Higher education

Hertie School

ifa Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen

1.   Introduction

The appeal of international higher education (IHE) reaches back millenea, as ancient cities like Athens and Baghdad attracted scholars from far afield to study at their famed universities. Prestigious centers for learning and research later formed important components of the international reputation of nation-states. Only recently, however, has IHE become a nearly universal tool of countries' external cultural policy (ECP) and exercise of "soft power" (Nye, 2005). In fact, the British Council recently argued that "the area of most urgent competition [in external cultural relations] was higher education" (British Council, 2021, p. 36).

International higher education—defined here as both attracting foreign students to home universities (including though short-term programs) and establishing branch campuses of dedicated tertiary educational institutions abroad (Hampel, 2021)—has grown rapidly in recent years (Amirbek & Ydyrys, 2014). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) predicts that roughly 8 million students will study outside their home country in 2025, quadruple the number who did so in 1998 (Yerezhepekova & Torebekova, 2019). Additionally, more and more universities are establishing foreign branch campuses and dozens of countries are pursuing explicit internationalization strategies.

Indeed, the British Council finds that "all countries see higher education as an increasingly important area of activity, vital for international reputation as well as for economic development and an opportunity to access the talented young people who will be the opinion formers of the future" (2021, p. 36). Scholars argue that internationalization is crucial for maintaining a competitive education sector (Wojciuk et al., 2015, p. 307) and that a globally-renowned university system "embodies tremendous potential to generate soft power for a state" (Lee, 2015, p. 354).

National IHE strategies involve at least one of three distinct, yet often overlapping, strategies. First, countries may seek to attract foreign students (and the talent and revenue that comes with them) as a way to improve their own educational systems and economic status. Some short-term "neoliberal" motives include tuition revenue and using education as an economic multiplier (Lee, 2015). Over the medium-term, gains to the education sector can increase productivity. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair also identified a long-term economic rationale in 1999, pointing out that foreign students "promote Britain around the world, helping our trade and our diplomacy" (quoted in Lomer, 2017).

Secondly, an internationalized university system can be used to generate affinity with international students, which is seen as a valuable tool of global influence when they return home. Former US Secretary of State Colin Powell made this explicit when he argued in 2001 that, "I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here" (quoted in Nye, 2005, p. 13). The large number of global leaders educated at US and UK universities in particular makes this a powerful tool of elite influence.

Finally, a prestigious university sector can boost the national image, even in the absence of direct educational links. For example, universities like Harvard and Oxford educate a relatively small number of people, yet their notoriety is a substantial boon for the reputations of their

host countries. Indeed, "the role of education in the international prestige and standing of a country has been significantly increasing in the recent years" (Wojciuk et al., 2015, p. 299). Due to a near-universal understanding that higher education is a crucial component of national development, IHE is characterized by severe power imbalances (Lo, 2011). Altbach (1987; 2003) has identified a colonial-style "core-periphery" relationship in the distribution of knowledge and educational prestige around the world. Indeed, wealthy, Western, and former colonial powers dominate the international education landscape. Meanwhile, developing countries must strike a balance between sending students abroad to seek expertise with developing a home-grown educational sector. Although education can often generate "win-win" outcomes, the uneven nature of knowledge distribution means that it is crucial to keep in mind power dynamics and exploitation that are inherent to the IHE landscape.

2.   International primary and secondary education in action

Like many aspects of ECP, international higher education exists along a spectrum of self-interest and mutual benefit. As Knight (2015) argues, IHE "is not traditionally seen as a game of winners and losers—it focuses on exchange and builds on the respective strengths of institutions and countries." While there is an element of truth to this, it is a mistake to be overly sanguine about the prospects for "win-win" scenarios and mutually-beneficial cooperation in international university education. Many countries explicitly view IHE as a contest for talent and prestige. With only a finite number of international students and top positions in global higher education rankings and many countries striving for them, this competitive viewpoint is largely justified.

