

# INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

THE BOSTON COLLEGE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

## Issue #106

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# Universities without Academic Freedom Have No Place in Rankings

Carsten A. Holz

The newly released [2021 Times Higher Education \(THE\) World University Rankings](#) carry few surprises. The usual contestants lead the rankings. Yet among these are some institutions, operating under totalitarian regimes, that do not match our expectation of what universities are about. If one adjusts the top 150 universities in the *THE* World University Rankings for academic freedom, those from the People's Republic of China (PRC, including Hong Kong) and from Singapore drop to the bottom of the list.

## The Core Values of or Universities

Current university rankings gloss over that which we value most: free academic discourse. In some countries, academic freedom is nonexistent. Take, for example, the PRC. Fudan University in Shanghai ranks highly in world university rankings. In late 2019, [its charter was revised](#) to remove “freedom of thought,” and the word “independently” was dropped from sentences describing the management of the university and the conduct of academic studies. Inserted was “the comprehensive leadership of the Communist Party.” Student spies reporting on their professors has become common practice across PRC campuses, as has the [dismissal of politically inconvenient faculty members](#). Contrast this with our understanding of the role of freedom in academia, as expressed by Philip Altbach in [2001](#): “Academic freedom is at the very core of the mission of the university. It is essential to teaching and research. Many would argue that a fully developed higher education system cannot exist without academic freedom.”

Or take Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, [tenured professors are fired](#) for political reasons. And criticism of the “central government,” if interpreted by agents of the regime as [“undermining the authority of the central government,”](#) will nowadays lead to imprisonment. Contrast this with [New Zealand law](#), which assigns to universities, among others, “the role of critic and conscience of society.”

## Adjusting University Rankings for Academic Freedom

It is high time to stop treating academic freedom—the very foundation of a university—as an irrelevant ornament of academia. But adjusting the *THE* World University Rankings for academic freedom is difficult.

The [Varieties of Democracy \(V-Dem\) project](#) at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden has now for the first time incorporated a total of five indicators of academic freedom in its database (for 1900 through 2019). These five indicators have allowed researchers to construct a rudimentary [academic freedom index](#) across countries.

Adjusting the *THE* World University Rankings for academic freedom (by multiplying the *THE* score with the academic freedom index value) reveals an astounding pattern. While most universities exhibit an almost one-to-one correspondence between their ranks in the unadjusted and the adjusted *THE* World University Rankings, a single set of universities stands out. Focusing on the top 150 universities in the original *THE* World University Rankings, the seven mainland Chinese universities plunge from ranks 20, 23, 70, 87, 94, 100, and 111 to the very bottom of the list. All five Hong Kong universities and both Singapore universities, the highest of these originally ranked 25th and 39th, end up in 137th to 143rd place, just above the seven mainland Chinese institutions.

Alternatively, consider press freedom as a proxy for academic freedom. In the United States, academic freedom derives from the First Amendment on free speech, and so

## Abstract

Academic freedom plays little or no role in university rankings, yet makes all the difference between a thriving academy and regime-controlled higher education. Adjusting a well-known university ranking to include academic freedom easily shakes out “top” universities under totalitarian regimes. If our values are due more than lip service, then the current system of university rankings is in urgent need of reform.

**Current university rankings**

***gloss over that which we value most: free academic discourse.***

does freedom of the press. While not identical, academic freedom and freedom of the press go hand in hand. Reporters without Borders compiles a [World Press Freedom Index](#) covering 180 nations.

The results are virtually the same. The mainland Chinese universities tumble to the very bottom of the list, immediately preceded by the Singapore and Hong Kong universities (with one of the latter universities, the University of Hong Kong, ranking slightly higher, in 132nd place). Additionally, adjusting by press freedom favors continental European universities over UK and US universities, because press freedom is significantly higher in countries such as Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany than in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Is press freedom a reliable proxy for academic freedom? The fact that a [scientific study of academic freedom](#) across 28 European countries ranks the UK 27th suggests that it is. And the PRC's rank of 177 in press freedom, surpassing only Eritrea, Turkmenistan, and North Korea, matches what we know about academic freedom in the PRC.

### **Academic Freedom in the Age of STEM and Extreme Managerialism**

In the author's home institution, the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology (HKUST), faculty members in STEM (sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields see little need for academic freedom. Predominantly mainland Chinese scholars in these fields chastise colleagues in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences for research that could, just possibly, attract unwelcome attention from the regime, to the point where colleagues leave.

Many of these mainland faculty will be Chinese Communist Party members whose membership [oath](#) includes, among others, to "carry out the Party's decisions, strictly observe Party discipline, guard Party secrets, and be loyal to the Party." Party allegiance trumps everything, including academic freedom.

It does not help when the institution has taken managerialism to an extreme, from the absence of meaningful faculty participation in academic matters to a passive, management-controlled "senate" and the lack of a labor union. The PRC model of higher education means focusing on STEM under factory-like arrangements controlled by management/the Party. Under such a system, there is no room for freedom of thought about society, the economy, let alone the polity or history. The truth is owned by the Party.

In a speech titled "[What Is a University?](#)" given in 1935 in his capacity as president of the University of Chicago, Robert M. Hutchins stated that "a university cannot exist without freedom of enquiry, freedom of discussion, and freedom of teaching," and that "the purpose of education is not to fill the minds of students with facts; it is not to reform them, or amuse them, or make them expert technicians in any field. It is to teach them to think, if that is possible, and to think always for themselves." Under a totalitarian regime, there is no freedom of enquiry, no freedom of discussion, no freedom of teaching, and no learning to think for oneself.

Replacing "freedom of thought" with "comprehensive leadership of the Communist Party" and replacing the quest for truth with Party "truth" constitutes nothing less than a public declaration that this institution has abdicated its right to be considered a *university*. Then why is it still included in university rankings?

### **The Consequences of Ignoring Academic Freedom in University Rankings**

It is for good reason that the [motto of Harvard University](#) is "veritas" (Latin for "verity" or "truth") and that [Stanford University](#) "Die Luft der Freiheit weht" (German for "the wind of freedom blows"). Academic freedom in the quest for truth is the very [foundation of a university](#). The comprehensive leadership of the Communist Party and its monopoly on truth is its very antithesis.

