financial aid scheme, the management's attention was heavily diverted toward either protecting or scamming these resources rather than advancing the HEI's core activities, such as teaching, learning, and research.

In sum, corruption thrived when the rules that enabled institutional capability were broken, leaving universities vulnerable to abuse and their academic reputation suffering. With chronic instability in place, the more mobile middle-class students move to more secure universities; top professors who are longing for predictable schedules and uninterrupted research time seek an academic home elsewhere, and leading donors that support universities take their money elsewhere. What is left, some would argue, is little more than a low-level teaching college rather than something most people recognize as a university.

Not Only a South African Problem

Unfortunately, this has been the fate of too many African universities across the continent. When corrupt universities break down, middle-class African families send their children to the few good universities in South Africa or to institutions in the West. Sadly, those who remain are poorer students without too many academic choices and faculty without spectacular track record in research and publications.

A corrupt organization can certainly mimic a higher education institution by going through the routines of student admissions, registrations, instruction, assessment, and graduation even with constant disruption and rampant corruption. But is that a university?

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The Quiet Global Revolution of Elite Private Higher Education

Philip G. Altbach

Abstract
In the past half-century and especially since the new millennium, there has been a small but remarkable development of high-quality nonprofit private universities, especially in the Global South. These new "elite" universities in countries like Brazil, India, and some others provide new ideas about higher education. Many are funded by philanthropy and are a new area of private higher education.

In the past half-century and especially since the new millennium, there has been a small but remarkable development of high-quality nonprofit private universities, especially in the Global South. These universities are especially important in the changing landscape of global higher education. They are providing new ideas about the organization, curriculum, and even the philosophy of higher education in countries where academic institutions are often very traditional and bureaucratic. These universities, often supported by substantial philanthropic efforts, have significant resources and have been able to attract top students and faculty.

The Map of Elite Private Universities

The elite private sector is small—perhaps 150 worldwide. The largest number are in the United States, with perhaps half the total, and a few in countries such as Japan and South Korea. Some Latin American countries host top Catholic universities and a few others. But the largest growth area for top private institutions is now the Global South.

There have been several periods of development for these universities. At the end of the nineteenth century, wealthy capitalists in the United States sponsored newly invented German-style research universities in an effort to strengthen the country's scientific capacity. Stanford University, the University of Chicago, and Johns Hopkins University, among others, were established and quickly became elite institutions. Waseda University and Keio University were founded in Japan with similar missions.

The Emergence of Elite Private Universities in the Global South

A few elite private universities were established in the mid-twentieth century. Examples include the Tecnológico de Monterrey (Monterrey Tec), established in 1943 in Mexico by industrialists. A decade later, the Manipal Academy of Higher Education was founded in India, followed by the Birla Institute of Technology and Science. These pioneering universities now have multiple campuses in India and are among the best and most innovative national institutions. In the following decades, additional innovative universities were founded. Symbiosis International University in Pune, India, was established in 1971 as an internationally focused institution, and the Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH) was founded in 1986 in South Korea. INSPER, an independent university in Sao Paulo, Brazil, focusing on business, economics, and (later) engineering was founded in 1987. LUMS University (formerly Lahore University of Management Science) in Pakistan, founded in 1984, grew from a management training institution to a comprehensive university. There were a small number of additional universities founded during this period in other countries.

All of these institutions were founded with a vision that differed from the standard university ethos.

All of these institutions were founded with a vision that differed from the standard university ethos. All were committed to excellence and all (with the exception of Symbiosis) were established with considerable private resources and thus the ability, like Stanford and Chicago in the United States, to establish infrastructure, hire highly qualified faculty, and appeal to top students within a short time period. All had strong links with local business and industry. POSTECH was founded by Korea's largest steel company, POSCO, with the goal of providing the country's rapidly developing economy with both research capacity and educated personnel. Similarly, Monterrey Tec founders saw the need for talent in Mexico's most important industrial region, and the founders of Manipal had a similar vision in India's early period of economic growth.

All of these universities share some common characteristics. They have continued to flourish and expand in the half-century or more of their existence. All have expanded

their curricular offerings beyond the founding disciplines—and all have become comprehensive universities. All are nonprofit private universities in countries where most of the top institutions are public. They were established with a clear vision and educational focus, have managed to maintain the original mission over time, and have focused on teaching quality from the beginning. They offer both students and academics significantly better facilities and working conditions than most academic institutions in their countries.

New Initiatives

The twenty-first century brought significant new initiatives in private elite higher education. This development is especially notable in India, where the demand for postsecondary education is immense. India has a very small but highly selective elite public higher education sector (mainly the Indian Institutes of Technology and Management plus a few universities), and thus there is much demand for high-quality higher education from India's rapidly expanding middle class, and great need to support the country's expanding and increasingly sophisticated economy. Several of India's billionaires and other business leaders are concerned with the country's need for top-quality universities and have responded by contributing significant resources to establish new universities with innovative missions. Examples include O.P. Jindal University, founded in 2009 with funds from a steel tycoon; Shiv Nadar University (which recently opened a second university in Tamil Nadu), with funding from a tech billionaire; and Ashoka University, established by a group of business and tech leaders in 2014. A new start-up, Jio University, heavily funded by the Reliance conglomerate, will soon open. These institutions boast impressive campuses and offer several postgraduate and doctoral programs, but so far mainly educate undergraduate students. All have innovative curricula emphasizing liberal arts and pay considerable attention to teaching quality. To date, these new institutions cater mainly to upper-middle-class students who might otherwise choose to study abroad and all charge high tuition fees by Indian standards. Their facilities are superior to all but a few public institutions.

There are perhaps an additional dozen or so similar universities in India, representing a tiny part of India's higher education landscape, but quite influential in terms of introducing new ideas about higher education that may influence other universities.

The idea of philanthropically founded, elite private universities seems less common in the rest of the world. Examples include Habib University, which largely serves undergraduate students with a liberal arts curriculum, established in 2012 in Karachi, Pakistan, and Westlake University, a semiprivate, graduate-only, research university in Hangzhou, China, founded in 2016. Westlake aims to develop a world-class STEM-oriented curriculum.

The Importance of the "New Model"

These "new model," well-funded, elite private universities are significant additions to the global higher education landscape. Even though there are probably under 50 such institutions in the Global South, they are of great importance. Although each has its own mission, there are some elements common to all. Perhaps most crucial is the fact that these universities reflect a different model in their organization, curriculum, and ethos from other academic institutions in their environment, and thus new ways of thinking about higher education. Among these elements are:

- *Financial backing*. These universities are, in their national contexts, well-resourced due to their establishment by wealthy individuals or businesses.
- *Innovation*. The universities represent new ideas about curriculum, teaching, organization, student affairs, and other aspects of academic life.
- *Excellent facilities*. They have built state-of-the-art campuses that are attractive to students and faculty and permit advanced research and scholarship.
- *Governance*. As private nonprofit universities, these universities differ from the public institutions in their countries in their approach to management and governance, they are often less influenced by national political pressures, and provide a greater degree of academic freedom.

- *Highly qualified students and faculty*. With ample resources, these universities are able to attract top-quality people. Some hire excellent faculty on the international market, while others "poach" the best professors from public universities.
- *Local quality and global orientation*. By offering education comparable to international standards, these universities manage to keep at home many students who would otherwise go abroad for study.
- *English*. Most of these universities use English either as the sole language of instruction and research or as a prominent language.
- *Internationalization*. Links, joint research, collaborative degrees, and other international initiatives are integral to these institutions. Students are often offered an international opportunity as part of their degree program.

Challenges

Most, if not all, of these elite privates depend on revenue from student tuition—and this determines academic programs and future directions. Tuition prices tend to be high, so students from low-income families cannot attend; diversity is limited. Many, such as LUMS in Pakistan, have a robust scholarship program aimed at low-income and rural students, but by and large, the new elite universities remain preserves of wealthy families—indeed this may be one of their attractions. These universities remain mainly undergraduate institutions. Only a few have become research-intensive universities with large graduate programs in the traditional disciplines, although some have highly-regarded professional schools in such fields as business and law. These universities are arguably the best universities in their countries, but at the same time sometimes benchmark themselves against the top global institutions—a rather high hurdle. Despite challenges, these elite private institutions have brought vitality to an often moribund higher education environment in their countries. ◢

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The Transformative Impact of Academic Excellence Initiatives

Jamil Salmi

Abstract

Academic Excellence Initiatives, government-sponsored programs to build world-class research-oriented universities, have become common in recent decades. These AEIs have had a significant impact on some of the countries in which they have been implemented. This article discusses the broad configurations of AEIs and addresses their success and the main problems encountered.

The emergence of global university rankings has prodded many university leaders to join the global prestige race and pressured governments to launch national programs called "academic excellence initiatives" (AEIs). They stand out from regular investment programs aimed at building research capacity. First, they are a relatively recent phenomenon. Except for China, which started on that path in the early 1990s, all the other AEIs were launched in the past 15 years. Second, AEIs target universities rather than research institutes. Third, one of the basic characteristics of AEIs is their competitive nature, resulting in winners and losers when it comes to accessing the additional funding available.

Rationale for Launching Academic Excellence Initiatives

The AEIs that started before the emergence of global league tables, namely in China in 1995 and in South Korea in 1999, had more of an endogenous character, reflecting a long-term national strategic concern about economic development. By contrast, the second wave of AEIs was induced by external considerations linked to perceived competitive

disadvantage in comparison with the more stellar performance of the top US and UK universities.

The second wave happened at a time when the concept of "world-class university" started to gain traction as a strategy for developing the capacity to compete in the global higher education scene through the creation of advanced scientific knowledge. Global standing has become an increasingly important concern for institutions around the world and for policymakers.

In terms of geographical distribution, most of the AEIs have taken place in Europe and East Asia, as the world-class university phenomenon has found little traction elsewhere.

Shift in Funding Allocation Models

AEIs represented a major change in the sense that entire universities were invited to apply for additional funding on a competitive basis, with no guarantee of success. A related, noteworthy feature of the selection process is delegating decision-making to groups of independent experts, including foreign scientists in many cases except China. The most common approach is to involve a thorough peer review process to select the best proposals.

Most governments that launched an AEI gradually realized that upgrading research universities was a long-term process that required more than one round of dedicated funding. The longest series of AEIs has happened in China, spanning the past three decades, and South Korea over more than 20 years.

Resource Mobilization

The resources mobilized to fund AEIs have come exclusively from the public purse, with some innovative features in a few countries. The German excellence initiative involved a partnership between the federal government and the state governments. Perhaps the most original model is the French AEI, where funding is provided through a large endowment (equivalent to USD 9.5 billion) whose yearly yield provides the resources allocated to the beneficiary universities. This approach offers an element of long-term financial sustainability that is absent in other AEIs.

In terms of funding volume, countries exhibit large disparities. China stands out in terms of the large proportion of additional resources going to the country's top universities in the context of several successive AEIs.

It is interesting to note the contrast between Europe and Asia when deciding whether private universities are eligible for AEI funding. In Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, both public and private universities were eligible to compete, and a significant number of private universities received funding to develop their research capacity.

Push for Internationalization

A common feature of all AEIs has been to support accelerated internationalization to attract top talent and reduce academic inbreeding by offering generous remuneration packages and leading-edge scientific facilities to foreign researchers and granting scholarships to international graduate students. Beneficiary universities have brought back outstanding academics from the diaspora, notably in China, France, Germany, and South Korea.

Results and Impact of Academic Excellence Initiatives

Measuring the impact of excellence initiatives is not an easy task. First, upgrading a university takes many years, eight to 10 at the very least. Since many excellence initiatives are fairly recent, attempts at measuring success could be premature in most cases. The second challenge is related to attribution. Establishing whether and how AEIs actually caused the positive changes that can be observed would require an in-depth evaluation.

The first and perhaps foremost effect of AEIs is that they have built a critical mass of outstanding faculty and top students.

Progress of Beneficiary Universities

The results of the Shanghai ranking are a proxy measure of how research-intensive universities have performed over the past 20 years. China shows the most remarkable rise, from no university in the top 200 in 2004 to seven institutions among the top 100 in 2022. Denmark now has two universities in the top 100 (from one in 2004). France has kept the same number of universities, whereas Germany and Japan lost three and two, respectively.