In addition to the traditional battle for prestige and influence, more and more countries are adapting explicitly economic approaches to IHE. This consists of both attracting talent to boost domestic productivity as well as drawing foreign students—who often pay much higher tuition fees—in order to strengthen the financial position of home universities. The British Council recently stated that "the existence of a great global competition for people with the skills, knowledge and networks needed for the 21st-century economy" is a core part of international relations (2021, p. 42). This struggle is particularly evident in countries like the United Kingdom or Australia and the growth of newly-planned "hubs" for international education in Asia and the Middle East.

The marked rise in education "hubs" in recent years has been especially prevalent throughout the Middle East and Asia (Lee, 2015). An education hub differs from preexisting research centers (such as Cambridge, MA, or the UK's "golden triangle"[1]) in that they are a deliberately planned approach to building an internationally-oriented research and teaching cluster. A particularly notable example is Qatar's Education City. Although there is a clear economic motive in these efforts, countries seek to become educational entrepots for a number of reasons, with revenue generation usually a subordinate goal. As Lee (2015) finds, "the conspicuous recruitment of international students among these hubs may be driven by various reasons that include revenue generation, campus diversification, talent attraction, and geopolitics" (pp. 353).

---

[1] The "Golden Triangle" typically refers the prestigious research and teaching network that the top universities in London, Oxford, and Cambridge jointly comprise (THE, 1995).

It is therefore important to understand the ride of educational hubs within the context of countries' broader ECP strategies.

Another trend in IHE is the proliferation of international branch campuses as part of transnational education (TNE). The most prominent cases are often separate campuses of Western universities, such as NYU Abu Dhabi or Duke Kunshan University. The UK is particularly prominent in THE, as all but 15 countries in the world hosted some sort of British TNE. While these appeal to many students who seek a Western education, as well as students from the home university looking to go abroad, they face many challenges. Some scholars have critiqued the neo-colonial nature of such arrangements, as it is often wealthy, former imperial powers that establish institutions in poorer countries (Wojciuk, 2015). Additionally, Western notions of academic freedom are often difficult to reconcile with less permissive attitudes in the host country, making it difficult to attract quality faculty.

The geography of IHE tends to mirror pre-existing economic and political power relations. The largest flows of international students are from Asia to North America, Australia, and Europe. There is also substantial student mobility within the European Union (EU), largely due to proximity and dedicated programs to encourage studying abroad. In an indication of the concentric core-periphery dynamics of international education, India (a large sending country) is also a preferred destination for students from developing countries (Wojciuk, 2015).

Chart 1: Number of students, 2019
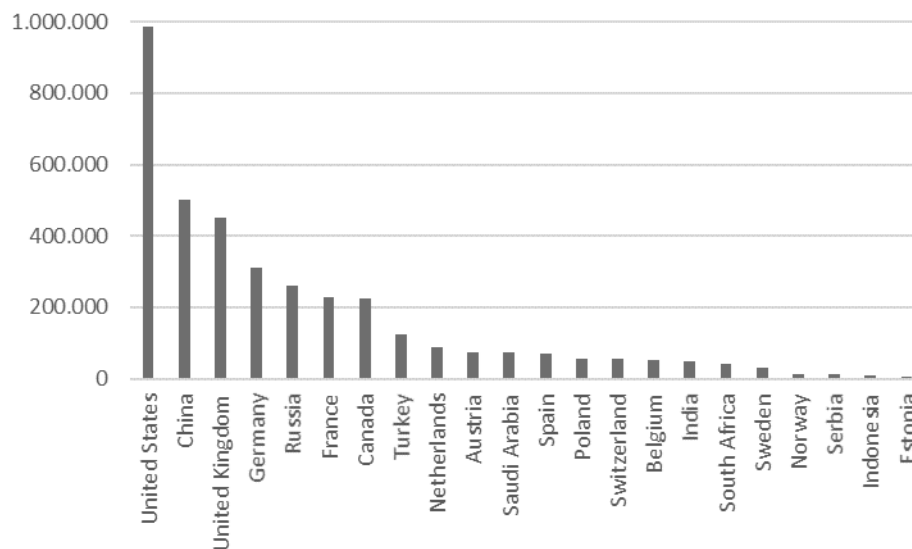
Source: ECP Monitor

3.   Major players in international university education

Anglosphere countries—particularly the United States and United Kingdom—dominate international university rankings. Of the Times Higher Education (THE) 2021 rankings, eight of the top ten universities are American, with the other two being British. Of the top 20, only Switzerland's ETH Zurich (14th) and China's Tsinghua University (20th) are located outside English-speaking countries.