University rankings such as the *THE* World University Rankings reward totalitarian regimes for their transformation of academia into a strictly controlled system targeting regime-desired technological advances, with the humanities and social sciences reduced to a soulless wasteland. Human values make way for obedience to the Great Leader. A body of castrated pseudo-academics shapes research fields worldwide as journal editors, reviewers, and article authors. And institutions built on strict obedience to the Communist Party in a world devoid of freedom of thought constitute great universities. ▲

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## Education Agents and Their Work with Universities

Vincenzo Raimo, Iona Yuelu Huang, and Eddie West

There are estimated to be some 20,000 education or international student recruitment agencies worldwide. These enterprises have become a key conduit of the ever more commercialized journey that thousands of international students make each year to enroll in universities abroad. These middle wo/men, serving as intermediaries between universities, increasingly desperate for international tuition fee revenues, and students searching for their perfect international study destination, have become a staple of the international student recruitment industry.

### What Are Education Agents?

The [UK Government Department for International Trade](#) provides a description of an agent as a person or entity that “works on behalf of an exporter [in this case, universities], introducing their products or services [degree courses] to potential clients [i.e., students]...” And it tells us that “The agent is paid a percentage of the selling price” (the tuition fee).

There are also agencies that are contracted by the students to support them in their applications to overseas universities. This type of agent is not considered in this article except insofar as they are also contracted by the university, i.e., contracted and paid by both the student and the university—what Americans refer to as “double dipping.”

### Why Do Universities Work with Agents?

Universities work with agents because they consider them a cost-effective way of securing new international student enrollments. In Huang *et al.*'s [study](#), *Power and control: Managing agents for international student recruitment in higher education*, university staff reported a variety of reasons for working with agents, stating that “agents are a very quick way into getting students”; that “the cost of going there [emerging markets] is so high and the return on investment is not there”; because certain countries are unsafe for university staff travel; and because competitors work with agents and universities do not want to miss out on opportunities.

While we lack detailed reliable data on the use of agents, except for Australia, we do know that nearly all universities in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, and a growing number in the United States, work with agents, and that some universities rely very heavily on agents to meet student intake targets. Agents have also become a key channel for international student recruitment to universities in continental Europe as well as in private and public institutions worldwide where international tuition fee revenue is critical, including international branch campuses.

### Abstract

Education agents are a key feature of the ever more commercialized journey that thousands of international students make each year to enroll in universities abroad. They are intermediaries between universities, increasingly desperate for tuition fee revenues, and students searching for their perfect study destination. They have become a staple of the recruitment industry. But what are agents, and why do universities work with them? And what governance mechanisms exist to protect students from unscrupulous agents?

73 percent of all international students recruited to Australian universities in 2018 came via an agent.

### How Many Students Are Recruited via Agents?

Agents are involved in the recruitment of students at all levels, including PhD programs. While there are a variety of data sources for the percentage of students recruited through agents, we found no single reliable, up-to-date, comparative source. The most authoritative source at a country level is that published by the Australian government, which reports that 73 percent of all international students recruited to Australian universities in 2018 came via an agent. The New Zealand government reports that 50 percent of international students are recruited through agents. There is no official national data on the use of agents for the United Kingdom, but our research suggests that at least a third of international students in the United Kingdom come through agents, with some universities relying almost entirely on agents for their international student intake. Data for the United States is the most elusive, in part because the sector is so diverse and because agents remain controversial in some quarters. However, the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) [reported in 2014](#) that 11 percent of students in US universities were recruited through agents and, more recently, [Bridge Education Group](#) reported that 22 percent of international students in the United States are recruited via agents.

Commission rates reported by universities range from 12 to 15 percent of the first-year tuition fee, but competitive pressures lead some universities to pay significantly more. Increasingly, universities are also paying continuation commissions, in particular for students who progress from a pathway program to Year 1. In addition to flat rate commissions, some universities also pay bonuses for meeting volume or other targets, and also provide other incentives like expenses-paid campus “familiarization tours.” Some agents also receive payments from the students whom they advise, in addition to being compensated by the universities for which they recruit, an inherent conflict of interest when these dual sources of income are not transparent—which is most often the case.

### How Is the University–Agent Relationship Governed?

Beyond Australia, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, there is little direct government regulation over the way in which universities work with agents to recruit students.

In the United Kingdom, the role of agents and the extent of their use by universities is a largely hidden activity. The Quality Assurance Agency’s [guide to Supporting and Enhancing the Experience of International Students in the UK](#) advises universities to make up-to-date lists of appointed agents public and make clear to students that agents offer a service for which they are paid by providers. There is little evidence of uniform compliance with either recommendation. While the United Kingdom’s consumer protection body for students, The Office for Students, [has raised questions](#) about the role of agents in its review of university admissions, it is yet to report on the matter or go as far as to issue any formal guidance or regulation.

In the United States, incentive-compensation-based recruitment of domestic students is prohibited by the Higher Education Act, which governs the administration of federal financial aid. But a “carve out,” or exception, allows that this restriction does “not apply to the recruitment of foreign students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive federal student assistance.” However, actual governmental oversight of international recruitment agent activity is, for all intents and purposes, nonexistent.

In our [study](#), *Governance of agents in the recruitment of international students: A typology of contractual management approaches in higher education*, we examined the contractual governance approaches adopted by universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and how the outcome of these approaches was perceived by university managers.

Among our conclusions is that a one-size-fits-all approach to the contractual governance of agents is ill-advised because of the many variables and risks inherent in international student recruitment activity. The *laissez-faire* archetype illustrates the need for active involvement in agent management by universities, notwithstanding the temptation to outsource the function entirely. And while working with fewer agents with strong relational contractual governance tends to lead to better results, if universities work with a large number of agents, it is important to specify, and follow through on, monitoring terms and processes in agents’ contracts.

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### Conclusions

Education agents have been an important part of the international student recruitment marketing mix for many years. Increasing pressures on university finances, coupled more recently with COVID-19 travel restrictions, is intensifying reliance on agents, further ensuring their role as a mainstay in sustaining universities' financial wellbeing.

With ever more students being recruited to universities through agents, greater transparency about their work for universities is, in our view, long overdue. Failing to prioritize transparency risks students' welfare and universities' reputations. Host country regulations and codes of practice are only useful where they are rigorously followed by universities and clearly communicated to prospective international students, and where they can be policed. ▲

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## Undervaluing Doctoral Education post COVID

Tessa DeLaquil and Lizhou Wang

In July 2020, we wrote a personal reflection on [the isolation of doctoral education in the times of COVID-19](#), focusing on the effects of lost opportunities for skills development, training, and network-building in doctoral education. While we made some recommendations at that point for ways to counter a few of these issues, new systemic challenges have since emerged in different national and institutional contexts.