The first and perhaps foremost effect of AEIs is that they have built a critical mass of outstanding faculty and top students. Beneficiary universities have made serious efforts to attract highly qualified researchers. They have also become more selective in terms of enrollment into their master and PhD programs.

In terms of additional funding, China is in a category of its own, as the scale of investment is gigantic compared to any other country in the world. China has become the largest producer of scientific articles, overtaking the United States and the United Kingdom. In other countries, the main gain may not have been the additional resources received. Rather, beneficiary universities have enjoyed more public recognition nationally and accrued prestige internationally.

The lack of governance reforms that would accompany and facilitate efforts toward research excellence appears to be one of the missing elements of AEIs, with a few exceptions. In Germany, a healthy debate about structural governance barriers led to governance reforms in a few states. In Denmark, a radical governance reform took place in the early 2000s, giving universities more institutional autonomy. In Japan and Taiwan, governance reforms to bring more management flexibility also took place.

An aspect of governance that has not been touched by AEIs is the mode of selecting university leaders. In countries where university presidents are elected democratically—France and Germany for example—this taboo issue has not been raised officially, even though it could be a limitation when it comes to empowering visionary and bold leaders for long-term transformation strategies. In countries where university leaders are directly appointed by the government, as happens in China, Malaysia, or Russia, there is a risk of appointment decisions based on political considerations rather than professional qualifications.

Academic freedom is also a governance dimension worth considering because of the tension between the search for excellence and the constraints resulting from political interference. It is doubtful that top universities can sustainably maintain outstanding scientific production when academic freedom is restricted.

By and large, AEIs have generated significant improvements in terms of internationalization. This has translated into higher proportions of international graduate students and postdocs, master and doctoral programs taught in English, recruitment of foreign academics and researchers from the diaspora, and collaborative research projects with foreign partners. Another positive result in many beneficiary universities has been a visible reduction in academic inbreeding.

Conclusion

Studies of AEIs have revealed a sense of "no turning back" in many countries. In the context of increased scrutiny of university performance by governments, university leaders have found ways to make their institutions more distinctive in terms of research themes, teaching excellence, and linkages with the economy to foster their competitive advantage.

While recognizing that global rankings and AEIs have contributed to a higher level of competition among universities, the virtues of cooperation should not be lost on university leaders. Increased collaborations between research teams across universities can boost research. They are also indispensable when addressing scientific questions that are of a regional or global nature, such as climate-related phenomena and communicable diseases.

There is a need for a broader definition of academic excellence than the one promoted by AEIs. Instead of focusing narrowly on scientific publications in elite journals, leading research universities should adhere to the principles of social inclusion, scientific truth, ethical values, responsible research, and global solidarity as moral pillars of their social commitment. These dimensions may be difficult to measure through rankings but they are fundamental to the mission of world-class universities. Finally, AEIs are not a substitute for reforms when it comes to strengthening higher education systems. Excellence initiatives primarily aim to support the development of globally competitive research-intensive universities. This can be complemented by system-wide reforms that would enhance equity and inclusion, promote innovative educational models, ensure sustainable financing, and modernize governance. ◢

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Academic Excellence à la Française: Between Excellence and Equality

Andrée Sursock

Abstract
France launched a funding program in 2010 dedicated to ensuring the emergence of five to 10 French universities at the top of international rankings. This initial goal changed overtime to embrace a larger set of institutions and objectives. This article discusses how the extension of excellence challenged the regulatory role of the State, the capacity of universities to act strategically, the relationship between the State and universities, and the landscape of higher education in France.

In 2010, France launched a program dedicated to financially supporting a number of its universities in response to the country's poor results in international rankings. The initial objective of the Investment Program for the Future (*Programme d'Investissements d'avenir*, or PIA) was to ensure that five to 10 French universities make it to the top of international rankings. This initial goal changed overtime to embrace a larger set of institutions and policy objectives by stretching and expanding the definition of excellence.

This article discusses how this extension challenged both the State, in its regulatory role, and the universities as strategic agents. Both must realign their relationship in a context where university autonomy continues to be constrained and where the State finds it challenging to reshape its role from the promoter of institutional activities to that of a funder and regulator.

The PIA disbursed around USD 96 billion over a 13-year period, in four rounds. During that time, the definition of excellence changed to encompass more than world-class universities. It stretched to different types of institutions, from comprehensive research-intensive universities to those more specialized; from those with international aspirations to those whose primary focus is regional engagement. Beyond research funding, the PIA was used to promote excellence in teaching and learning, doctoral training, campus life, links with stakeholders, internationalization, governance, and management.

From Excellence to ExcellenceS

The extension of the notion of excellence culminated in the most recent funding program titled "ExcellenceS – Excellence in All Its Forms," where the "s" in the word excellence was capitalized to emphasize that selection criteria were sufficiently flexible to let each university set its own strategy to achieve its specific excellence and that the State would support them in defining their own profile. To many outside of France, this may seem unoriginal. For France, with its long tradition of State centralism and political stress on equality, encouraging universities to sharpen their individual profile and strategy has been truly transformative.

The PIA accentuated the differentiation among universities, a trend that started in the twentieth century and saw the creation of new types of universities over the course of three rounds. The PIA was the latest push that led to the establishment of new universities, albeit through a process of university mergers (occasionally with *grandes écoles* and research organizations) rather than through creation of brand new institutions.

These developments—slow burning in the twentieth century, accelerated in the twenty-first century—have resulted in increased heterogeneity within the sector. It has encouraged even those universities that did not receive PIA funding to sharpen their profile and to build on their areas of strength.

According to the Court of Auditors, this heterogeneity poses a three-fold challenge to the French State: to find the right tools that would enable the government to understand this diversity; to set transparent criteria for resource allocation, and to monitor both the quality and relevance of the universities' performance.

While the State has been pushed outside its comfort zone, some of the universities have managed to become more strategic, despite the enduring limits to their institutional autonomy. Indeed, the scorecard on university autonomy that is produced by the European University Association every few years continues to signal the very poor performance of French universities. They lack control over their governance arrangements

(defined by law), and management of their staff (who are mostly civil servants) and of their research activities (which are partly dependent on powerful research organizations); all this means that their room to maneuver is extremely narrow.

Heterogeneity and Isomorphism

How has such institutional heterogeneity come to be despite very strong isomorphic tendencies? A key to the success of the PIA was the confluence of three factors that opened a space for negotiating and engineering change.

How has such institutional heterogeneity come to be despite very strong isomorphic tendencies?

Firstly, a few university presidents led the way and provided leadership models to others. These presidents demonstrated effective leadership in persuading their communities to adopt institutional strategies and to embrace the concept of excellence—a controversial notion in egalitarian France.

Secondly, the reliance on international juries and most notably on the stability of the jury that adjudicated the most important PIA program (IDEX, I-SITE funding) ensured constancy in decision-making. That jury was appointed in 2010, kept the same chair and nearly the same membership over the span of 11 years, and strove to make decisions consensually. The political authorities recognized that the jury was immune to political pressures and individual lobbying, whether from universities or political actors. The then-president François Hollande noted that only the Constitutional Council in France can have precedence over the State, but the political authorities made an exception and accepted that the jury operates in total independence as a condition for the international recognition of French universities.

Thirdly, independence of the jury did not mean that there would be no role for the State. The ministry responsible for higher education and research influenced the selection criteria and was instrumental in shifting the definition of excellence from focusing on individual universities to encompassing regional clusters, which was more aligned with its policies. This meant that the initial focus on research strength was enlarged to embrace the governing structures of these clusters as a central selection criterion.

Impact of the PIA

Has the PIA achieved its aims? The results have been mixed.

On the negative side, a tacit goal in creating regional clusters and promoting mergers was to reduce fragmentation caused by the presence of the *grandes écoles*. Their existence makes the French higher education system rather unique in having small institutions at the top of the national hierarchy but hardly visible in international rankings, including those that are research active. Most *écoles* resisted this policy, claiming their strong institutional brand and their feeling of superiority vis-à-vis universities. Those who accepted to be included into newly created universities did so while retaining their name and their autonomy after the State passed an ordinance allowing them to do just that.

Furthermore, the extra funding gained through the PIA is relatively small and does not compensate for the relatively low core funding of French universities as compared to their peers in many OECD countries. Yet, the extra PIA funding imposes major changes. Managing change in a context of relative penury led university staff to quip, "Should we do excellence with three rubber bands and two paper clips?"

Nevertheless, the PIA funding was instrumental in stimulating positive change. It resulted in better management and leadership, provided much-needed funding to enhance research, teaching and social engagement, and improved both strategic intent and focused internationalization. It helped a few French universities reach the top of international rankings and resulted in a more diversified institutional landscape.

To consolidate those gains, the State must now focus on ensuring greater institutional autonomy, increased funding for higher education and, importantly, more policy coherence and constancy. ◢

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China's Academic Excellence Initiatives

Yannan Cao and Rui Yang

Abstract
China is often cited as a classic example of successful academic excellence initiatives featured by a prominent role of the government. Their next stage of development needs to explore new models to support innovation and sustainability in higher education.

Since the mid-1990s, China has invested a lot in higher education, specifically targeting a highly selective group of universities. Major initiatives in this field include Project 211 in 1995, Project 985 in 1999, and the ongoing Double First-Class University Plan launched in 2015. Their aim is to elevate China's best universities to world-class level with global reach and impact. As part of Project 211, 112 universities were selected and received the total equivalent of USD 2.7 billion from the central government. Project 985 handpicked 39 universities with a commitment of USD 7.97 billion. The Double First-Class University Plan included 137 universities and 465 disciplines in its first round, and over USD 14.14 billion was spent from 2018 to 2020.

The lists of universities participating in these initiatives overlap to a large extent. Since 1995, the Chinese government has invested nearly USD 25 billion in these projects, focusing especially on national flagship universities. Provincial governments have always been urged to match funds for participating universities within their jurisdictions. The overall public expenditure would therefore easily exceed USD 42 billion if provincial inputs are taken into account, thus making this arguably the world's largest investment into higher education

World-Class Status Achieved?

Scholars are divided on whether the aforementioned initiatives have managed to uplift China's best universities to world-class levels or not. In 2021, the ministry of education (MOE) officially started evaluating the first round of the Double First-Class Plan. Prior to this, each participating university was required to carry out both a review by external experts and a self-assessment. Based on the assessments, several universities, including Tsinghua University, declared that they had reached world-class status. While such a claim is supported by their rising in major global university rankings, it provoked widespread skepticism. In a subsequent press conference, the MOE emphasized that overall, there was still a large gap between Chinese universities and global world-class HEIs.

The return on investment is especially clear in terms of quantifiable and measurable performance indicators, as evidently seen in global rankings. China is the only country to have been leaping forward substantially and consecutively for years in nearly all rankings. Mainland China currently has 71 universities in the top 500 and eight in the top 100 in the 2022 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), compared to only nine in the top 500 in 2023, when Tsinghua University ranked highest at 201–250. Seven and six mainland universities have reached the top 100 in the latest *Times* and QS rankings respectively, with Tsinghua University and Peking University considered among the top 20.

In China, global rankings are used as a synonym for world-class universities and the benchmark for development. Chinese universities do well in terms of the key performance indicators of the rankings that focus primarily on comparable research outputs. In 2018, China became the world's largest producer of scholarly papers, thus dethroning the US, and became the most cited country among the top 10 percent of scientific and technical papers cited worldwide. China and the United States accounted for 24.8 percent and 22.9 percent of the top 10 percent of cited scientific and technical papers worldwide respectively. In 2019, 1.67 percent of scientific articles with Chinese authors were in the top 1 percent of the most cited articles, compared with 1.62 percent of articles with US authors. China also leads in patent applications with 40 percent of the world's total.