The United States is unrivaled in the attractiveness of its university system, as 14 of the top 20 THE universities are based in the US and every year nearly 1 million students come to the US to study at an American university. Much of this appeal comes from the prestige of US universities (many of which are private and supported by the state only indirectly), but the federal government also plays a role. Although US universities are highly regarded abroad, many potential applicants are dependent on advice due to the complex application and visa processes. The Office of Global Education Programs therefore supports the EducationUSA network. This consists of 435 centers that offer advice in embassies and consulates as well as American Spaces, NGOs and other partner institutions. In 2015, around 4 million young people and young adults used the services of EducationUSA (ACPD, 2019). In addition to drawing foreign students to the United States, many American universities have a presence abroad, either though branch campuses or American institutions overseas. The latter exists in over 55 countries, with the average institution enrolling between 1,000 and 2,000 students on an €18 million operating budget (Kyle, 2018).

The Office of Academic Exchanges develops and manages several major U.S. government academic exchange programs, including the well-known Fulbright Program. Since its foundation, more than 390,000 people from over 160 countries have participated in the program, with over 7500 participating in 2018 (FFSB, 2017; US ACPD, 2019). It is considered an extremely successful means of familiarizing future leaders with the United States, and several other countries have explicitly tried to emulate it.

Largely as a result of the prestige of its educational sector, the United Kingdom enjoys an outsized role in international education. Indeed, the UK's higher education is extremely prominent internationally, both in terms of drawing foreign students to the UK and offering transnational education (TNE) abroad. 139 UK universities have a TNE presence and there are a full 43 UK overseas campuses, a figure that trails only the US (Universities UK, 2019).

The UK government is also active in promoting mobility to the UK, particularly from developing countries. More than 450,000 international students study in the UK each year. To increase mobility, the British government supports three major scholarship programs: Chevening, Marshall (US only) and Commonwealth Scholarships. In 2019, these programs awarded nearly 400 scholarships collectively (Chevening, 2019; MAAC, 2020; CSC, 2019). Despite this success, there have been ongoing debates about the role of IHE in Britain's university sector. With ongoing debates about immigration, cutting student numbers has been considered.[2] At the same time, the impact of the last decade of austerity policies has left many

---

[2] As Home Secretary, former Prime Minster Theresa May implemented sever restrictions on international students' ability to stay in the UK after graduation.

UK universities dependent on foreign students, who pay much higher tuition. Brexit may also endanger the UK's prominent international role, as EU students now pay the higher "overseas" fee, as opposed to the earlier amount, which was equal to the domestic rate. As a result, some parliamentarians, such as MP Jo Johnson has suggested the cultural and language institution, the British Council should take on promotional duties similar to Germany's Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and other international equivalents (British Council, 2021, pp. 36).

Although they do not match the prestige of the US or UK, other Western nations like Germany and France are also significant destinations for international students. Both also have dedicated agencies to promote mobility, a strategy that is seen as increasingly important worldwide.

Germany's educational promotion agency, the DAAD, is the world's largest funding organization for international academic exchange. Its tasks include awarding scholarships, promoting the internationalization of German universities, and promoting scientific exchange. The DAAD has a global network of 18 regional offices, 5 German Centers for Research and Innovation (DWIH), 40 Information Centers (IC), 11 Information Points, and 426 lectureships (DAAD, 2020). The DAAD budget of €594 million (2019) comes primarily from the funds of various ministries, with the Federal Foreign Office providing over a third of the budget. Additionally, the DAAD is supported by the European Union, as well as foreign governments, companies, and other organizations (ibid.).

Since 1925, the DAAD has supported nearly two and a half million people in Germany and abroad. In 2018 alone 145,000 students, graduates and scientists received funding, more than 60,000 of them foreigners from about 180 countries, with about 1,000 staff involved in the process (DAAD, 2019). Germany also uses educational mobility to serve its foreign policy goals. For instance, the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI) has supported over 15,000 refugee students to receive an undergraduate education in their country of asylum.