As national systems of higher education and individual higher education institutions grapple with loss of funds in this pandemic year, recent months have shown that the consequences may have dire implications especially for doctoral education. In this article, we demonstrate that by undervaluing the role of doctoral education in higher education, national higher education systems risk critical long-term damage, not only to higher education, but also to economic and human development.

### The Value of Doctoral Education

With the rise of the knowledge economy, individual nations have sought to differentiate and to strengthen their higher education systems through inclusion of research universities. This trend includes the creation of doctoral-level programs across disciplines, from STEM fields to the humanities and social sciences. As such, doctoral students play an increasingly important role in the economic and sociopolitical development of countries through their roles in universities as participants in the creation of knowledge through research. Doctoral students are also involved as teachers or as teaching assistants in educating and training undergraduate students. In this way, doctoral students contribute directly and indirectly to the labor force across various industries.

With highly specialized knowledge in their respective fields, original research skills, and transferable competencies, doctoral graduates are expected to be important contributors to the knowledge economy, both within academia and industry. A doctoral degree has become a common prerequisite for academic research and teaching positions.

### Centers vs. Peripheries?

The growing educational gap between centers and peripheries in international higher education, that is, between high-income, middle-income, and low-income regions, countries, national systems, institutions, and individuals, has been exacerbated during

### Abstract

Undervaluing doctoral education by restricting support for PhD students and programs due to COVID-19 resource losses may shift global talent flows in the immediate future, and potentially in the long run.

the pandemic. In spite of the importance of graduate programs, many institutions and education departments in various countries have cut or plan to cut programs, especially in arts, humanities, and social sciences. This process does not only occur at institutions in peripheral countries, but also at top-tier institutions within center countries.

Doctoral programs, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, across the United States have suspended admissions for the Fall 2021, including at Harvard, Brown, Columbia, MIT, New York University, and more. The reasons given are related to limited resources, which departments are electing to redirect to support their current doctoral students. However, restricting admissions in this way may “squeeze the pipeline” for PhD students in the humanities and social sciences, with potentially more significant effects on the least advantaged of prospective students.

In March 2020, UK PhD students and early career researchers sent a letter to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) requesting an extension of research funding for the length of the pandemic. However, in November 2020, UKRI “strongly advised” that students adjust their projects to fit their original funding periods, providing limited funds to those students struggling the most to complete their projects in time.

The UK and US cases above point to the restrictive effects of COVID-19 on doctoral education. For prospective PhD students, this limits access to doctoral education for at least one year, with possible knock-on effects as competition for limited places increases in the coming years. With fewer peers in their programs, current PhD students in the United States and in other similar doctoral systems may also be spread thin across departments to maintain the current level of departmental research and teaching functions. In the United Kingdom, without funding extensions, PhD students may be forced to change the substance of their research in order to meet resource constraints, arguably going against the very purpose of a doctoral degree.

Germany has done the opposite, with a cabinet decision in April 2020 to extend contracts for PhD students by a length of time equal to the amount of time lost due to COVID-related restrictions.

On the other hand, universities in Hong Kong and Singapore decided to provide funding and additional places for students whose study abroad plans were interrupted due to COVID-19. Prestigious individual universities, such as Hong Kong University and The Chinese University of Hong Kong, offered lucrative scholarship schemes for outstanding candidates who hold a PhD admission offer from top universities around the world. These plans have successfully attracted a considerable number of applications from students from various countries.

### Brain Drain or Brain Gain?

The above examples demonstrate how global talent flows might change during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Nations and institutions that highly value doctoral education are taking advantage of the situation and expect to obtain long-term benefits of “brain gain,” as these students adjust to local lifestyles, learn the local language, receive training, conduct research, and build academic networks, regardless of whether they are domestic or international students.

Nonetheless, providing global economic and social activities return to “normal” in a few years, will institutions at the center continue to attract top talent and PhD graduates in research, teaching, and postdoc positions, in spite of their decisions during the pandemic period? Although these institutions at the center, such as those in the US or UK cases, may undervalue PhD education in their current decisions and pause PhD recruitment for a year or two, the unequal power dynamic in global higher education might persist to their advantage. However, from the world wars to the recent geopolitical tensions, history has shown that international talents demonstrate their preferences through the way they flee and flow in times of trouble and in times of stability.

### Conclusion

The training and support (financial and other) of doctoral students in COVID-19 times are critical for the future of research and the next generation of scholars across disciplines. Universities are making hard decisions regarding whether to cut funding—in particular in the humanities and social sciences. Although these cuts might seem financially beneficial

*Nations and institutions that highly value doctoral education are taking advantage of the situation and expect to obtain long-term benefits of “brain gain”.*

in the short term, such decisions have ramifications for research capacity building in the long run. Changes in national/institutional policies may alter global talent flows for a few years, but it is difficult to conclude who will benefit most and for how long. With the shifting world order, the clear effects of populist nationalism in some countries at the center, and with more openness and multilateralism in the policies of emerging economies, there is no guarantee that global talent flows will once again turn in their favor. ▲

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## Measuring Higher Education Access: Purpose and Context

C. M. Malish

The share of the population getting access to higher education (HE) and joining the workforce with higher education qualifications is an important indicator of the quality of labor and of countries' potential for social and economic development. Planners and policy makers rely on indicators to assess progress, set targets for future expansion of the HE sector, and focus on particular social groups to ensure equity across an expanding system. Gross enrollment ratio (GER) is a widely used indicator to measure access to HE. Recently, though, Pankaj Mittal and Bhushan Patwardhan (*IHE, 2020, Fall Issue # 104*) argued that another measure, called eligible enrollment ratio (EER), is a more realistic indicator for measuring access to HE, especially for economies such as India's. This article attempts to contribute to the debate by comparing the merits and demerits of GER and EER.

### Indicators of Access to Higher Education

Enrollment ratio (ER) reflects the vital linkage between education and society at large. Gross enrollment ratio (GER), net intake rate (NIR), net enrollment rate (NER), and gross intake ratio (GIR) are some of the main indicators relied upon when making comparisons between educational systems. Not all indicators are suitable for HE. For instance, NER, which calculates the percentage of age-specific enrollment for a given level of education, is rarely used in HE, as total age-specific enrollment is difficult to calculate due to the multiplicity of available entry pathways.