Governing Higher Education through Academic Excellence Initiatives

Usually called "key construction projects," China's academic excellence initiatives (AEIs) have always been project-based. Free from conventional bureaucratic approach to fiscal expenditure, such a practice effectively enables the government to distribute funding flexibly and unevenly, creating strong incentives for selected institutions. Centered on clearly defined tasks, the projects are tailor-made to implement particular policy goals with strategic priorities at different stages. Though different projects are managed differently, all participating institutions translate state intentions into specific tasks. They are carefully monitored and assessed. The Double First-Class Plan had introduced a merit-based and outcome-oriented competition mechanism, in which underperforming universities would be disqualified from the list, while high-performing ones would be added during the next round. The list is adjusted every five years.

China's AEIs show the typically Chinese ways of policy making and project implementation: top-down, state-led, catch-up mentality, concentration of resources where needed aiming at quick effects, and campaign-style governance with relatively short-term focuses. Such inbuilt features raise questions about the sustainability of such projects and underlying challenges. First of all, such initiatives have significantly transformed university practices and academic culture. In order to win funding and gain reputation associated with the initiatives, universities reorganize themselves to meet project requirements measured by simplified performance indicators of global rankings and government-led evaluation. Corporate-style management tools, including performance-based appraisal system and direct financial rewards for research publications, are adopted to boost productivity. Academic culture is increasingly imbued with utilitarianism and short-termism.

China's AEIs show the typically Chinese ways of policy making and project implementation: top-down, state-led, catch-up mentality, concentration of resources where needed aiming at quick effects, and campaign-style governance with relatively short-term focuses.

Secondly, China's AEIs have contributed to inequality in an increasingly unbalanced higher education system. While participating universities have been continuously receiving generous project money, many nonparticipating institutions suffer from shortage of funds, with widening gaps between them in teaching and research. The disparities between developed and underdeveloped regions are also prominent because the selected universities concentrate in major cosmopolitan and coastal areas. Such uneven distribution of government funding pushes universities of different levels and categories to compete intensively to be included in the initiatives. They tend to take guidance from the KPIs of world-class universities, which leads to the erosion of systemic and institutional differentiation, as well as relevance to local society.

Thirdly, despite China's rise as a scientific power, its humanities and social sciences have been greatly overshadowed by STEM-related disciplines, with little progress and low international visibility. The gap is partially generated by the AEIs's inherent bias toward natural and technological sciences, which are favored for their perceived direct contribution to social and economic development. An overwhelming majority of endeavors to gain world-class status at institutional level have focused on STEM disciplines exclusively because they produce more publications and citations that weight heavily in global rankings and national evaluation exercises. Similar gaps exist between fundamental and applied research.

Conclusion

China is arguably the most extraordinary case of academic excellence initiatives in the world. The example of China is appealing to various nations aiming to create world-class universities and a modernized higher education system. With substantial and consistent financial support, Chinese initiatives have greatly influenced the country's premier universities and have stimulated them to change their frame of reference so that they embrace international norms and compete on the global stage. Although China's achievements have been largely quantitative so far and sometimes even imitative, they pave the way for the next, qualitative stage.

China's AEIs have also raised concerns. The higher education reform needs to be continued in order to find a nuanced balance between a powerful state and a vigorous academic system. The traditional top-down approach that has long worked well might not be as effective in the future. Deep cultural changes are necessary to create an environment that would support innovation and sustainability in higher education. Meanwhile, evidence shows that certain efforts have already been made to explore new models of higher education development. ◢

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Internationalization in Higher Education: Critical Reflections on Its Conceptual Evolution

Hans de Wit

Abstract

Internationalization is a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon, and its theories and definitions continue to be adjusted to match new and evolving understandings. Given the current complicated global environment, it is important to challenge past mostly market-oriented perceptions, and define relevant new directions for internationalization in higher education.

In 1995, Jane Knight and I wrote that there was no simple, unique or all-encompassing definition of internationalization of higher education institutions and that it would not be helpful if internationalization became a "catch-all" phrase for everything and anything international. In 2018, 23 years later, we wrote that that notion was probably even truer at the time and that internationalization had become a very broad and varied concept, including new rationales, approaches, and strategies in different and constantly changing contexts. Others, too, stress that internationalization in higher education is a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon, and its concept continues to be refined and revised, and theories and definitions adjusted to match new and evolving understandings. It is these two dimensions—multifaceted and evolving—that are the key characteristics of internationalization of higher education. One could also add the same about several of its components, such as study abroad, international students, internationalization at home, transnational or cross-border education, digitalization, Sustainable Development Goals, the use of terms like "global citizenship," and so on.

Postpandemic and in current complicated geopolitical global challenges, it is important to challenge past perceptions and to define relevant new directions for internationalization in higher education.

Problematic Sloppiness

One can argue though that over the past five decades, there has evolved a problematic sloppiness in the use of the term "internationalization" in the context of higher education, mixing and confusing the "why" (the rationales for internationalization), the "what" (its programs and actions), the "how" (its organization), the "impact" (its outcomes) and the "who" (partnerships), and ignoring the "where" (its context). One can also argue that

its perception by higher education leaders, both institutional and national, has moved more toward competition, mobility for a small elite, and revenue generation rather than toward cooperation and global learning for all.

There is no model of, or approach to, internationalization that fits all; its diversity is institutionally, locally, nationally, and regionally defined, and has changed and evolved over time in response to changing contexts and arising challenges. This adaptation to historical and geographical contexts is one of its strengths. At the same time, it is, together with its multifacetedness, its main problem, since the meaning of "internationalization" has been used by stakeholders in a diverse range of—in some cases even strongly opposing—meanings and policies, with an overarching tendency toward competition and marketization; in other words, toward internationalization as an industry.

Implications for the Meaning of Internationalization

The 2004 definition of internationalization in higher education by Knight as "a process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of postsecondary education" is widely accepted as a working definition and had its foundation in her 1993 institution-focused definition of internationalization as a process. It challenged the international dimensions of the higher education sector from what had previously been a rather static, ad hoc, and fragmented approach, based on activities and related administrative procedures, mainly tucked away in the international offices of higher education institutions, and often related to governmental bureaucracies, termed as international education.

Instead, the Knight definition emphasized a process approach involving a wide range of internal (academics, students, administrators) and external (national and local governments, private sector, international entities) stakeholders. Knight's definition of internationalization as a process was an important step forward, but it brought new challenges to the forefront as it involved several misconceptions and unintended consequences, and left ample room for different approaches to understanding internationalization, with more competitive and economic revenue-driven forms taking dominance above the more traditional forms of cooperation and exchange. In that respect, the gradual shift from the term "international education" to "internationalization of higher education" did not create sufficient clarity about its meaning and focus, and even rechanneled it into a narrow economic direction.

A Counterreaction

At the turn of the century, proponents of such ideas as "internationalization at home" in Europe in 1999, "internationalization of the curriculum" in Australia and the United Kingdom, and "comprehensive internationalization" in the United States started criticizing that exclusive focus on mobility and economic rationales as synonym for internationalization. In response to this broad range of concerns it was timely to update Knight's 2003 definition, making it clear that the internationalization process needs to be intentional and giving it a clearer direction and focus on inclusiveness and social responsibility. Accordingly, a new definition of internationalization emerged in 2015, emphasizing these factors. Although these concepts and the 2015 definition have become part of the common discourse, in reality they are used more as rhetoric than a basis for concrete actions.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation behind the concept of internationalization of higher education has evolved over the last four decades. In 1996, Teichler described research on international education as occasional, coincidental, sporadic, and episodic. In the following years, an evolution in the conceptual thinking about internationalization in and of higher education took place. The *Journal of Studies in International Education*, founded in 1997, was an important factor in that process, but internationalization has also become one of the main themes in other higher education journals, and there are many more books, blogs, and webinars on internationalization as well. At the same time, the notion of internationalization of higher education as a Western paradigm dominated by Western authors is increasingly challenged and addressed by a more diverse global scholar community, even though its overall theoretical foundation is still rather weak.

The theoretical foundation behind the concept of internationalization of higher education has evolved over the last four decades.

Critical Reflections for the Future

One should not ignore the positive potentials of internationalization in higher education, but also be aware of the growing inequality in its dimensions, which has only increased over the recent period. Internationalization as a process of higher education requires more clarity on the meaning, rationales behind it, its programs and its organization, as well as its outcomes/impact. Accepting and describing its multifacetedness and historical and geographic contextuality is an essential starting point.

Owing to sloppy use of the term, internationalization of and in higher education has become an obstacle rather than a solution to the future of higher education, and it is too easy to blame external factors and actors. Both scholars and policy makers need to be clearer about what they mean and about the context in which they use this or that meaning of internationalization and its different dimensions. What remains crucial for the coming decade is the need to move from short-term neoliberal approaches to long-term societal interests, from international education as a benefit for a small elite toward global learning for all, and from a Western paradigm to a global and equal concept. This is truer than ever given the current geopolitical environment and bearing in mind that governments and institutions tend to pay only lip service to inclusion and equality, continuing to give preference to mobility and revenue as drivers of internationalization. ◢

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Globalization of English Language and Culture: Let's Change English Language Instruction

Gareth Humphreys

Abstract

The globalization of English language use has led to new recognition of the diversity among both language use and language users. This diversity necessitates a disconnection of English language from its traditional sole association with native English speakers and their national cultures. All English users are legitimate users, and their diverse cultural backgrounds represent the cultures of English language use. There remains a need for broader representation of these changes in English language teaching.

Although there are other languages that are spoken on an international level, English is now dispersed in more international locations and used among a wider diversity of people and in a wider range of contexts. Other languages may have more first language users, such as Chinese Mandarin, but the distinction here is that these tend to be first language users.

English Language and Culture in Context

English, however, has many more people who use it as a contact language in intercultural communication. Indeed, there are estimations that 80 percent of global communication involving English takes place among nonnative English users, a figure considered an underestimation by some researchers. Given this globality of use, it is surprising that the native speaker is still used as the baseline for learning, with standard language practices and Anglophone, particularly US, cultures serving as the basis for learning. Following this perspective, English learning should be focused on preparing learners to approximate native speakers and take on a cultural stance consistent with the (perceived) norms of Anglophone societies.

This perspective is problematic since the notion that English-speaking nations are monolithic in terms of their language and culture is inaccurate. This is especially true in multicultural societies, which can be highly diverse and multilingual environments. Despite this, the concept persists in language education around the world of a need to

use English like (imagined) native speakers from Anglophone settings, and adopt a sociocultural perspective in perceived compliance with (imagined) fixed cultures.

With the variety of contexts and multitude of users among nonnative speakers who outnumber native speakers, Anglophone standards and (national) cultures have to be replaced in English language education to help students recognize their own backgrounds and ways of using English as legitimate. This call for change is hardly new, but the absence of broad impact on teaching and learning practices suggests that it is worthwhile to raise these issues again. This will hopefully lead to some reflection among teachers elsewhere on their own educational practices, and the practices in the institutions where they work.

Conventional Education

Although there is a need for some regulations and norms, particularly in the early stages of language learning, it is essential to direct students' attention to the diversity of English use outside of the boundaries of fixed English language. While some textbooks represent broader conceptualizations of language use, the "native speaker" so often continues to be the primary focus. This focus is on standard norms of codified uses informed by language authorities, including textbooks, grammar guides, and assessment frameworks. In particular, influential international testing systems (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC) continue to shape many language policies and educational practices. Moreover, this focus is evident in many teachers' perspectives. In addition, the cultural elements featured in most mainstream textbooks are usually confined to a few nations and are overrepresented by Anglophone cultures. While studying culture and learning cultural knowledge can be an interesting aspect of language education, when it comes to intercultural communication involving English, it is essential to go beyond target language and target culture given the diversity in its use and among its users. Otherwise, learners may not develop the resources or confidence that they themselves are legitimate users of English, and that they, like all users, represent the cultures of English language use.