France's alternative to the DAAD, Campus France, is newer, existing in its current form only since 2010. Its mission is "to promote the French science model and France as a science location internationally, to initiate international scientific cooperation and to promote the mobility of students, teachers and researchers" (Schneider, 2015, p. 363). It is also under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education (Campus France, 2017).

Campus France's main tasks include managing public scholarship and scientific support programs, advising international students and organizing local information events. For example, the Eiffel Excellence Scholarship Program, comparable to the Fulbright program, is funded with €12 million each year by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and administered by Campus France (Campus France, 2018, p.42). In the 2019 academic year, 378 students were sponsored, 320 for a Master's course and 58 to pursue a PhD (Campus France, 2019). This international network includes 259 offices ("Espaces") and branches ("Antennaes") in 127 countries. In order to facilitate contact with students and scientists, the offices are often located directly in universities. Many Campus France offices also share their premises with the Institut français or the local French embassy. Campus France's strategic focus is particularly on the African continent. In recent years, new branches have been opened in Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda,

Burkina Faso and Ghana (Campus France, 2016b, p. 36). This parallels France's larger geopolitical objectives.

In the West, China has typically been viewed as a lucrative source for sending foreign students. In recent years, however, China has made concerted efforts to become an education destination in its own right. In 2019, China hosted over 500,000 international students from about 200 countries and regions, up from under 400,000 in 2015. Additionally, "Recognizing that today's top students may be tomorrow's political leaders, intellectuals, and experts," China has launched a prestigious scholarship program called the Yenching Academy based at Peking University. The scholarship is similar to the Fulbright and Rhodes Scholarship program. Furthermore, since 2017 China has been the most popular destination in Asia for foreign students. One reason for the rise in inbound student figures is the growing prestige of Chinese universities. The grants on offer in China—such as those run by the China Scholarship Council (CSC)—are an also important factor in the rise in foreign students. The China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), which operates under China's MFA, coordinates most of the university internationalization policy. China is also growing in TNE with university branches in Laos and in Italy, and Malaysia and more due to open in future years (Wojciuk et al., 2015, p. 306).

While "Brain drain" has been a concern among Chinese policymakers, this trend may be reversing. As Wojciuk et al. point out, "The number of students returning to China is growing each year by 30–40 percent, but it is still less than a half of those who left. The best way to stop brain-drain from the PRC is to improve the competitiveness of Chinese universities, and to create more research opportunities, which clearly matches the currently implemented educational projects in the PRC, or the 2011 Plan" (2015, p. 307).

The Chinese upwards trend is partially mirrored by the situation in Russia: Once a great educational destination of the Soviet Union, Russian IHE initially experienced a significant decline. Since the beginning of the 21st century, however, the internationalization of the Russian higher education system has been regarded as an important engine for the modernization and restructuring of the system. In 2012, President Putin declared: "We should multiply our presence in the educational and cultural landscape of the world, especially in countries where part of the population speaks or understands Russian" (Sergunin & Karabeshkin, 2015, p. 356). These efforts have been successful in numerical terms: over nearly 350,000 international students Russia studied in Russia in 2019 (UNESCO, 2020). Many Russian universities, such as the Lomonosov University in Moscow or Saint Petersburg State University, are particularly popular with students from post-Soviet countries.

Additionally, the Russian government aims to massively increase the competitiveness of Russian universities and place them in international rankings. As a way to promote this, Rossotrudnichestvo manages the "www.russia.study" website, which awards up to 15,000 scholarships annually to foreign students at 400 Russian universities. Another example is the Russian Excellence Project 5-100, which was launched in 2013 with the goal of placing 5 Russian universities in the global 100 rankings.[3] This plan has been far from successful, however. Despite 60 billion roubles (approximately €650 million) being spent across 21 institutions, few

---

[3] A total of 21 universities are part of the 5-100 project, including the Far Eastern Federal University, the National Research University - Higher School of Economics and Saint-Petersburg Electrotechnical University.