### Gross Enrollment Ratio

Among these indicators, GER is widely and globally used as an indicator to measure access to HE. Even the classification of HE into elite, mass, and universal stages (by Martin Trow, in the early 1970s) is based on GER. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, GER represents total enrollment at a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of the age cohort corresponding to that same level of education. Since 18–23 is the age segment of the group enrolled in higher education in India, GER in a given year is calculated as total enrollment in higher education institutions (HEIs), regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total 18–23-year-old population cohort that year.

### Abstract

Gross enrollment ratio (GER) is a widely used indicator to measure access to education. Recently, another indicator called eligible enrollment ratio (EER) was introduced. This article attempts to compare GER and EER and their utility in assessing the progress of higher education in India. This article argues that GER is more likely to remain the most appropriate indicator for measuring access to higher education.

**“GER vs. EER” appears to be a false debate.**

### Eligible Enrollment Ratio

As indicated by Mittal and Patwardhan, EER is calculated as the total enrollment in HE in a given year regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of the age cohort (in the official HE age group) who have attained a secondary qualification (class 12). Thus, applying this additional eligibility criterion simply excludes all those in the age cohort who did not attain a secondary qualification. EER provides vital insights about demand and supply conditions in HE. However, unlike GER, EER can in principle be increased in two different ways. One is by increasing the total enrollment, and the second by reducing the number of members of the qualified age cohort. The second scenario is obviously not progressive. For instance, EER can be high even with a very low level of total enrollment, if the size of the eligible and qualified (12th class pass) age cohort is limited: If 1,000 out of one million college-going age population in a country have passed the secondary school certificate and the total enrollment in HE is 1,000, then EER is 100 percent.

### Comparing GER and EER

“GER vs. EER” appears to be a false debate. As discussed, the purpose of each indicator is different. The comparative advantage that each brings in should not be the rationale for preferring one over another. We need to examine both the purpose for and the context of using an indicator. In the specific context of the knowledge economy, the share of the population acquiring higher education qualifications is crucial information for social and economic planning. Here, GER serves an important purpose, indicating how many college-aged youths are enrolled in HEIs. A high GER means that more are enrolled in colleges and universities. On the contrary, EER, taken independently, is inadequate to provide direction for planners. For instance, a higher EER could be due to a lower number of eligible-age cohorts. So EER is meaningful only in comparison with GER. It is noteworthy that in mature HE systems such as, for instance, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, the gap between GER and EER is minimal. It is due to the progress that these systems have made in universalizing school education.

Mittal and Patwardhan drew our attention to some of the limitations of GER. For instance, including international students when calculating GER is allegedly giving undue advantage to mature HE systems, which attract numerous students from all over the world. There are three more factors impacting GER in emerging economies like India. First, the enrollment of mature students (who are older than the official HE age group). In universalized HE systems such as the United States and the United Kingdom, mature students constitute a substantial share of the total enrollment and are an influential factor in calculating GER. This phenomenon is not significant in some other regions such as Asia and Africa. Second is the duration of undergraduate (UG) programs. Compared to four-year UG degrees such as in the United States, Indian UG degrees take three years, except for technical and professional programs such as engineering and medicine. This has serious implications on GER. Third is the inclusion of all types of postsecondary qualifications when calculating GER. Some postsecondary study programs, which are below the bachelor degree (level 6 of ISCED 2011), should not be considered higher education.

### Conclusion

To conclude, GER and EER indicate two distinctive scenarios of HE enrollment. Therefore, discussing the advantage of the one over the other may not be very helpful. Although EER is an important indicator, taken alone it is of little use for planners of education and economy. If the aim is to envision an inclusive society and a globally competitive economy in a knowledge era, then GER better suits this purpose. Therefore, it is more likely that GER will continue to remain the main indicator to measure access to HE. However, there is immense potential for improving it, to make it globally comparable and fairer for low and lower-middle economies. ▲

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# Internationalization, Digitalization, and COVID: A German Perspective

**Dorothea Rüländ**

**D**igitalization has been a pressing issue on the agenda for quite some time, and for good reason. Now, however, we are facing a turning point: COVID-19 is speeding up many processes; the cards are being reshuffled. We find ourselves in the middle of an extensive transformation process, which will change not only the academic world of universities, but also our working environment—and our lives in general.

## The Impact of COVID-19 on International Higher Education

Universities, international higher education, and international research collaboration will look quite different after COVID-19, for several reasons. Science has never been as important as today. We need tight-knitted networks to face major global themes such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, since no country can overcome these challenges on its own. The fight against COVID-19 illustrates that fact.

International research collaboration has proven to be quite fruitful and resilient during this crisis. More research has been published in an international context than during a similar time period before COVID-19, especially during the beginning of the crisis. For good reasons: Research partners knew each other very well, a common understanding and trust existed on all sides. Switching to a digital mode was easy. Therefore, scientific cooperation will be the key to successful internationalization in the future.

## The Role of Digitalization in Higher Education

But what is the role of digitalization amid all these trends? Digitalization renders us much more independent from time and space. The largest accelerator in this process has been COVID-19. Mobility came to a stop in March 2020 and left no other option. From one day to the next, universities worldwide had to move to virtual classrooms. Universities all over the world had to find new ways of teaching and doing research. If we look back over the last few months altogether, this change worked quite well.

So, is everything all right and will the academic world soon become entirely digital? Most likely not—but what will the future look like? The role of physical and digital mobility will definitely change. As mentioned before, the switch to digitalization in cooperation worked quite well because researchers already knew each other, had met before, and were used to working together.

## Students and the New Academic World

Meanwhile, circumstances look quite different for students. The younger generation deserves the chance to get to know each other personally, build intercultural skills, meet people in a foreign country, learn about different perspectives, develop trust and networks and all the benefits deriving from physical mobility. Therefore, on this level, physical mobility will still play a very important role. Nevertheless, digitalization can be a useful tool to prepare and accompany physical mobility.

We do know that at least 50 percent of all students in Germany will never go abroad for several reasons, for example, funding or family. Here again, digitalization can support internationalization at home in many ways. A further advantage of digitalization is that it allows for a new diversity. Digitalization might serve as one of the main catalysts in reaching new target groups, offering equal opportunities, diversifying the student body, and allowing more outreach.