Global Englishes

Due to the variability and complexity of English usage, it is impossible to prepare students beforehand for all the cultural knowledge and linguistic variation that they may encounter. Therefore, it is necessary to provide some form of education to equip them for such eventualities. Diversity in English language use is recognized in Global Englishes, an umbrella term to encapsulate World Englishes and English as a lingua franca (ELF). World Englishes is an established area of study looking at distinctive and codifiable varieties of uses in different locations in the world. Its focus is on standardizations and regularities, often in corpora of recorded uses in different localities. ELF differs from World Englishes in its focus on interactions involving English. It reflects the diverse ways in which language is used for communication, with the diversity and variability being too unpredictable to be reflected in patterns found in language data in corpora. ELF focus is on how individuals use their individual multilingual and other resources to communicate where English can be used as a contact language (though may not be selected). The basis of communication is on adaptation, flexibility, and accommodation in the negotiation of meaning, instead of adhering to the stringent and traditional expectations of (assumed) native English speakers.

Due to the variability and complexity of English usage, it is impossible to prepare students beforehand for all the cultural knowledge and linguistic variation that they may encounter.

In recent years, ELF has become a major area of study. As language teachers, we should be adapting our own practices to reflect these realities. We should be exposing students to the global nature of English and encouraging them to think of themselves as intercultural citizens, i.e., as connected to different cultures and communities. This would involve going beyond the focus on Anglophone standard norms and developing among students the skills to be able to draw on different linguistic (and nonlinguistic) resources in their multilingual communication involving English. It would also mean delinking English from the national cultures of Anglophone countries and helping students to perceive themselves as legitimate users of English, irrespective of cultural background. Disconnecting the English language from Anglophone cultures in teaching is important to allow all English speakers to learn and use the language in a way that is more relevant and applicable to their own lives and contexts.

These are realistic goals. There is an increasing interest in Global Englishes instruction and increasing endorsement of its meaning for English language education. However, it seems that this is mostly in research. The effect of Global Englishes on actual educational change is still limited, and it seems unlikely that great progress will be made based on conventional language perspectives in language policies and language management within institutions. It is essential that English language education becomes widely aware of issues around Global Englishes and addresses these points in educational practices.

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A Critical Perspective on Short-term Mobility: The Kazakhstan Experience

Aliya Kuzhabekova and Botagoz Ispambetova

Abstract

Based on the results of interviews with Kazakhstani government-sponsored international students, this article argues that the benefits of short-term mobility do not accrue equally to the host and sending institutions. Northern institutions are the main beneficiaries, generating revenue from international student fees. Southern institutions are often degraded to secondary roles in capacity-building projects, whereby they must perform more effort-intensive and seldom recognized administrative and field responsibilities, while gaining few results.

This article looks at the relatively understudied phenomenon of short-term international mobility of faculty from a critical internationalization perspective. It uses data from interviews with academics from Kazakhstan who participated in short-term professional development trips abroad. The data showed that international mobility and internationalization in general are not as benign as often presented. Academic mobility brings economic benefits and contributes to the social mission of developing international awareness and producing graduates equipped with the intercultural competence required for success in global competition. Yet it may contribute to reproducing existing structures of inequality.

Internationalization and Kazakhstan

Internationalization has become the main approach to modernization of higher education in Kazakhstan. Ever since Kazakhstan became an independent state, Kazakhstani reformers have tried to position the country—neither a member of the developed Western club, nor a former colony in the Global South—as an emerging "Asian tiger." Several initiatives were undertaken in an effort to modernize higher education and develop the research capacity.

One of the earliest steps was a commitment to the Bologna Process, which facilitated the development of international partnerships between Kazakhstani and European universities and different mobility schemes. In parallel, the Kazakhstani government generously supported national mobility schemes, the most notable being the "Bolashak" program, originally envisioned to provide scholarships to degree studies at top universities abroad. In addition to Bolashak, the government supports short-term mobility of faculty and students enrolled at domestic universities. This mobility funding is distributed directly to the recipients and is intended to support the development of intercultural awareness of students and the improvement of teaching, research, and administrative skills of the faculty.

Short-term faculty mobility refers to mobility measured in days and weeks, rather than months and years, during which faculty are working on a long-term contract abroad. Recently, the amount allocated for this short-term training increased significantly, as compared to the stipend received by degree-seeking international students. Short-term faculty mobility is a topic that is relatively less discussed within global scholarship.

While some research is available on academic mobility and its benefits, less is known about short-term mobility. Our recent study on mobile Kazakhstani scholars allowed us to shed some light on this issue.

Short-term Mobility: Critical Insights from Kazakhstan

We conducted 21 interviews with academics from Kazakhstani universities who took part in short-term mobility schemes. The interview participants were selected among individuals employed as faculty with at least one year of academic experience prior to departure, who had spent one to nine months abroad, and who worked at least six months in an academic position after returning. Most of the participants were humanities scholars, and their countries of destination were within the European Union.

The data analysis showed that this type of mobility can be beneficial for all involved. Some participants reported that they had gained new teaching and research skills and had also developed useful networks, which helped them improve their performance after returning to Kazakhstan. Yet, the general impression from the data is that mobility was beneficial predominantly for host institutions. These benefits also seemed to come mostly in the form of hard cash. While going to great lengths to attract Kazakhstani visitors, host institutions provided very modest support once their visitors arrived on campus. Faculty mentors did not prioritize advising their Kazakhstani guests, who were frequently excluded from fee-based activities on campus (such as courses, seminars, and workshops), and were frequently left to themselves.

In line with the findings of prior critical explorations of internationalization, benefits appear to accrue mostly to host institutions in the North—the key benefit being access to alternative revenue. Meanwhile, international faculty, their home institutions, and the sending country look at short-term mobility as a pathway to increasing their individual-, institutional-, or national-level research and teaching capacities, which is essential for success in the knowledge economy. However, with faculty receiving little support from the host institutions, short-term programs rarely lead to significant improvements in individual teaching and research skills. Consequently, little effect is produced for the sending institutions and the sending country. In conclusion, the findings of our study on short-term faculty mobility are in line with key findings from other studies of internationalization, in the sense that this activity contributes to the reproduction of epistemic hegemony and academic domination by the global North.

However, with faculty receiving little support from the host institutions, short-term programs rarely lead to significant improvements in individual teaching and research skills.

Hosting short-term visitors seems to be driven predominantly by neoliberal, profit-seeking motives, rather than by the humanistic mission of universities to produce and disseminate knowledge, including mutually beneficial knowledge exchanges with institutions in other countries. According to the reports of our Kazakhstani study participants, host institutions charge significant amounts of money from funders, while providing Kazakhstani visitors with nothing more than an opportunity to superficially experience (mostly observe) their campuses. Such provision does not require any additional money, effort, or specialized services. The findings about the neoliberal underpinnings of the host institutions' interest in short-term mobility were consistent with the observation of the move "from aid to trade" in international education exchanges, made by many other scholars. These scholars deplore the decline of initiatives by Northern institutions aimed at providing assistance to countries of the South, and their replacement by profit-seeking projects and programs.

From Critical Awareness to Just Policies and Practices in Short-term Mobility

Education policy makers and practitioners need to realize that what makes this unfair exchange possible is the normalization of the global competition discourse, which reaffirms the cultural hegemony of the global North, positions higher education systems in Northern countries above those in the South, degrades universities and individuals in the South to a status of complete worthlessness and invisibility, and creates a sense of necessity for those in the South to catch up. This mechanism is evident in the motivations of sponsors to fund short-term mobility, in the way the funded programs are planned and administered, in the way faculty participants are treated prior to and after their stay abroad by their home institutions, and in the way they are "serviced" at their host institutions.

To mitigate these negative effects of short-term mobility, policy makers and practitioners in the field of international education need to contribute to an open communication between the parties, allowing them to clearly understand each other's needs and goals when engaging in mobility schemes. In other words, there is a need for international partners to understand local contexts and needs and individuals' expectations and interests, and to reach an overall agreement on the goals of the mobility initiatives. In their terms of reference, both government and private sponsors of mobility should articulate clear requirements for host institutions or contractors that develop and administer short-term mobility schemes, to engage sending institutions and individual participants in the process of planning and administering the programs. ◢

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The Future of UK Universities' Transnational Education Engagement

Janet Ilieva and Vangelis Tsiligiris

Abstract

Transnational education (TNE) has become a core activity for many UK higher education institutions, and supply-side and demand-side factors continue to support its growth. TNE lifecycle starts with filling the gaps in the supply of local higher education before its focus shifts to diversifying local provision, enhancing its quality and developing its capacity in niche subject areas. As a result, TNE generates substantial local impact and explicitly responds to the sustainable development agenda.

For many United Kingdom (UK) universities, transnational education (TNE) has become a core activity. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of UK higher education institutions (HEIs) engaging in TNE activities increased by 22 percent (from 138 to 168 HEIs), and the number of TNE students grew by 30 percent. TNE is slowly becoming more evenly distributed: There were 94 HEIs with 1,000 or more TNE students in 2021, vs. 74 in 2016.

UK TNE Trends Overview

UK TNE has been expanding steadily, reaching more than 530,000 students in 2021. In the same year, HEIs attracted approximately 680,000 international students to the United Kingdom. The 30 percent increase in TNE over the previous five years was primarily driven by growth of collaborative TNE.

Specifically, collaborative forms of TNE currently account for 67 percent of overall UK TNE activity, compared with 64 percent five years ago. In this article, the term "collaborative TNE" includes partnerships between two or more HEIs with franchise or validation arrangements, educational progression of students, and programs leading to dual and joint degrees.

In comparison, international branch campus activities remained stable and accounted for 7 percent of overall TNE activities during the studied period. The share of online and flexible learning activities declined from 29 percent in 2017 to 25 percent in 2021.

Will TNE Continue to Expand?

Evidence gathered over the past 30 years shows what TNE lifecycle looks like. Initially, TNE evolved to absorb the unmet local demand for higher education. Thus, its primary remit was to support local higher education provision. As local higher education systems expanded, TNE helped improve access to international degrees and contributed to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Thanks to this, global mobility of higher education programs helps counter brain drain and generates positive impact locally.

While tertiary education participation rates have increased over the past decades, TNE has evolved to serve continuously changing local higher education systems. China is a good example of such change, evidenced by an eightfold increase in its tertiary

education gross enrollment rate—from 8 percent in 2000 to 64 percent in 2021. While TNE continues to expand, its primary focus has shifted from expanding higher education provision to strengthening quality, as well as providing training in niche subject areas and research. Another hotspot for TNE programs is Malaysia, which has also attracted reputable international universities to set up branch campuses. TNE has helped elevate the global appeal of higher education and strengthen the competitive ability of the country's higher education system. TNE activities in both China and Malaysia continue to expand, and they have been the United Kingdom's top host countries for over a decade.

A similar lifecycle is observed in Greece. TNE emerged in Greece in the early 1990s to fill the supply gap of in local higher education provision. At present, Greece is one of the nations with the highest tertiary participation rates, yet TNE continues to grow.

Globally, TNE will continue to evolve over the years to boost the diversity of local higher education and improve the local students' chances for pursuing international programs. For HEIs globally, TNE offers a means to reach students in remote locations with a minimal environmental impact. Models that rely heavily on physical mobility of academic and administrative staff are replaced by those where teaching and student support are provided locally. The latter takes the form of global education hubs, where multiple foreign universities operate using common local infrastructure to provide TNE programs efficiently and effectively. One example is the Metropolitan College Global University Hub in Greece.

TNE is also best suited to address the fast-paced workplace-related changes and the demographic challenges of lower-middle-income countries. New forms of TNE, yet to be captured in the existing data collection structures, address the need for continuous professional development and lifelong learning. For example, online microcredentials, executive education, and technical courses attract thousands of students, especially from mature age groups.

If these activities are taken into account, one can understand that TNE constitutes the driving force of market development and innovation in global higher education.

Developments in Regulatory and Policy Contexts

For TNE to fully benefit HEIs, their students, and local communities, a supportive policy framework is required.

For TNE to fully benefit HEIs, their students, and local communities, a supportive policy framework is required. Recent research across multiple countries indicates continuous improvements in the regulatory and policy environment for TNE. A growing number of countries are liberalizing their legislative provision to encourage greater TNE activities. Examples of such changes over the past five years include:

- Egypt's Law No. 162 Of 2018 On the Establishment and Organization of International Branch Campuses.
- India's UGC Regulations to Offer Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes with Foreign Higher Education Institutions from 2022.
- Indonesia's Regulation for International Universities in Indonesia by the ministry for research, technology and higher education from 2018.
- Pakistan's Policy for Pakistani Higher Education Institutions Offering Degree Programs in Collaboration with Foreign Universities.
- The Transnational Higher Education Act in the Philippines in 2019.