Russian universities have prominent international profiles, with none placing in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2020 (THE, 2020).

In addition to attempts to internationalize its own universities, Russian institutions of higher education also conduct activities abroad. In 2018/2019, 43 Russian universities provided educational services abroad in a total of 25 countries. These activities are heavily concentrated in former Soviet countries (Arefiev, 2019).

Although the country is not a traditional education destination, Qatar's Education City—a immense 14 square kilometer building project on the outskirts of Doha—is one of the most ambitious new initiatives in IHE today. It was officially opened in 2003 and now houses branches of six American universities and one French and one British university.[4] In addition, two Qatari universities are located in the Education City: the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies and Hamad Bin Khalifa University. The foreign universities receive generous financial support from the Qatari government. According to American sources, the six US institutions alone received over roughly €240 million in funding in 2014 (The Washington Post, 2015).[5] Cooperation therefore also has great advantages for Western institutions. Everette E. Dennis, Dean of the Qatari offshoot of Northwestern University, declared in 2015 that there were no financial risks—only the reputation of the university had been considered. Indeed, universities must repeatedly defend themselves against critics who accuse universities of cooperating with an authoritarian regime. Despite large financial incentives, some universities have had difficulty recruiting professors, so they are forced to rely on short-term teaching (Lewin, 2008). The Education City initiative serves as an important model for other countries seeking to boost IHE, so its success or failure in recent years will be an important bellwether for which direction international university education is likely to go.

4.   Additional players in international university education

Beyond countries with globe-spanning educational ambitions, there are a number of smaller, yet still significant countries in IHE. These include small countries with prestigious universities (such Switzerland or the Netherlands) as well as larger countries with regional significance (Turkey, India).

4.1.   Small, prestigious systems

Switzerland focuses primarily on the prestige of its universities, with internationalization following as a result. The focus on international programs has been growing, however. For the years 2021-2024, the Swiss Federal Council has approved CHF 200 million (around €185 million) for this purpose. In particular, the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Scholars and Artists (ESKAS) scholarship program is available to all foreign nationals

---

[4] Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, Texas A&M University at Qatar, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, HEC Paris and UCL Qatar.
[5] Translation according to annual average exchange rate:
https://www.wolframalpha.com/input/?i=2014+exchange+rate+u.s.+dollars+to+euros.

from states with which Switzerland maintains diplomatic ties. The support primarily targets post-graduate researchers (MA, PhD) with the aim of establishing long-term scientific cooperation (Bundesrat, 2018). From 1996 to 2015, 2430 foreign students were recipients of this prestigious scholarship (SERI, 2018). In total, in the academic year 2019-2020, foreign students made up an impressive 30% of all students and 56% of doctoral graduates (OECD, 2019).

The Nordic countries are similar to Switzerland in their small size, yet prestigious academic reputation. Sweden, a country of only 10 million people, places five universities among the top global 100. This is reflected in its popularity as a destination to study for a doctoral degree, as 35.1%, of PhD students hail from abroad (Eurostat, 2019). Norway has become a much more popular destination in recent years, particularly among graduate to 40% of PhD students came from abroad in in 2020, up from 27.5% in 2010 (Nordisk institutt for studier av innovasjon, 2021). Finland, which enjoys a significant reputational boost as a result of its strong education system (Wocjuick et al., 2015), has made university internationalization a key priority as well (Välimaa, 2014).

Canada is well-renowned in university education, but trails many of its Anglophone partners in international appeal. With political instability in the US and UK, there may now be an opportunity to expand the Canadian reach. 224,548 foreign students studied in Canada in 2019, almost five times the number of outbound students (48,345) (UNESCO, n.d.). The most common countries of origin were China, India and France. Recognizing international students as an economic driver and observing the competition over international students, Canada's internationalization strategy functions as a blueprint to further enhance the country's attractiveness for international students. The strategy is allocated €99.6 million over its duration of five years (Global Affairs Canada, 2019).