### Abstract

Digitalization of higher education has been a pressing issue on the agenda for quite some time and for good reason. Higher education will look quite different after the COVID-19 pandemic: Digital change is not merely advancing technology, but organizational and systemic innovation that affects all areas of higher education and the educational system. The university of the future will, in all its aspects, be an international university, physically as well as virtually.

*Will the academic world soon become entirely digital?*

The quality of studies might improve because it is much easier and more convenient to bring the most renowned scientists together in a virtual space than to expect them to travel. But we should not forget that a lot depends on digital infrastructure. We should keep this in mind whenever we think about digital cooperation. There are still parts in the world where access cannot be taken for granted. And we should not increase the digital divide that already exists. Circling back to individuals, it is noticeable that the benefits of digital formats of mobility increase depending on how far an individual is in their studies.

An academic environment that is 100 percent digital is, however, unlikely to become a reality for the majority of students worldwide. We know from research done in this field that currently, digital study programs offer an alternative to only 10 percent of students interested in internationalization. We might look at a different picture if we focused on lifelong learning and not only on full study programs, but also on micro credentials.

### Looking Beyond the Digitalization of Academic Mobility

Therefore, in the future, we have to ask ourselves what effects and outcomes we expect from mobility, to then be able to decide which kind of mobility—whether of a physical or virtual kind—offers the best approach to reach this goal.

This is just one dimension of digitalization and its role for internationalization. However, internationalization is so much more than just mobility. To continue this train of thought, we might not only have to rethink internationalization, but universities as a whole. European universities and their respective networks have had to switch to digitalization to uphold their multilateral cooperation. As mentioned before, digitalization renders us more independent and flexible. Why should each university offer the same courses? Would it not make sense to join forces and develop study programs together, the way it works within some area studies at German universities?

A different dimension will be to digitalize the student journey and the field of administration at universities. Students will be supported individually according to their needs and interests and be guided through their journey to the foreign country of their choice, to the university where they might decide to study. All this could be organized conveniently and efficiently via digitalization and artificial intelligence. This is not a *brave new world*, it is already a reality in Germany in the form of personalized concepts via a platform called MyGuide supporting and guiding prospective students on their way from their home country to the university of their choice in various host countries.

### Conclusion

All in all, digital change is not merely advancing technology, but organizational and systematic innovation that affects all areas of higher education and the educational system. We should avoid isolated solutions, which might be the mistake of the past. All parts of universities will be affected, including the content of teaching, because in such unknown environments students will need new skills. And, last but not least, this development asks for a new governance. We need a holistic strategic approach. This offers a completely new quality to internationalization. The university of the future will be an international university in all aspects, physically as well as virtually. ▲

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# Globally Engaged and Locally Relevant: Revisiting Higher Education

Janet Ilieva and Vangelis Tsiligiris

**H**igher education institutions are grappling with COVID-19 outbreaks on campus, and travel conditions, limited flights, and health concerns are presenting challenges to mobility. To mitigate safety concerns, many universities have introduced a staggered return to campus with options for students to study online or with local partners based overseas, or to start the following term. Anecdotal evidence suggests that universities with flexible learning options are managing overseas student demand relatively well.

While solutions to pressures from all sides are short-term and focused on the current academic cycle, there are some long-term considerations for higher education institutions and policy makers, which we are exploring in this article.

## Revisiting International Higher Education

The current barriers to mobility are pressing students to reassess the value of international education. For educators, these barriers present an opportunity to repurpose their higher education offer. For too long, the global race for talent has been measured by the distribution of countries' market share of international students and these students' economic contribution to the host country.

While the current environment favors remote learning and studying near to home, it also presents an opportunity to revisit the value of international education as seen through students' lenses. This goes beyond graduation rates, employment outcomes, and life-changing experiences. Increasingly, globally minded students are environmentally conscious, and their choice of study opportunities is no longer solely focused on career prospects. An institution's carbon footprint and contribution to sustainable development policies globally are likely to become critical decision-making factors for students. The question is whether this change will be demand driven, or whether higher education institutions will take leadership on this matter.

For too long, countries' international education strategies have been export driven. Additionally, universities have adopted a rather simplistic approach when developing their internationalization strategies, which are often lacking critical evidence about the contextual factors that affect demand and supply of higher education. Internationalization at home has growing importance and enables HEIs to develop globally minded citizens, particularly relevant to those without any international mobility experience.

Historically, even at times of global conflict and disruption, universities have been agents of international collaboration. Today, in a period during which the process of internationalization is challenged, the role of universities as "global social enterprises," prioritizing social and environmental benefits and impact on a global scale over their own economic profit, is increasingly important. As part of their broader mandate to develop and educate responsible citizens, universities play a paramount role in promoting inclusion, access to quality education, and sustainability. Such a role will become more prominent in the face of deepening social and economic inequalities globally.

## Maintaining Local Relevance

Is it possible for a globally delivered degree to be locally relevant, and how can this balance be achieved? For decades, transnational education has facilitated the local delivery of international qualifications. In times of challenged mobility and travel, there is a growing scope for such delivery. The importance of local partners is heightened by the flexibility that they bring in terms of education delivery—locally facilitated teaching or

### Abstract

This article examines current pressures on higher education provision and attempts to draw long-term considerations for institutions and policy makers. It calls for a reconceptualization of international higher education, placing global citizenship at the core of its provision. Such education delivery aims to be locally embedded, globally relevant, and centered on the needs and ambitions of a diverse student population.

*Is it possible for a globally delivered degree to be locally relevant, and how can this balance be achieved?*

locally assisted online delivery models. In response to the pandemic crisis, some institutions have taken the initiative to offer “study abroad” options for international students in their home country for a semester or longer, until travel conditions improve.

Cost-efficient study abroad options will enjoy growing popularity in the post-COVID-19 recession, which will exert pressure on middle-class families and their ability to educate their children overseas. Near-to-home study options are an opportunity to continue to engage students locally through a network of trusted education partners.

At the same time, internationalization should not be considered as mutually exclusive to local relevance. The “future of work” and the [Fourth Industrial Revolution \(4IR\)](#) shift the emphasis to soft skills, and particularly to personal qualities like adaptability and the ability of graduates to “connect the dots.” These soft skills require universities to provide a dynamic learning environment where students are placed outside of their comfort zone to discover, explore, and experiment with knowledge beyond their local context.

### **Environmental Considerations**

Engaging with students in their country of residence reduces HEIs’ carbon footprints significantly. Innovative ways of delivering education and quality assurance of remotely delivered programs and assessment are already taking place.