These five countries account for 23 percent of the world's tertiary education population, with over 54 million tertiary learners.

In addition to regulating TNE engagement, some governments fund and proactively support those types of TNE that benefit their youth. Examples of such government-led initiatives include:

- The creation of designated areas for international branch campuses, such as Egypt's New Administrative Capital area, India's Gift City initiative, and Indonesia's Special Economic Zones.
- Funded schemes, such as those run in collaboration between the Philippines Commission for Higher Education and the British Council, e.g., Joint Development of Niche Programmes through PH-UK Linkages and Access and Competitiveness through Internationalisation of Higher Education.

Conclusions

An ever-growing number of HEIs have embraced TNE as one of their core activities. Both supply-side and demand-side factors continue to stimulate this trend.

Policy makers increasingly support such engagement by liberalizing their regulatory and policy frameworks. However, an area that continues to generate controversy is the government-backed elitist approach to international collaboration. Several countries have tied their regulatory TNE frameworks to international universities' performance in global rankings. It is not clear how well this provision serves the purpose of international collaborations. Similarly, at HEI level, the global engagement agenda and choice of partners are often limited to resource-related criteria that may disadvantage smaller but good-quality partner institutions overseas.

TNE generates substantial local impact and explicitly responds to the sustainable development agenda. For example, TNE has evolved to cater to the needs of atypical student populations, such as mature learners or those with work and family commitments, disabilities, or financial constraints. As a result, it has widened access to education for populations that might have been unable to access it otherwise. This significant contribution is underreported and often neglected in the public discussion about TNE. A dedicated online portal has been recently developed to capture this impact.

The recent market, regulatory, and policy developments indicate a phase in the TNE lifecycle where the emphasis shifts to quality, impact, and multilayered collaborations. With the right policy framework and partners, TNE engagement creates opportunities for universities to develop their global presence in an impactful and environmentally sustainable way. ◢

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Under the Radar: American Universities Abroad

Kyle Long and Saiansha Panangipalli

Abstract

Conventional wisdom about American campuses abroad suggests that they are typically vanity projects for cosmopolitans. This view reflects only a partial reality. A new database from the Global American Higher Education initiative shows that the landscape is more diverse and inclusive than commonly understood. These institutions are largely unknown in the United States but extend the American higher education footprint into 80 countries around the world.

Media coverage of international campuses—meager though it may be—is dominated by only a handful of institutions. The few headlines that they garner in the US press typically highlight the overseas ventures of well-resourced institutions like Duke University, New York University, and Yale University. Reporting usually conveys bad news like academic freedom or labor law violations, or an impending campus closure. The concentration of the public's limited attention on this small group gives the impression that US higher education overseas is elite and frivolous.

But this view obscures reality. Hundreds of lesser-known institutions provide access to US higher education abroad. In addition to branch campuses, there are independent institutions, microcampuses, and international joint universities offering US-degree programs. They differ in size, offerings, and quality. In fact, the US higher education landscape is as diverse overseas as it is at home. The Association of American Universities, composed of the country's leading 65 research universities, only accounts for 1 percent of all higher education institutions in the United States. It should come then as no surprise that a great majority of US higher education institutions abroad also fly under the radar.

Global American Higher Education

There are, of course, name-brand branch campuses educating thousands of students across the globe. But it is the institutions beneath that visible top layer that really extend the United States' global presence. Webster University, for example, a regional private university in Missouri, operates 10 international campuses in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Europe. The American International University-Bangladesh has over 10,000 students in a wide range of programs. SUNY Empire State University offers full-degree programs on the campuses of a half dozen institutions, mostly around the Mediterranean. These universities may not be world-class, but they bring US higher education classes to the world.

A new publicly available dataset from the Global American Higher Education (GAHE) research initiative now enables interested parties to explore the entirety of this population of institutions. The GAHE dataset shows that there are 262 active American higher education institutions in 80 countries. Together, they enroll approximately 720,000 students. By comparison, the roughly 6,000 higher education institutions in the United States enroll 760,000 international students. This article adds nuance to stereotypes about US universities abroad by highlighting some of its more representative institutions.

The GAHE dataset shows that there are 262 active American higher education institutions in 80 countries.

Independent Institutions

Over the past two decades, the branch campus has become the industry standard for international higher education institutions. Before that, the prevailing model was the independent institution. The earliest of these free-standing colleges were established by American missionaries in the eastern Mediterranean and China during the second half of the nineteenth century. Like the flagship American University of Beirut (est. 1866), independent US universities abroad typically use "American" or "United States" in their names. Even after the missionary period, the model persisted. During the 1960s, entrepreneurs from the US started establishing independent American colleges in Western Europe. After the Cold War, free-standing US colleges began to appear in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and later became the prevailing model.

But independent colleges do not always get credit for being first movers. For example, Weill Cornell Medicine in Qatar (est. 2001), a partnership between Cornell University and the Qatar Foundation, describes itself as the first American medical school outside the United States. While it may be the first branch campus of a US university to offer medical education outside the country, the distinction of being the first ever US medical school outside the United States belongs to the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine, which began its offerings in 1980 and has been operating continuously in the region since the mid-1990s. A host of others followed.

The Caribbean case is representative of independent US universities abroad more generally. There are legitimate concerns about quality. At US medical schools in the Caribbean, residency placement rates are low and student debt load is high. This is consistent with the quality situation for independents globally: Only a third are accredited in the United States. Half of them operate for profit. That percentage is even higher in the Caribbean, prompting the introduction of legislation in the US Senate to improve accountability of foreign medical schools receiving federal student aid.

Still, these institutions in the Caribbean educate a disproportionate number of physicians of color who work in the US. Indeed, independent US universities have a long legacy of educating marginalized populations even though their role as refuge for the overlooked is routinely unheralded. The American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, for example, has enrolled hundreds of refugee students from Syria and Afghanistan in recent years. The independent model of US higher education often goes where branch campuses will not. To wit, the American University Kyiv opened in fall 2022.

Branch Campuses

Among the United States' active international branches campuses, only six of the 67 are affiliated with institutions ranked in the top 50 by US News. The City University of Seattle operates five degree-granting international branch campuses: one in Greece and four in Canada. Washington state is also home to the for-profit DigiPen Institute of Technology, which operates degree-granting branches in Singapore and Spain. The mention of

a for-profit in this context is not an anomaly. A higher percentage of US international branches belong to for-profit institutions than the percentage of those affiliated with institutions ranked in the top 50 by US News.

Branches in hubs draw the most attention. Qatar's Education City and South Korea's Incheon Global Campus, for example, each host multiple prominent US universities. But data shows that US branch campuses more commonly operate in isolation in North America or Europe, not the Middle East or Southeast Asia. Some critics see the branch campus boom as nothing more than a cash grab. Indeed, institutions in Qatar receive substantial subsidies from their hosts. But most US institutions' branch campuses depend on tuition from modest enrollments, often with fewer than a thousand students.

Small, solitary campuses offering specialized degree programs are the norm. Berklee College of Music (Spain), Embry–Riddle Aeronautical University (Germany), Parsons School of Design (France) are typical. The distinctively US liberal arts college is less commonly branched but there are still notable manifestations in Germany (Bard College), Hungary (McDaniel College), and Spain (Saint Louis University). This model has allowed US higher education—including humanities and social science programs—to persist in environments otherwise hostile to democratic values. When Hungary's regime forced the independent Central European University into exile in 2018, McDaniel was able to remain because it was a branch of an institution with programs in the United States.

The GAHE dataset also includes information on relevant microcampuses, international joint universities, and foreign institutions accredited in the United States. When added to the mix, they further underscore the capacity, diversity, and obscurity of global American higher education. ◢

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The Quality Management System in Kyrgyzstan: Achievements and Challenges

Chynarkul Ryskulova

Abstract

Kyrgyzstan implemented a new system of quality assurance through independent accreditation agencies in 2016. Poor management of the accreditation process, insufficient faculty training, and misunderstanding of the essence of quality culture present serious challenges. The absence of institutional research structures and specialized professional accreditation agencies are the main issues.

The contemporary higher education system in the Kyrgyz Republic has been shaped by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the implementation of the Bologna Process in Europe, and the influence of international donor organizations. Currently, there are 73 higher education institutions (33 public and 40 private) with 219,030 students in the country. The system faces economic and political instability, and is characterized by corruption and low quality.

Kyrgyzstan does not meet the territory requirements of the Bologna Process but it follows some of its principles. The ministry of education and sciences introduced changes in the higher education system such as a three-tier structure of academic degrees, European credit hour system, new student-centered curricula with competency-based education, and independent accreditation of educational institutions based on legal documents and amendments to the Law on Education of the Kyrgyz Republic. The law was first adopted in 1992 and subsequently amended in 1997, 2003, and 2013. In addition, various concepts, regulations, and policies were adopted during the 30 years of independence. According to the legislation, the state is responsible for quality assurance in higher education.

Achievements and Challenges of Independent Accreditation

Six years have passed since Kyrgyzstan implemented a new quality assurance system through independent accreditation of higher education institutions aimed at quality assurance and integration into the European Higher Education Area. The National Accreditation Board of the ministry of education and sciences in the Kyrgyz Republic recognized five local independent accreditation agencies and one Kazakhstani agency for quality assurance in education. Local independent accreditation agencies work in close cooperation with international organizations such as the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA), TEMPUS (European Union), the Central Asian Network for Quality Assurance (CANQA), Quality of Engineering Education in Central Asia (QUEECA), and the German Corporation for International Cooperation Educational Organization (GIZ). All of them have supported local agencies in implementing independent accreditation in Kyrgyzstan. The implementation of accreditation should allow educational institutions to create mechanisms for continuously improving the quality of education.

The transition from a Soviet approach to quality control to new quality assurance practices used in the European Higher Education Area was not smooth. There have been challenges with implementation, including poor management of the accreditation process, insufficient faculty training, and misunderstanding of the essence of quality culture. The Soviet state attestation system was based on input assessment, while the new independent accreditation is based on outcome assessment focused on student learning. The main challenge in assessing the quality of educational programs is the shift from input assessment to outcome assessment.

The transition from a Soviet approach to quality control to new quality assurance practices used in the European Higher Education Area was not smooth.

University professors and administrators did not fully understand the purpose of each accreditation standard due to lack of training; some of the standards and criteria of accreditation were confusing and repeated from standard to standard. The guidelines for self-study were not prepared well and ended up with confusing language and misused words because of poor translation from English into Russian. For example, the word *faculty* was translated into Russian as *department* (since *department* in Russian is *fakultet*), and *quality culture* was interpreted as ethical behavior of professors in the classroom, which might mislead accreditors, researchers, and university faculty.

Poor management of the accreditation process at different levels—whether at the level of accreditation agencies or higher education institutions (HEIs)—resulted in misunderstandings of accreditation purposes and standards. The whole process took a lot of faculty time and energy. Not all accreditors are good at evaluating research, teaching methods, and higher education management practices because accreditation agencies do just one- to three-day workshops to train experts on the new system, which is of course not enough. These newly certified accreditation experts cause some concerns about their qualifications and the quality of accreditation that they do. All educational programs are accredited even though there are no noticeable quality improvements, taking into account the endless public discussions about corruption and low quality of education in the post-Soviet period. For instance, a large-scale audit of government officials for the purpose of identifying those with fake diplomas demonstrates that some people still simply buy university diplomas.

Current Issues in Quality Management

The main issues affecting the accreditation process are the absence of institutional structures (e.g., institutional research offices), lack of specialized professional accreditation agencies, and the existing mechanisms for HEIs to report on student learning. Due to the absence of institutional research offices, which could support institutional assessment and collect and analyze data about educational practices and internal quality control policies, HEIs collect data for accreditation just a couple of months before accreditation experts come for a site visit. This is a Soviet legacy of the state attestation process that promotes embellishment aimed to impress accreditors with nicely written internal assessment reports. In addition, Kyrgyzstan does not have independent specialized professional accreditation agencies because the accreditation system is under the control of the ministry of education and sciences. One accreditation agency cannot accredit all

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programs from various fields and inform society about the quality of education. Moreover, HEIs cannot promote institutional effectiveness and inform their stakeholders about the quality of their academic programs without institutional research offices that would systematically collect and analyze educational data and communicate this data for continuous improvement of faculty training and student learning.