Belgium is a popular destination for international students and has a good academic reputation. Indeed, the number of tertiary-level international students in Belgium (53,896) is three times the number of outbound Belgian students (15,868) (UNESCO, n.d.). Belgium has made some inroads into TNE, as the University of Ghent, one of Flanders' most distinguished universities, possesses an English-language offshore campus in Incheon, South Korea, which concentrates on technological degree programs and offers exchanges with the university's other branches in Flanders (Ghent University Global Campus, n.d.).

The Dutch university sector is highly internationalized, with NUFIC (Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation) having been established in 1952 to promote English education and draw students from former colonies to the Netherlands (NUFIC, n.d.a.). In recent years, Dutch education has become increasingly popular internationally, with 12.3% of university students hailing from abroad in 2019, up from 8.9% in 2015 (NUFIC, 2020). Over 80% of Dutch universities have internationalization plans. The Netherlands' efforts at internationalizing its education sector have even been too successful for some Dutch citizens, however. There has been a growing backlash to the large numbers of foreign students, which some critics accuse of limiting the spaces for Dutch students (supports say these claims are unfounded). This prompted a 2019 government decision to strive for more "balance" in the internationalization of universities by limiting English-language courses, creating stricter rules about learning Dutch while studying in the Netherlands, and reducing scholarships for foreign students (Government of the Netherlands, 2019). It is unclear how well these efforts

can be squared with ongoing internationalization: NUFIC's first reason under a "why study in Holland" FAQ is a "wide range of English-taught programs" (NUFIC, n.d.b).

Lastly, South Africa's affordability and mostly English-language institutions make it a popular international student destination. 42,267 students came to the country for their higher education (UNESCO, n.d.). Inbound students overwhelmingly come from other African countries. The International Education Association of South Africa found that in 2017, 78% of all international students studying in the country came from fellow African countries (IEASA, 2019). The most common countries of origin (by order of frequency) were Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho and Namibia (UNESCO, n.d.). South Africa is also home to the internationally highest-ranked African university – the University of Cape Town (THE, 2019). These attributes demonstrate how the attractiveness of South Africa's higher education institutions support the country's establishment as a regional leader.

4.2.   Rising educational powers

India sends many students abroad to top institutions internationally and the number of Indian students studying abroad is almost eight times the size of the number of inbound international students. Among the 375,000 outbound Indian students, the most popular destinations were primarily economically strong English-speaking countries, with the United States, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and Germany leading the list (UNESCO, n.d.). At the same time, India's higher education institutions have been sought out by some countries in the Indian neighborhood. India's "New Education Policy" wants to promote the country as a "global study destination" (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020, p. 39). With a higher education strategy spanning the years from 2019-2024, India intends to (more than) quadruple inbound international students to 200,000 by 2023 (Department of Higher Education, 2018). Indian universities are also encouraged to set up campuses abroad or invite foreign branch campuses into the country (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). Still, utilization rates for scholarships remain low (ICCR, 2020). Despite ambitious plans to increase India's appeal, progress has been slow. There were only 47,000 inbound students in 2019, with the majority originating from India's neighborhood. The most frequent countries of origin were Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nigeria (ibid.).

Turkey, too, has taken IHE much more seriously as an ECP tool in recent years. 20 universities have been designated as part of the core group for internationalization. There are currently about 100,000 students abroad, and roughly 115,000 foreign students studying in Turkey. This latter figure places Turkey near the bottom of OECD rankings, percentage-wise (Study in China, n.d.).

First implemented in 2012, the government-funded Türkiye Scholarship program has grown rapidly in recent years. After receiving roughly 4,000 applications in its first year, numbers rose to nearly 145,000 in 2019 (Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities, n.d.). Nearly 40,000 students from 167 countries were awarded scholarships last year (e-Bursum, 2019, p. 32). The program also consists of an alumni network, which is primarily centered in MENA and Central Asia (Turkey Mezunlari, n.d.). The Turkic Council also fosters education links between the Turkic-speaking countries. There is currently a planned Turkic University Association and member states have also collaborated to write Common Turkic History Textbook in order to emphasize their shared past (Turkic Council, 2019a). The Orkhun Exchange Program is another shared initiative currently in the pilot phase. In the 2017-2018 academic

year, 43 students of member universities from the politics and IR departments utilized the program (Turkic Council, 2019b). The program will 'expand significantly' this year, after the previous academic year was considered highly successful.