The pandemic has brought into focus the significant environmental footprint of higher education, both in terms of student travel and academic staff mobility. Although there is a clear justification for the value of immersing an international student into the learning environment of a different country, there is now broad agreement that a substantial amount of academic staff mobility can be substituted by online collaboration.

### **The Way Forward**

International student mobility is a valuable component of international higher education. However, considering the costs and risks involved, an overseas study has to add unique value to the student’s experience. Universities need to assume more actively and transparently their role of global social enterprises. By embracing a global citizenship education agenda, universities should aim to educate global citizens who can comprehend, pursue, and propagate key priorities for society in the twenty-first century.

Even today, the location of the learner is used to distinguish between the different forms, and often the perceived value, of provision—e.g., local, international, or distance. Nevertheless, international higher education does not guarantee an internationalized learning experience. Equally, an internationalized learning experience is possible in locally delivered higher education. Thus, there needs to be a reconceptualization of international higher education so that global citizenship is at the core of its provision, irrespective of the location of the student. Such provision aims to be locally embedded, globally relevant, and centered around the needs and ambitions of a diverse student population. It is through a global delivery model, environmentally conscious and with sustainable development and global citizenship at its heart, that international higher education can remain relevant in the future. ▲

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# Germany: Policies for Internationalization

Sude Pekşen and Liudvika Leišytė

In recent years, Germany has become the fourth in top international destinations for study abroad in the world. The German federal government places emphasis on internationalizing the higher education (HE) landscape and is progressively adopting new policies in order to strengthen it with the support of a range of actors, especially through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

## Higher Education Internationalization in Germany: Foundational Values

German federal policy is built on the value of HE as a public good and traditionally promotes a specific type of internationalization through cooperation, fostering academic freedom, contributing to development, and participating in efforts to solve global problems. The 2017 federal internationalization strategy focused on five targets: strengthening excellence through worldwide cooperation; developing Germany's innovative strength internationally; expanding education and training internationally; shaping the global knowledge society together with emerging and developing countries; and lastly, overcoming global challenges collectively.

In line with these targets, the new DAAD strategy 2025 emphasizes these values by stressing the importance of international mobility exchanges, research networking and collaboration, and taking global responsibility and contributing to development and peace. These ambitious goals are supported with impressive funding for various internationalization projects and activities through the DAAD, the German research foundation (DFG), or the federal ministry, and are implemented by research societies and higher education institutions (HEIs). Funding for international projects increased from EUR 567 million in 2009 to EUR 1.05 billion in 2019.

Following the DAAD's strategy, the German HE and research sector increases its attractiveness by being a largely tuition-free system valuing knowledge exchange. It is committed to the academic success of international students and to increasing the share of foreign academic staff to 15 percent of its academic workforce through advertising academic positions internationally. In recent years, information and marketing campaigns of the DAAD have aimed to promote world-class research, invest in international partnerships through cooperative study programs, and fund German international universities abroad (e.g., in Bahrain, Egypt, and Thailand). The DAAD positions itself as a leader on the discourse on internationalization in HE and research and sees itself as an influential agent in science diplomacy. In 2019, the DAAD had an overall budget of EUR 594 million and gave stipends to 145,659 students, graduates, and faculty, including 60,581 individuals from abroad and 85,078 individuals from Germany. The implementation of these ambitious strategies, however, depends on the HE systems of the 16 states (*Länder*) and the various HEIs.

## Measures at the Level of Individual States

Comparing statistics on incoming mobility in Germany by state in the winter semesters of 1998–1999 and 2019–2020, we can observe that overall, the numbers of international students increased in all states. The highest increase happened in former Eastern German states (e.g., in Thuringia from 4 percent to 15 percent, Saxony-Anhalt from 4 percent to 16 percent, and Saxony from 6 percent to 17 percent, while Berlin, the capital of the country, boomed from 13 percent to 22 percent). Further, we can also observe differences in tuition fees. In most of the states, higher education for international students is usually free, but some states have introduced tuition fees, such as Baden-Württemberg, where since the winter semester 2017–2018, non-EU students have been charged

## Abstract

Germany has become a top destination for study abroad, owing to its longstanding and specific approach to internationalization through nonprofit orientation and cooperation—a typical soft-power approach. The role of intermediary actors, especially the DAAD, has been crucial in this respect. Supportive measures are promoting internationalization at the federal and state levels. Meanwhile, the recent introduction of tuition fees in the southern states points to a slight distancing from Germany's traditional nonprofit orientation.

*Following the DAAD's strategy, the German HE and research sector increases its attractiveness by being a largely tuition-free system valuing knowledge exchange.*

EUR 1,500, or in Bavaria, where fees are charged to students who participate exclusively in study offers at branch campuses located outside the European Union, e.g., study programs at the Technical University of Munich Asia in Singapore. We can also see that different HEIs pursue different strategies when it comes to branch campuses, attracting and recruiting foreign academics, and supporting refugees via state-supported funding initiatives. All these measures point to soft power exercised by the states beyond legal frameworks, which are instruments of hard power.

A closer look at the legislation of all the states allows us to see that internationalization is largely promoted by the state ministries for education through performance agreements with HEIs, while new laws provide general frameworks. For example, in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the new law of 2019 calls for improvement in the quality of HEIs, to make them more attractive to international students and faculty, and according to a new state law in Rhineland-Palatinate enacted in 2020, a Higher Education Forum will be established to strengthen cooperation and exchange between the state and HEIs on internationalization.

Importantly, performance agreements are linked to the funding of HEIs—thus here, concrete incentives are at play. For example, a recent agreement between Hamburg and the Hamburg University of Technology includes a 10 percent incoming and outgoing student quota, while in Bavaria, the Technical University of Munich has agreed to increase the number of North American students by 2022.