Conclusion

It is necessary for Kyrgyzstan to establish professional accreditation agencies that would conduct external evaluation of academic programs in various fields. It is also important to establish institutional research offices within HEIs to collect and analyze data about educational practices and internal quality control policies. Existing accreditation standards and criteria are not clear enough to participants of the accreditation process, and they require revision and improvement. HEIs and accreditation agencies need to improve the accreditation management system, retrain faculty, and promote the quality of education. ◢

The Dilemma of "Good Practices" in Armenian Higher Education

Susanna Karakhanyan and Robert Khachatryan

Abstract

Inconsistent and incoherent approaches to policy reforms have thwarted Armenia's vision of establishing a democratic and competitive higher education system based on "good practices" from Western systems. Attempts at reforms have demonstrated a questionable commitment to meaningful change of the existing system, which is still heavily influenced by Soviet legacy. Armenia's integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has turned out to be delusional, resulting in the decline of relevance and therefore quality.

The transfer and diffusion of "good practices" from one context to another in the hope of convergence and mutual recognition of diverse systems globally is a key development in the era of mass higher education. Despite their noble intent, such transfer and diffusion is hindered due to contrasts in contexts, culture, and values.

Borrowing Good Practices

Diffusing good practices borrowed from advanced systems depends on such diverse factors as economic and social needs, change agents, tacit and rigid mechanisms, and values driving the systems where the good practices are planted. Unless contextualized and premised on systemic needs, good intentions are likely to fail along the way.

Former Soviet republics, inspired by advanced models of higher learning, embarked on diffusing good practices premised on Western values and ideologies. Coupled with globalization, internationalization and massification of higher education, these countries faced challenges in finding an adequate balance between a strong Soviet legacy and the new reality, while at the same time trying to restore national identities. Armenian higher education had been experiencing incremental changes to its higher learning model predominantly initiated by lead higher education institutions (HEIs) until 2005, when Armenia officially committed itself to the Bologna Declaration. Following the ratification, the Armenian government took the lead of the reforms, and even though 18 years have passed since then, both systemic and institutional changes are still questioned. At the same time, the Armenian system has become more diversified and differentiated, both horizontally and vertically, with new types of providers. The current higher education landscape is comprised of comprehensive and specialized universities, institutes, academies, conservatories with various legal statuses—state (public), private, intergovernmental, cross-border. Institutional reforms include introducing a new governance model premised on autonomy balanced with accountability, launching internal quality assurance (IQA) systems, and curricular changes.

Former Soviet republics, inspired by advanced models of higher learning, embarked on diffusing good practices premised on Western values and ideologies.

Changing Governance Structures and Qualifications

A tangible shift away from Soviet practices took place in the 1990s, when it was decided to grant more autonomy to HEIs and to delegate power to boards of trustees, composed of diverse stakeholders. Despite the country's ambitious aspirations to establish a sustainable and autonomous higher education system, balanced with robust accountability, the outcome was limited to actions taken as part of European integration commitments rather than meaningful systemic changes. A clear example is the regulatory framework adopted in 2014–2018 allowing a new legal status for public HEIs—a move from state not-for-profit organizations to foundations. While meant to enhance self-governance and entrepreneurial functions, the experience of 11 state universities demonstrates no tangible accomplishment promoting democratization and competitiveness. In 2019–2022, Armenian authorities introduced a new draft law on higher education and science that further challenged the system's democratization capacity by practically limiting the autonomy of HEIs and giving more power over HEIs back to the government, hence anew drifting away from international "good practices."

Previously directed by the so-called *state standards* dictated from Moscow, the nature and levels of qualifications offered by HEIs transformed due to the adoption of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF) in 2011 premised on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). While EQF promoted academic freedom, failure to understand the logic behind Western systems and their success factors led to coexistence of both Soviet and European qualifications. Despite the adoption of the ANQF, the *state standards*—a legacy from the Soviet times that imposed contents on HEIs' curricula—has not ceased to function. The two-tier system (bachelor, master) introduced through ANQF de facto coexists with Soviet qualifications—five-year specialist diploma plus two layers of postgraduate doctoral degrees (candidate of sciences and doctor of sciences), causing more harm than benefit. As a result, in some subject-specific areas, e.g., medical and health sciences, the newly introduced degree levels tend to be perceived as lacking legitimacy and not recognized by the market, which leads to growing unemployment.

Other "good practices" on top of the reform agenda included moving from teacher- to student-centered education, modernization of curriculum through the introduction of "intended and achieved learning outcomes," relevant assessment methodologies, improving student engagement and ensuring the visibility of students' voices and choices in the learning process. However, key factors of good practice addressing the change agents' needs were overlooked. For example, the introduction of the *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*, which hardly managed to serve its primary purposes, failed to be operationalized even at institutional level, let alone across the system and beyond.

The Way Ahead

One of the key systemic transformations and quasi-successes in the Armenian HE is the establishment of an independent external quality assurance (QA) system based on the Bologna action line. During the Soviet era, QA (licensing and inspection) was fully centralized at the Republic of Armenia's ministry of education and was done by designated inspectors who relied on *state standards*. In 2008, tangible transformations took place ensuring independent and objective evaluation of institutional performance by establishing an independent national QA body premised on European "good practices," and introducing procedural and content changes. The *National Center for Professional Development Quality Assurance* (ANQA), acknowledged at both European and international levels as a dynamically growing QA body, operates in par with European Standards and Guidelines. It was recognized by ENQA and EQAR in 2017 and 2022 respectively. Despite the success with establishing an external QA system, internal QA at HEIs still mainly serves compliance purposes and does not stimulate continuous quality enhancement, thus contributing to a failed quality culture.

Ambitions to democratize Armenian higher education and enhance its competitive capacity through transfer and diffusion of good practices was diverted from the desired trajectory due to insufficient investment into change agents and, most importantly, failure to recognize the crucial role of culture and context in designing reforms. In-depth understanding of factors contributing to effective change within a given culture and

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context, clear vision and values, competitive strategies and priorities, comprehensive analysis of system and society needs, complete government commitment, and change agent empowerment are crucial for successful diffusion of good practices.

Research Evaluation: Unraveling the Metrics-Driven Pressures

Emanuel Kulczycki

Abstract
Metrics-based research evaluation, with origins in Russia and the Soviet Union, continues to impact scientific publication practices. The prevalence of publication counting prompts researchers to engage in adaptive behaviors, known as the "evaluation game," with the primary motivation of preserving their standing. A shift in focus from individual achievements to collective societal needs is required, ensuring that the application of metrics aligns with the overarching goals, values, and beliefs of the academic community.

The profound impact of scientific discovery is felt most acutely during moments of crisis, exemplified by the groundbreaking research that led to the development of COVID-19 vaccines. However, contemporary science has become increasingly publication-driven rather than discovery-focused. The relentless pressure to publish leaves researchers with little time for substantive work, resulting in a surge of publications, particularly among early-career academics. Nobel laureate Peter Higgs contends that he would not meet today's standards of productivity within academia. Yet, merely increasing the volume of publications is not enough; the true currency in the scientific world is the number of citations.

The Evaluation Game: How Publication Metrics Shape Scholarly Communication provides a fresh perspective on the genesis and consequences of metrics in academia, as well as suggestions for enhancing research evaluation. By examining both positive and negative implications of research evaluation practices and exploring how these have played out across the globe, the book steers the field toward a more balanced and effective approach to assessing scholarly work.

Proliferation of Metrics and Research Evaluation Regimes

As universities become increasingly governed by market-driven logic, the emphasis on accountability and quantifying academic productivity intensifies. The ramifications of these shifts are extensive and are the subject of ongoing debates within the academic community.

Metrics are employed ubiquitously, serving various purposes such as assessing individual researchers, evaluating the success of grant recipients, or measuring and comparing the productivity of academic institutions. Journal impact factor (JIF) remains the preeminent metric. In the United States, 40 percent of research-intensive institutions reference JIF in review, promotion, and tenure documentation. Originally conceived to assess journal readership, JIF has evolved into a comprehensive instrument for evaluating various facets of the research landscape. Additionally, there are top-down, metric-based solutions implemented at the national rather than institutional level. Numerous countries—including Australia, China, Finland, Norway, Poland, and the United Kingdom (with its well-known Research Excellence Framework)—have established national research evaluation systems. These systems empower governments to not only oversee the activities of their science and higher education sectors but also to allocate block grants in many instances.

The scientific community has long been engaged in efforts to counteract misuse and abuse of metrics. Initiatives such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the Leiden Manifesto strive to refine the methods by which scientific research output is evaluated, targeting funding agencies, academic institutions, and other stakeholders in the process.

Untold Histories and Their Consequences

The Evaluation Game tells untold histories of measuring science. One of them is the geopolitical dimension of the reactions to publication pressure. Such reactions vary and are influenced by the historical and cultural context of research evaluation systems' implementation. Hence, the degree of trust in metrics and distrust in experts also differs between the United States, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe.

An extensive exploration of the modernizing potential of measures and metrics used in the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union explains the difference in such reactions to some extent. This investigation reveals that metrics used in monitoring and evaluation in academia were implemented in Russia more than a century and a half before the emergence of neoliberal logic in the science and higher education sectors. Thus, research that started out of curiosity about different reactions to metrics in current research communities in different countries has led to the origins of the first national system of research evaluation in the Soviet Union. This was an ex ante evaluation system that was primarily aimed at making sure that research aligned with state values and policy objectives.

Studying the origins of measuring scholarly communication also led to the second untold history related to the Polish origins of the science of science and the role of Soviet scientometrics. The science of science served as a tool to inspire science policy changes after World War I, and Soviet scientometrics, inspired by the Polish approach, laid the foundation for various research evaluation systems. The legacy of these systems persists in much of today's Europe, manifesting in a peculiar reliance on metrics over experts.

Playing the Evaluation Game

The evaluation of researchers and universities elicits a diverse array of responses to assessment expectations. Some metric-based systems successfully motivate researchers to adapt their publication strategies and target higher-quality, more reputable outlets. In contrast, other researchers choose to adhere to evaluation rules and satisfy metrics-based expectations with minimal personal cost, often resulting in numerous, occasionally low-quality publications in less reputable venues. However, a substantial portion of such practices should not be labeled as "gaming" but rather as "playing the evaluation game." *The Evaluation Game* contends that the term "gaming" fails to accurately capture the manner in which researchers alter their professional communication practices in response to publication pressures and evaluative metrics. Researchers publish more low-quality pieces instead of aiming to publish one outstanding paper because what really matters to keep their position (from the perspective of the evaluation regime that they are subject to) is the quantity of papers. In other words, researchers who engage in the evaluation game are not driven by a desire to maximize profits, but rather by a desire to maintain their *status quo*, which serves as their primary motivation.

Use Metrics, Don't be Ruled by Them

Academia will not escape metrics, but we must put an end to the perception that science can be reduced to the publications of individual researchers working at individual institutions. It is also not possible to return to a situation where there are no metrics and measures in the management and organization of science because such a situation simply never existed. Metrics have always been used—either as tools of modernization or of monitoring and oversight.

The Evaluation Game urges policy makers, managers, and researchers to embrace seven principles for an improved, metrics-balanced scholarly communication system. First, cultivate an academia that inspires excellence in researchers and managers. Second, substantially increase sustained research funding through block grants. Third, ensure stable employment and competitive salaries, especially for early-career researchers. Fourth, involve researchers in defining evaluation criteria and generating metrics. Fifth, deindividualize evaluation and acknowledge modern science as a collaborative effort. Sixth, let academia manage key scholarly communication infrastructures. Lastly, ensure transparency and accessibility in metric-based evaluations. By adopting these principles, we can foster a more balanced, effective, and collaborative academic environment that would prioritize quality over quantity. Let us make sure that our goals, values, and beliefs guide metric usage rather than alter our values to meet metric-driven goals. ◢

Academia will not escape metrics, but we must put an end to the perception that science can be reduced to the publications of individual researchers working at individual institutions.