Indonesia's appeal as a tourist reputation has also grown in recent years, similarly boosting its status as a study destination. Still, the 7,677 inbound students in 2020 are overshadowed by Indonesia's 49,900 outbound students (UNESCO, n.d.). Perhaps to address this mismatch, the number of English-language programs available in Indonesia's 3,226 colleges and universities is growing, with the island Bali as a particularly popular destination (Ministry of Research and Technology, 2018; Reuter, 2019). However, finding a balance between expenditure for external cultural policy fields and domestic spending remains a contested issue in Indonesia. Especially as a developing country, the country's intensive support for international students and Indonesian students seeking an education abroad rather than investing in better accessibility to education domestically is not always popular at home (Alta & Sudrajat, 2020). In this, Indonesia's case speaks to an ongoing tension in IHE for developing countries that demands careful domestic justification of foreign expenditure.

Saudi Arabia's well-known higher education scholarship program complicate its classification as a "rising educational power". Traditionally, Saudi students were encouraged to go abroad for education due to a shortage of higher education institutions within the country. The government's large-scale support has resulted in the country's most-institutionalized ECP effort. Today, Saudi Arabia's IHE strategy closely follows its efforts at economic diversification. Today, more effort is made to attract institutions to Saudi Arabia, making it a rising power in its domestic understanding of IHE. The ban on international branch campuses on Saudi Arabian soil ban was finally lifted in 2019. This reorientation now has the Ministry of Education investing to attract the attention of international higher education institutions (Salama, 2021).

Across this wide range of countries with diverse IHE approaches, we can see a mix of strategies. Nearly all pursue internationalization as a way to develop human capital and gain revenue. A more elite set is able to use the prestige of its university system to train future members of the global elite, ideally imbuing them with positive feelings about the host country in the process. Furthermore, the mere existence of well-renowned universities can burnish a country's reputation, increasing its attractiveness as a trade and diplomatic partner. In future years, we can expect not only the countries discussed above, but also many others, to adopt most or all of these approaches in the race to advance their domestic higher education systems.

5.   Conclusion

International higher education forms a crucial component of dozens of nations' external cultural policies. Indeed, analysts argue that "[international higher education] is the single most important focus of most countries' cultural relations activities" (British Council, 2021 p. 16). The multifaceted linguistic, political, and economic motivations for IHE make it a very tempting area for competition.

While rivalries in IHE are fierce, there is also ample room for growth. In 2018, there were roughly 224 million global educational enrolments, a figure that is set to rise to 594 million global enrolments by 2040 (British Council, 2021, pp. 36). This "growing pie" will make competition for international students from developing world universities a particularly impor-

tant phenomenon, as student capacity in the developed world remains relatively constant. Despite growth in the global south, the place of Anglophone and other wealthy countries at the top of the rankings is unlikely to change anytime soon. Funding gaps remain massive, and the world's best universities measure their lifetimes in centuries, not years. Progress in education is slow, but this will not stop many countries from trying.

The ways in which countries try to attract students—and the rationale for such efforts—will likely be sharpened in the coming years. As the British Council argues, "the way in which countries go about targeting higher education varies considerably, and there are detailed lessons to be learned, but the takeaway is the need to have a strategic approach" (2021, p. 36). With the proliferation of internationalization strategies, rise in branch campuses, and expansion of educational hubs, it seems that many of the world's countries are closely heeding this advice.

References

Altbach, P. (2003). *Centers and Peripheries in the Academic Profession: The Special Challenges of Developing Countries*. Retrieved from: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9781403982568_1

Altbach, P., and Peterson., P. (2008). Higher Education as a Projection of America's Soft Power. In: *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, Yasushi Watanabe and David McConnell (eds.). M.E. Sharpe

Altbach, P.G. (1987). *Higher education in the third world: Themes and variation*. Sangam Books.