#### **Future Perspectives of Internationalization in German Higher Education**

The current federal and DAAD strategies, continuous commitment to internationalization through substantial state funding, and the overall increase in the importance of internationalization in all states allows us to assume that the German government, as well as all major stakeholders, are seriously committed to being globally competitive in terms of HE, science, and innovation. Global leadership based on long-standing traditions seems to work through both soft- and hard-power approaches, depending on the policy level. One can observe certain measures promoting internationalization in state HE laws; thus, a hard-power approach through coercion seems to be used to some extent. At the federal level, we observe a range of nonbinding, yet supportive measures to promote internationalization, such as guidelines, strategy papers, and financial policy instruments; thus, a soft-power approach is used at the federal level through agenda setting, benchmarking exercises, and information policy instruments. We also observe that competition seems to drive important changes at the level of the states as well as of the HEIs, such as the introduction of tuition fees or increased assertiveness in attracting international students and scholars, Berlin being a clear leader in this regard.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the development of internationalization is highly uncertain and facing serious challenges. Some countries are refusing entry to foreign nationals, and the DAAD is advising against travel abroad to high-risk areas. Current developments point to the possibility of new measures by policy makers and funding agencies to promote internationalization in the virtual space. At the same time, it is unlikely that Germany's overall approach toward internationalization will change in the near future, as the aims of cooperation, academic freedom, and contribution to global development are anchored in the core value of higher education as a public good. ▲

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# South Africa: Developing an Internationalization Policy

Nico Jooste and Cornelius Hagenmeier

A policy that would focus and guide the internationalization of the South African higher education system was not part of the guidance provided by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCE) in its 1996 report. What it indicated, however, was that South African higher education, emerging from a period of relative isolation, would have to produce the skills and technological innovations necessary for the country to successfully participate in the global market. Internationalizing South African higher education was left to the university sector, as the national government was focusing on other activities meant to transform the racially defined and fragmented system into a unitary system.

The International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) conference of 2003 provided the system with the impetus to start paying attention to the need for a national policy. The rationales behind a national policy were the transformation of education as an international phenomenon; the need to address regional demands, in particular from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and challenges posed by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union; and the necessity to address the country's skills development needs in the context of globalization. It was, however, not until 2012 that the national department of higher education (DHET) initiated the drafting process.

An intensive public participation process accompanied the development of the policy framework. The DHET engaged national and international experts to develop a first concept paper. Meetings were arranged with representatives of public South African universities to discuss their proposals for a structure of the planned policy framework. The views of universities and national and global experts were considered in the drafting process, and several public workshops were conducted to explain the policy as a steering mechanism.

## The Policy Framework

The policy framework is grounded in the 2012 National Development Plan and other national policy documents. It gives effect to the commitments that the country made in terms of the 1997 SADC Protocol on Education and Training. It aims to provide "a national framework for internationalisation of higher education within which higher education institutions can develop and align their institutional internationalisation policies and strategies." All higher education institutions have to develop policies or strategies for internationalization and provide appropriate administration and support for internationalization. Strengthening internationalization at historically disadvantaged institutions is of particular concern.

The duty of institutions to consider national priorities is balanced with a guarantee of academic freedom enshrined in the constitution. The policy embraces mutuality, complementarity, quality, legal compliance, and ethics as structural principles. The government is not allowed to steer internationalization directly, but is rather assigned an enabling role. Higher education institutions are required to report on their progress in terms of internationalization in their annual performance plans, measured against goals that they have set for themselves.

The policy considers internationalization of research a priority. Internationalization should benefit all students, not only those who partake in mobility: Internationalization at home is prioritized, curriculum internationalization becomes mandatory. The internationalization process is viewed as an opportunity to take local and/or indigenous

## Abstract

South Africa has completed a process of developing a national policy framework for internationalization. Following a transparent public participation process, the policy became legally binding in November 2020. It is expected to provide a broad agenda for internationalization and requires universities to adopt institutional internationalization strategies or policies. The policy provides the sector with clear guidance on internationalization for the post-COVID-19 pandemic period, and could become a model for the developing world.

*Internationalization should benefit all students, not only those who partake in mobility.*

knowledge to the international community, thus the involvement of local communities in the higher education internationalization process is encouraged.

Adherence to strict ethical standards for international student mobility is required. A framework for cross-border and collaborative provision of higher education is provided, but only private higher education institutions are permitted to set up branch campuses abroad. In principle, cobadged, joint-, and consecutive qualifications are allowed, but double degrees remain prohibited. Financing internationalization is considered mainly an institutional responsibility, and institutions are encouraged to “design self-sustainability into their internationalisation activities.”

The publication of the draft policy in April 2017 raised the expectations of South African universities that a policy would be in place to guide them and provide a legal framework to offer international joint- and double degrees. It was also expected that the policy would assist previously disadvantaged universities in playing a more critical role in higher education internationalization, but because of its delayed implementation, institutional inequalities inherited from the apartheid system were allowed to continue.

### Continuing Historical Imbalances

International student numbers, as an indicator of the level of internationalization, illustrate this clearly. The student data of universities identified as Historically White Universities (HWUs) and Historically Black or Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) tells the following story. In 2018, HDIs accommodated 23 percent of all South African students, but only 9 percent of all international students. Compared to the total number of international students in South Africa, the number of international students at HDIs has been declining annually. In 2018, the HDIs’ student body only included 2.5 percent international students—far below the norm and system average of 7 percent. In contrast, the international student to local student ratio at HWUs was 10 percent, significantly more, and HWUs also registered more than 60 percent of all international students. This inequality is inherited from the past. It is also closely linked to leadership and the capacity of institutions to respond to international opportunities.

### Higher Education Institutions Still Lead the Way

Leadership changes in government departments, diverging stakeholder views, and the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays with the finalization of the policy framework. In the absence of a formal policy, many universities still embarked on strengthening internationalization at home and internationalization of the curriculum, and aligning their institutional strategies according to the draft policy. They are strengthening institutional support structures and developing reporting structures for internationalization. Some are attempting to involve local communities in the internationalization process. Thus, the draft South African policy framework has already made a substantive contribution to strengthening the internationalization of higher education, and at least some universities are well prepared for its implementation. The publication of the policy in early November 2020 paved the way for internationalization to become one of the transformational drivers of the South African education system. The real impact of the policy will only be seen in years to come. The next challenge is now for the DHET to develop an imaginative implementation plan. If successfully implemented, the policy can contribute to overcoming historical imbalances in South African higher education internationalization and become a model for internationalization in the developing world. ▲

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# Internationalization and India's New Education Policy

N.V. Varghese and Eldho Mathews

While the waves of globalization seem to be receding, the call for internationalization is on the rise. Many countries view internationalization as a strategy to gain academic credibility and increase the global competitiveness of national education systems. Internationalization implies cross-border mobility of programs, students, institutions, and faculty. Cross-border mobility is guided by economic rationales and mediated through market processes.