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The Benefits and Limits of Guanxi in US–China Research Collaborations

Morris Hsin-Mu Chen, John P. Haupt, Die Hu, Wen Wen and Jenny J. Lee

Abstract
Social networks based on Chinese culture, or *guanxi*, played an important role in scientists' capacity to produce knowledge, their collaboration experiences, and in navigating the securitized research environment targeting collaboration between the United States and China.

As the United States and China vie for the top spot in the global knowledge economy, international collaborative research has been increasingly subjected to greater politicization and securitization. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing geopolitical tensions and resulted in greater governmental and institutional oversight over international collaborations. Given these developments, we were interested in how US and Chinese scientists continued to collaborate on COVID-19 research. Our bibliometric findings show, among other things, that the majority of US–China publications on COVID-19 included at least one ethnic Chinese scientist/author based in the United States. Among our final survey sample of 241 scientists (United States, N=91; China, N=150), ethnic Chinese scientists' culture, in the form of *guanxi*, played an important role in shaping scientists' networks and knowledge production capacity, in how the pandemic impacted their collaboration experiences, and in how scientists navigated the securitized research environment between the two countries.

Guanxi is a Chinese term that refers to a social network informed by shared cultural knowledge and experience. The basis of *guanxi* is a relationship between two individuals, whose personally defined and reciprocal bonds form the fundamental unit of larger *guanxi* networks. *Guanxi* contrasts with Western notions of social capital and networks, which tend to focus on the network structures and individuals' positions in networks. China is a highly relational society, and a well-socialized Chinese person (or anyone who is aware of and practices *guanxi* principles) is culturally obliged to answer requests within one's networks. There are many ways to differentiate types of *guanxi*, depending on the background on which *guanxi* is built (e.g., family, school, workplace, hometown, etc.) or the nature and purpose of interactions involving *guanxi* (e.g., love and sense of belonging, resource exchange). *Guanxi* evolves over time, and its state at a specific time or in a specific context can trigger different principles of interaction and potential outcomes.

Guanxi Promotes US–China Collaboration

Our findings revealed that ethnic Chinese scientists in the United States and China rated shared culture and ethnicity as more important motivations for collaboration than did non-ethnic Chinese scientists based in the United States. The ethnic-Chinese *guanxi* networks enabled easier and faster access to samples and first-hand knowledge of the pandemic in its earliest days. These findings highlight the importance of tie formation and collaborative relationships beginning during noncrisis times. Ethnic Chinese scientists in China mobilized their overseas *guanxi* networks to develop international research ties and to be more productive in their research publications. *Guanxi* also motivated US-based ethnic Chinese scientists who had completed parts of their education in China to collaborate with scientists in China. *Guanxi* has a strong affective dimension, and the instrumental and sentimental aspects of *guanxi* helped to promote reciprocity and motivation for scientists' international collaborations. The affective and social norms prescribed by *guanxi*—including reciprocity, a sense of obligation, and long-term equity—allowed ethnic Chinese scientists in the United States and China to better mobilize weak ties with the goal of later forming stronger ties for the purpose of collaboration.

Guanxi Facilitates Access to Research Projects

Since China had the majority of COVID-19 cases and data at the onset of the pandemic, some US-based ethnic Chinese scientists were able to use *guanxi* to access critical research data, samples, clinical expertise, and more. For example, a US-based ethnic Chinese scientist reported that his strong trust and *guanxi* with Chinese scientists and employees at several regional centers for disease control and prevention in China kept him better informed and allowed him to negotiate with governmental bureaucracy and overcome internal department politics to access COVID-19 data, as well as to obtain a permission to analyze it. In another case, a US-based ethnic Chinese scientist used his *guanxi* network to secure medical care for a family member in China who was infected with COVID-19—the scientist and his Chinese collaborating clinicians published the experience as an early successful treatment model for COVID-19. In both cases, the US-based ethnic Chinese scientists did not necessarily know the decision-makers personally, but they were able to mobilize weak ties by pulling *guanxi* through mutual friends and colleagues who did have strong ties with relevant decision-makers.

Guanxi as the Basis of Trust

Scientists in both the United States and China rated shared research goals and trust as the most important motivations for collaboration and reported that they had known their collaborators or worked with them prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. US-based ethnic Chinese scientists established *guanxi* with their Chinese colleagues in formal settings during noncrisis times—they used to be classmates, colleagues, shared the same advisor, or met at conferences. As *guanxi* between pairs of scientists grew over time, researchers benefited further from each other's deepening academic interests and expertise through multiple collaborations. Given the highly politicized and urgent nature of COVID-19-related research and restrictions on international travel, it made sense for scientists to look within one's trusted *guanxi* network. *Guanxi*, as a form of trust, was also essential for ethnic Chinese scientists in the United States and China for navigating a highly scrutinized research environment.

Scientists in both the United States and China rated shared research goals and trust as the most important motivations for collaboration.

Limits of *Guanxi* in the Current Geopolitical Environment

Most scientists have witnessed the geopolitical climate's effects on science. Variations of "leave politics out of science" were echoed repeatedly. Beyond their immediate projects, some US-based ethnic Chinese scientists talked to us about restricting relationships with Chinese scientists or cutting ties with them all together, losing US government funding, or being investigated and disciplined by their universities. Such effects on working relationships were also discussed by China-based scientists, who have experienced distancing by US colleagues, and more restrictions on collaboration and exchange due to changes in US university-level and government policies. All this helps understand the limits of personal *guanxi* in navigating institutional climate and policy.

Our findings suggest that culture, in the form of *guanxi*, is not only a useful framework for analyzing and promoting tie formation between ethnic Chinese scientists in the United States and China, but also an instrumental tool used to help US-based ethnic Chinese scientists gain resources and improve productivity. This is an important finding, especially as US–China collaboration tapers and China moves away from its overreliance on SCI/SSCI-indexed journals. Further research could examine *guanxi* formation between nonethnic Chinese scientists to determine its applicability across diverse groups. Our findings also underline the need to ensure international mobility of students and scholars, remain open to scientific cooperation between the United States and China, and continue supporting cross-border tie formation among scientists in the long run. Formal education and institutional affiliation can be important bases for *guanxi* formation, and many US scientists whom we interviewed reported a sharp drop in Chinese graduate students or visiting scholars at their institutions. Losing Chinese students and scholars to other popular destination countries not only negatively impacts collaboration between the United States and China, but also may have long-term impacts on both countries' abilities to produce leading research internationally. ◢

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The Growth of Doctorates in Germany

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Abstract
The number of doctoral degrees awarded in Germany, which was already high, is growing. The German Excellence Initiative is the major growth factor. Doctorates awarded by universities of applied sciences (UASs) do not play a statistically significant role (yet). However, the traditional university monopoly on awarding doctoral degrees is clearly eroding. In the face of "massification" of the doctorate, Germany still tends to opt for horizontal diversification rather than vertical stratification.

Is Europe Seeing the Massification of the Doctorate? was the title of a recent article (February 2, 2023) in Times Higher Education (THE). Among other issues, this article zoomed in on the German news that some *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences, UAS) have been granted the right to educate and train doctoral candidates and award doctoral degrees despite considerable protests from universities, which used to have the exclusive right to award doctoral degrees.

UASs, providing mostly professional higher education (in contrast to "academic" higher education), were established in Germany in the early 1970s, mainly as an alternative to traditional universities. UAS faculty, including professors, were not expected to carry out research, had a higher teaching load than professors at universities, and were required to have at least five years of professional experience outside academia. However, these experiences often led to a more intensive cooperation with industry, from which emerged applied research. In recent years, ministers of education and research in some German states decided to grant the right to award doctorates to some UASs—provided they could prove that they were what is commonly called "research-intensive," at least for some programs or departments. UASs had to submit their respective research portfolios. They were then evaluated by an independent body that gave a recommendation on whether to grant the right to award doctoral degrees or not.

However, this is not the whole story. The growth of doctorates in Germany was influenced by at least two other developments and started from an already traditionally high output.

Doctorates as Part of Chair Infrastructure

An important explanation of the traditionally high output of completed doctorates in Germany is the fact that having at least one but often two or even more doctoral positions is part of the infrastructure of each professorial chair. In German higher education, doctoral candidates are not called students but doctoral candidates or early career researchers because the majority (about 60 percent) have a junior academic staff position linked to a professorial chair. Furthermore, it is the rule that most externally funded research projects include one or more doctoral positions as well to carry out the actual research. Thus, professors who are reasonably successful in attracting research funding have additional positions for doctoral candidates. Furthermore, there are at least 10 major foundations plus the German Research Association (DFG) that provide individual doctoral scholarships or fund graduate schools with five to 12 doctoral scholarships (accounting for another 20 to 25 percent of funding for doctoral candidates).

Doctorates as Part of the Excellence Initiative

The German Excellence Initiative (2005–2019) was another factor contributing to the growth of doctorates in Germany. In the first two rounds (2005–2012) and the third round (2012–2017), altogether 85 graduate schools were established and funded. In the first two rounds, the funding amounted to one million euros per year for the total period of five years, and in the third round the funding varied between one million and 2.5 million euros per year for the period of five years. In addition, there was a funded transition phase (2017 to 2019). Each of these graduate schools had scholarships for six to 12 or six to 15 doctoral candidates, most of whom successfully completed their doctoral degree within three to five years. The growth in doctorates at German higher education institutions can be seen in detail in the statistics of the German Federal Office of Statistics. Since 2000, between 25,000 and 26,000 doctorates have been awarded annually. The largest

effect of the graduate schools supported by the Excellence Initiative could be seen in 2015—the year when almost 30,000 doctorates (29,218) were awarded.

Doctorates Awarded by Universities of Applied Sciences

The third factor that was emphasized in the *THE* article, namely doctoral degree awarded by UASs, is not—at least not yet—a factor leading to significant further growth in doctorates in Germany. It is necessary to keep in mind that UASs are only allowed to award doctoral degrees in some of the German states, and that this right was not granted to the institutions as a whole but only to a limited number of their research-intensive departments. The right to award doctoral degrees is granted only when certain conditions are fulfilled and is temporary. Every few years, an evaluation is carried out by an independent body to assess whether the right to award a doctoral degree should be extended or not. A look at the annual statistics of the German Federal Office of Statistics shows that so far, only one UAS awarded one single doctoral degree in 2021.

However, another development should be pointed out here. Since 2010, so-called cooperative doctoral education and training procedures have been established successively in all German states. In the framework of a cooperative doctorate, a university professor and a professor from a UAS cooperate closely on guiding and supervising graduates with UAS degrees. Before that, UAS graduates were not even allowed to embark on postgraduate programs without additional course work at a university after their graduation from a UAS. In such an arrangement, it is the university that awards the degree in the end. Every three years, the German Rectors' Conference carries out a representative survey to gather figures about cooperative doctorates, and the latest available survey results show a continuous rise from 109 cooperative doctorates in 1997–1999 to 1,575 in 2015–2017. However, given the fact that German universities award between 25,000 and almost 30,000 doctoral degrees annually, this figure cannot explain the growth of doctorates in German higher education. In the meantime, though, the Max Planck Institutes, nonuniversity basic research institutes, are also clamoring for the right to award doctoral degrees, arguing that their own research training is even better than that at universities. In the future, they might be successful with their claim, which will erode the university monopoly on awarding doctoral degrees even further.

Conclusions

Two main conclusions can be drawn from what has been said so far. First, the main factor behind the growth of doctorates in Germany has been the Excellence Initiative, though one should keep in mind that the output in terms of completed doctorates had been relatively high in Germany already for quite a while before this initiative was launched. In contrast to this, doctoral degrees awarded by UASs do not yet play any role in terms of figures. Second, the traditional monopoly of German universities to have the exclusive right to award doctoral degrees is slowly eroding despite their opposition. But it can be assumed that this erosion will continue as German higher education policy makers generally share the view that there should be many pathways to a doctoral degree.