Amirbek, A., and Ydyrys, K. (2014). Education and Soft Power: Analysis as an Instrument of Foreign Policy. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.428

British Council. (2021). *Soft power and cultural relations in a time of crisis*. Retrieved from: https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/policy-reports/soft-power-cultural-relations-crisis

Bundesrat. (2018b). Switzerland's International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation. *Strategy of the Federal Council*. Retrieved from https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/services/publications/data-base-publications/int-strategy-eri.html

Calderon, A. (2018). *Massification of higher education revisited*. RMIT University. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/36975860/Massification_of_higher_education_revisited

Eurostat. (2019). *Culture Statistics 2019*. Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10177894/KS-01-19-712-EN-N.pdf

Government of the Netherlands. (2019). *More balanced internationalisation in higher education*. Retrieved from: https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2019/09/06/more-balanced-internationalisation-in-higher-education

Jussi, V and Weimer, L. (2014). *The trends of internationalization in Finnish higher education*. https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2017/14678/pdf/ZfPaed_2014_5_Vaelimaa_Weimer_The_trends_of_internationalization_in_Finnish_higher_education.pdf

Knight, J. (2015). Moving from Soft Power to Knowledge Diplomacy. *International Higher Education*. Retrieved from: https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ihe/article/view/6135

Lee, J. (2015). Soft power and cultural diplomacy: emerging education hubs in Asia. *Comparative Education*. DOI: 10.1080/03050068.2015.1037551

Lomer, S. (2017). Soft power as a policy rationale for international education in the UK: a critical analysis. *Higher Education*. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-016-0060-6

Nordisk institutt for studier av innovasjon, f. o. u. (2021, March 19, 2021). *Share of international doctorate graduates in Norway from 2010 to 2020 [Graph]*. Retrieved from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1123786/share-of-international-doctorate-graduates-in-norway

NUFIC. (2020). *Jaarverslag 2019*. Retrieved from: https://www.nuffic.nl/sites/default/files/2020-08/jaarverslag-2019.pdf

NUFIC. (n.d.a). *Facts and figures*. Retrieved from: https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/facts-and-figures/regions-and-universities

NUFIC. (n.d.b.). *International Offices*. Retrieved from: https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/about-us/international-offices

Nye, J. (n.d.). Soft Power and Higher Education. *FORUM*. Retrieved from: http://forum.mit.edu/articles/soft-power-and-higher-education/

OECD. (2019). Share of international, foreign and all students enrolled by field of education. *OECD Database on Education and Training*. Retrieved from https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG_ENRL_MOBILES_FIELDS#

SERI. (2018). *Scholarships that Change Lives' - online survey of former FCS Swiss government scholarship holders for the years 1996–2015*. Retrieved from Bern: https://www.sbfi.ad-min.ch/sbfi/en/home/services/publications/data-base-publications/survey-eskas.html

Times Higher Education. (1995). *Oxbridge Windfall*. Retrieved from: https://www.timeshigheredu-cation.com/news/oxbridge-windfall/94844.article?storyCode=94844&sectioncode=26.

Wojciuk, A. (2015). *Higher education as a soft power in international relations*. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327689964_8_Higher_educa-tion_as_a_soft_power_in_international_relations

Yerezhepekova, A., and Torebekova, Z. (2019). Education as Soft Power; The Potential of Student Mobility. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from: https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/world-view/education-soft-power-potential-student-mobility

Imprint

The External Cultural Policy Monitor
Developed by Helmut K Anheier, Hertie School & UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, and ifa Competence Centre. Supervised by Helmut K Anheier. Coordinated by Sarah Widmaier for ifa.

Preferred citation
Knudsen, Edward (11/2021). "Higher Education. Comparative report," in: Helmut K. Anheier and ifa (eds.). The External Cultural Policy Monitor. Stuttgart: ifa.

The publication exclusively reflects the personal views of the author.

Editor:
ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen):
Charlottenplatz 17,
70173 Stuttgart,
Postfach 10 24 63,
D-70020 Stuttgart

www.ifa.de

© ifa 2021

Author: Edward Knudsen

Copy-editing by:
ifa's Research Programme "Culture and Foreign Policy"