If it is possible at all to speak about a "massification" of doctoral education and training in German higher education, the result is a diversification of doctoral degree types, e.g., research doctorate, professional doctorate, PhD by published work, cooperative doctorate, industrial doctorate—just to name a few. As often happens with massification, there is a need to structure existing options—either through vertical stratification (by reputation and rankings) or through horizontal diversification (by types of degrees). Despite the fact that the German Excellence Initiative was the first attempt to structure through vertical stratification, German tradition still gravitates toward horizontal diversification by types of degrees and types of institutions. ◢

If it is possible at all to speak about a "massification" of doctoral education and training in German higher education, the result is a diversification of doctoral degree types.

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Historically Black Colleges and Universities Are Vital and Valuable to the United States

James V. Koch and Omari H. Swinton

Abstract
Though Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are little recognized, both in the United States and internationally, rigorous empirical analysis reveals that given their circumstances, they typically perform at a high level. This is the first comprehensive empirical analysis that has examined the performance of HBCUs.

HBCU—these are well-known letters within the United States' 47.3-million-member Black community. HBCU stands for "Historically Black College and University," a group of slightly more than 100 institutions within the country, which currently enroll about 280,000 students. Such a grouping of institutions might seem unusual to some people, but racially- and ethnically-focused universities are a relatively common phenomenon internationally. They exist in many countries and serve diverse groups including Muslims, Jews, Kurds, and Uzbeks.

Awareness of the existence, purpose, and achievements of HBCUs is not only spotty among non-Black Americans but also almost nonexistent in the rest of the world. *Vital and Valuable* (Columbia University Press, 2023) is designed to address this knowledge deficit. It provides facts—carefully derived empirical evidence—generated from a sample of more than 700 US colleges and universities that included more than 60 HBCUs. It compares the situations and performances of HBCUs to other types of colleges (for example, flagship state universities), a procedure that places the performance of HBCUs in context. This is the first such comprehensive empirical analysis of HBCUs that has ever been conducted.

A Bit of History

HBCUs came into existence prior to the American Civil War. The reality was that Black Americans either were held in slavery or, if free, could obtain admission only to a handful of colleges. Many states in the American South responded after the Civil War by establishing HBCUs that were rigidly segregated by race. An influential 1896 US Supreme Court decision blessed this arrangement by stating that it was acceptable to provide "separate but equal" facilities and services; however, no state with an HBCU ever came close to satisfying this standard. It was not until 1965 that HBCUs were recognized as a distinct group of institutions by the US government.

The HBCU Talent Pipeline

HBCUs are well-known for generating famous and conspicuously successful graduates who range from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King (Morehouse College) to Oprah Winfrey (Tennessee State University).

HBCUs are well-known for generating famous and conspicuously successful graduates who range from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King (Morehouse College) to Oprah Winfrey (Tennessee State University). HBCUs have graduated about three-quarters of all Black physicians, college professors, and military officers. They provide and sustain a talent pipeline that is vital to the prosperity of the Black community and the United States at large.

Some have criticized HBCUs for not graduating larger proportions of their students. However, in one of the most important findings, the study demonstrated that this conclusion reflects the use of an inappropriate measuring stick. Once one takes account of the differences in the family and academic backgrounds of HBCU students, one sees that a representative HBCU graduates higher percentages of its students than a representative non-HBCU. Think in terms of a prospective student who comes to campus from a family with an annual income of 30,000 US dollars and has an SAT score of 950. What kind of institution is most likely to provide this student with the environment and support that will enable them to graduate? The answer is an HBCU. Once we account for family incomes and SAT scores, we find that the probability of this student graduating from a representative HBCU is higher than it would be at a comparable non-HBCU.

Providing Upward Economic Mobility

HBCUs excel at improving the economic status of their students. Pragmatically, this involves hoisting students upward from the lowest income quintile to the fourth or fifth highest income quintiles. Consider Florida A&M University, an HBCU, where at the turn of the twenty-first century, 39.8 percent of the students came from households whose incomes ranked them in one of the two lowest quintiles in the United States. Nevertheless, within a period of time averaging 15 years, 47.6 percent of those students had incomes that placed them in one of the highest two income quintiles. This is especially notable because it occurred in a society that had become increasingly stratified, both economically and socially.

HBCUs Are Becoming More Diverse

Approximately 78 percent of HBCU students self-declare that they are Black. However, the proportions of Hispanic- and Asian-background students enrolled at HBCUs have nearly doubled over the past decade. More than one-quarter of the students at such HBCUs as Talladega College in Alabama and Prairie View A&M University in Texas are Hispanic. Further, some HBCUs (e.g., Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, and Howard University in Washington, DC) enroll substantial numbers of international students, who relish these institutions' cosmopolitan atmospheres.

HBCUs Are "Places to Be"

The influence of HBCUs on US society extends well beyond graduation and mobility. HBCUs are social and economic pillars within their communities, and their events (for example, football games) sometimes draw 50,000 or more spectators.

Viewed historically, HBCUs often presented the only available opportunities for Black Americans to access higher education. This may still be the case. The percentages of Black students enrolled at prominent American universities often is disturbingly small—only 2 percent at the University of Colorado, 4 percent at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and 5 percent at Virginia Tech. The doors of opportunity at non-HBCUs may have cracked open for Black Americans at such institutions, but not very far.

Challenges

There are several challenges that will influence the future of HBCUs. One is what many now term an impending "enrollment cliff"—a decline in the absolute number of high school graduates in the United States that will begin in 2026 and will last more than one decade. This will exacerbate an already dire higher education enrollment situation: Higher education enrollment in the United States has been declining for 11 years already. This demographic challenge could force some smaller, privately supported HBCUs in rural locations to close their doors. This would constitute an irreversible change. Because no one expects new HBCUs to be created, the demise of an HBCU is analogous to losing an endangered species. Once gone, it will be gone forever.

Another challenge to HBCUs relates to the healthy level of expenditures that they typically make on administrative functions. More than a few HBCUs are administratively top-heavy, a characteristic that reduces the funds that they have available to spend on other vital functions such as instruction and research. This situation in part reflects t the reality that HBCUs as a group are smaller in size than non-HBCUs and therefore are unable to realize the administrative economies of scale that non-HBCUs typically enjoy because of their larger sizes.

Summary

HBCUs constitute a unique segment of higher education in the United States, whether one's perspective is national or worldwide. They are frequently unknown or misunderstood. ◢

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The Taliban's Curricular Attack on Higher Education in Afghanistan: A New Reality for Higher Education in Afghanistan

Abdul Aziz Mohibbi and Noah Coburn

Abstract
In two short years, universities in Afghanistan have seen a drastic drop in enrollment due to the Taliban ban on women in higher education and a culture of surveillance and fear. At the same time, however, the Taliban have moved to begin to restructure curricula and universities themselves to impose their own versions of conservative religiosity, in stark contrast with the expansion of universities under the previous government.

When the United States completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, it left the government and the military of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan incapable of resisting the momentum of the Taliban's rapid expansion. Among other things left behind during that collapse was a surprisingly vibrant higher education sector. In the 20 years since the 2001 US invasion, the number of universities, both public and private, expanded rapidly. While the quality of these institutions was uneven, Afghanistan's booming youth population embraced the university system as a means of social mobility, and a growing number of Afghans sought advanced degrees either in the country or abroad. Between 2001 and 2021, the number of students in higher education in Afghanistan increased from 8,000 to 400,000 in 39 public and 128 private institutions. Since then, many of the faculty have fled, international funds that previously supported higher education initiatives have been frozen, many private institutions have closed, and the number of students in both public and private institutions has plummeted.

The international media has largely focused on the Taliban's misogynist bans on women and girls, first from secondary and then from tertiary education. However, interviewing administrators, faculty members, and students, both those who have fled the Taliban and those that have remained in the country, shows that behind the scenes, Taliban authorities have begun the slower, more deliberate process of dismantling much of the work that was done over the past 20 years to grow and standardize the higher education sector. This includes massive revisions to the previous regime's curriculum and replacing it with one that centers on a conservative version of Islam counter to the religious beliefs of many of those in the country, and enforcing this version of religious education in the university primarily through fear and other authoritarian tactics.

A New Curriculum

The Taliban, a political movement that grew out of religious schools in the Afghan and Pakistani borderlands, has always emphasized its own vision of education. It is based on conservative Islamic and Pashtun values, which stand in striking contrast not only with Western approach to education but also with more moderate Islamic modes embraced elsewhere in Afghanistan. This has meant a long tradition of prioritizing male adolescent students, who also served as recruits for the Taliban. Over the past 10 years, as the Taliban steadily expanded the territory that it had under control, new *madrassas* have been built to fulfill their vision of religious learning. Though the Taliban always had supporters in specific universities, particularly in the east of the country, since gaining control over Kabul and the government apparatus of the former regime, it has moved to reshape higher education as well. This includes replacing university officials, instilling fear in students, and forcing the ministry of higher education to revise curricula and transform education. Curriculum changes in particular could reshape Afghan education for future generations.

Courses on human rights, women's studies, and social welfare have all been removed from the social sciences curriculum over the past two years.

For instance, courses on human rights, women's studies, and social welfare have all been removed from the social sciences curriculum over the past two years. Departments of philosophy have been replaced with departments of philosophy and faith; furthermore,

instead of studying different philosophical concepts, students who take courses in this area now focus on criticizing the philosophies that the Taliban considers counter to its ideology. Other changes address course contents directly. For instance, there is now a ban on discussing music or dance as a part of cultural studies. Some changes are more subtle and surprising. For instance, sociology of war was removed from the curriculum, since the Taliban's approach implies focusing on war in the context of violent *jihad* (struggle against disbelief and nonbelievers).

While religious studies were part of the curriculum even under the previous government, the type of religion taught has also shifted significantly. The focus used to be on moderate forms of Islam and Islamic obligations, such as performing good deeds and speaking to nonbelievers about Islam. The Taliban curriculum transmits a far more conservative form of Islam, draws on the work of conservative Islamic scholars, and emphasizes the importance of conducting *jihad*.

Under the previous regime, such revisions would have been conducted internally at the ministry of higher education with the help of academic experts, but nowadays changes also need approval from the ministry for the propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice (locally known as *Amr bil Maroof*). *Amr bil Maroof* is the ministry that was responsible for enforcing the Taliban's moral code during the previous period of the Taliban rule, to the extent of regulating the length of men's beards and veiling requirements for women. This ministry was reinstated by the new Taliban regime and symbolically given the offices of the now defunct ministry of women's affairs. In addition, the faculty of *shariah* law has been brought in to review curriculum changes, and all officials involved are now required to participate in week-long workshops led by the ministry of vice and virtue.

Other changes impact students at all departments. For instance, students are now required to take 24 credits of religious studies—vs. only eight credits in the old times. This has reduced the number of credits for other types of courses.

Enforcement through Fear

The Taliban government has not only restructured the curriculum but also instilled a culture of fear that stifles dissent on university campuses. Faculty and students have told us how Taliban officials at schools had imposed conservative dress codes and harassed students and faculty deemed troublesome. The fact that the ministry of vice and virtue—a body that is often criticized for disregard for individual rights and impunity—is now involved in the work of universities has had a chilling effect, leading students and faculty to self-censorship.

The Taliban government has not only restructured the curriculum but also instilled a culture of fear that stifles dissent on university campuses.

As one male student of economics who wanted to protest the banning of women said, "We couldn't do anything or protest when they banned women from the university out of fear of being reported."

Faculty and students also mention fear of being informed on by colleagues or fellow students. A culture of mistrust has been created and thus, as some people report, made real teaching and learning impossible.

Reshaping Afghan Society

This quiet restructuring of university curricula by the Taliban demonstrates the extent to which the current authorities are aiming to reshape Afghan society. They want to create a world where women are invisible outside the home, where no dissent is tolerated, and where academic analysis is replaced by religious beliefs that only a fraction of the Afghan population actually shares. As the generation of Afghans educated in the imperfect yet lively and expanding universities of 2001–2021 is being replaced by a generation that is indoctrinated with authoritarian ideology through fear and mistrust, hope for academic debate and dissent, as well as for human rights, is fading. ◢

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