This article argues that India's efforts to internationalize higher education do not seem to be motivated by market processes, but by a wish to extend its soft power and increase the country's global role. The New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) reflects this perspective and prioritizes internationalization in order to promote Indian education abroad and facilitate the establishment of foreign higher education institutions in India.

## India's Approach to Internationalization: Main Turning Points

During the postindependence period, Indian development strategy emphasized political sovereignty and economic self-reliance. The latter implied technological self-reliance, as reflected by the establishment of higher education institutions of technology. India relied on external funding and expertise to establish the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), and on educating its nationals abroad to train the first generation of teachers in higher education. For instance, while IIT Bombay received help from the former Soviet Union, IIT Madras and IIT Delhi were established with the support of former West Germany and the United Kingdom, respectively.

India offers around 3,940 scholarships every year through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to foreign students from about 140 countries to promote cultural understanding, and has signed cooperation agreements within the field of education with 54 countries. Yet it has taken the country decades to issue a clearly articulated policy on internationalization. Two earlier national policies on education (NEP 1968 and NEP 1986) were relatively silent on this issue. An internationalization strategy was articulated for the first time when the University Grants Commission (UGC) introduced a program for the "Promotion of Indian Higher Education Abroad" (PIHEAD) in 2002. This proposal was shelved, since the Task Force of 2004 did not wish to see the Indian higher education system subjected to global competition under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) framework. The UGC plan for internationalization of 2009 was also constrained with respect to internationalization, for lack of legislative measures. A bill seeking permission for foreign education providers to establish campuses in India was presented in parliament in 2010. This bill did not pass either.

NEP 2020 is the first national policy that gives priority to internationalization. Its vision is for India to become a global study destination and an education hub to attract international students. In a major shift in policy orientation, NEP 2020 recommends the establishment of branch campuses by top-ranking foreign universities (from among the top 100 in world university rankings).

NEP 2020 also envisages highly performing Indian universities setting up branch campuses abroad. Many private Indian universities already have branch campuses in a number of countries. According to the Cross-Border Education Research Team's latest international campus listing, Indian institutions have branch campuses in countries such as Australia, Mauritius, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan. Thanks to NEP 2020, select public and private institutions may also establish a presence abroad from now on. Regulations introduced by the UGC in January 2021 allow the category of "Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities" to establish

## Abstract

Internationalization of higher education in India seems to be motivated more by efforts to extend its soft power and increase its global role than by market mediation for revenue generation. The New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) encourages foreign education institutions to establish a presence in India and recommends setting up Indian institutions abroad.

*India's efforts to internationalize higher education do not seem to be motivated by market processes, but by a wish to extend its soft power and increase the country's global role.*

foreign campuses with the approval of the government. The liberalization of regulations on branch campuses and stimulation of credit transfer possibilities (between Indian institutions and institutions abroad) emphasized in NEP 2020 will help increase student flows to and from India.

### Expectations vs. Reality

The NEP 2020 condition that India will only welcome branch campuses from top-ranking institutions may act as a constraint against expanding the scope of institutional mobility to India. Informal discussions with officials at some top-ranking institutions indicate that only a few are keen to establish campuses in India, for several reasons. First, they are likely to continue to focus their efforts on retaining, if not improving, their place in global rankings. Second, their decision would be driven by the profitability of investments: There is a need for more clarity on their authority to decide the level of student fees. Third, legal provisions regarding repatriation of income generated by foreign providers are still unclear. Fourth, many of these institutions are welcoming Indian students in their home campuses, with a financial benefit that is arguably higher than what they would levy in India with a branch campus.

How will the provisions in the policy affect student flows? According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 375,055 Indian students were studying abroad in 2018. Their motivation for studying abroad is highly influenced by poststudy employment opportunities in host countries. Hence, their favorite study destinations are the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. They make a calculation between the high cost of their studies and potential high returns. A degree from a foreign branch campus located in India may not satisfy their aspirations for poststudy employment and high returns on investments.

Are the NEP 2020 recommendations likely to help India emerge as a higher education hub? India hosts currently around 47,000 international students, mostly from South Asia and Africa. Many of them are attracted to India because of access to better quality education than at home, at a low cost. But India does not provide many employment opportunities and when provided, the salary is not very attractive. In other words, the economic logic that guides Indian students going abroad may not be a reliable framework by which to understand the logic of foreign students coming to India.

India is aspiring to play a global role and education may be a supporting sector in that process. Therefore, India has been making serious efforts in recent years to increase the flow of inbound international students by extending scholarships under the "Study in India" program launched in 2018. India plans to host nearly 500,000 international students by 2024, 10 percent among them on attractive government scholarships. The provision of scholarships is an indication of India's interest to play a global role.

Another area envisaged in NEP 2020 is the promotion of research collaborations and faculty exchanges between Indian and foreign institutions. India launched a Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) in 2018, to strengthen academic and research collaborations with select countries. Another program, the Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN), was successful in attracting more than 1,283 scholars from 56 countries to Indian higher education institutions between 2015 and 2019. These collaborations are seen as reliable and sustainable ways to promote internationalization.

### Conclusion

To fulfil its vision, India needs to put in place legislative measures and incentives to attract institutions and students. While its large diaspora, especially in Gulf countries, is a good source of demand for international education, the country will be able to develop into an education hub only when attracting a sizeable number of international students from a diverse range of countries. While market-mediated, cross-border mobility may not work in favor of India, government initiatives such as extending scholarships may be an effective measure. Further, online courses through India's MOOC platforms such as SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) may also have the potential to attract foreign students in large numbers. Needless to say, COVID-19 has considerably stimulated online learning among students in India and abroad. This is a new reality on which India can capitalize. ▲

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# Brexit is Done: What Next for UK Higher Education?

Anne Corbett

Legally, the Brexit deal is done. It comes in three parts, all of which deeply affect the sphere of UK higher education and research. Two are international treaties between the United Kingdom and the European Union. The third is a national affair: the choice of the UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, and his government.

## The Deal with the European Union

The [EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement](#) frames the terms of the divorce, taking away the four freedoms around which the European Union has been constructed: freedom of movement for capital, goods, services, and people. Gone are the automatic rights that for nearly 50 years came with EU membership to study, work, and live in any nation of the European Union. Gone too are associated freedoms, such as the recognition of professional qualifications, linked to the freedom of establishment.

The [Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) (TCA) defines the political deal as cut by the United Kingdom with the European Union. It lays out the grounds for trade and political cooperation with the European Union. The higher education sector interest here is that it covers education and research.

The United Kingdom is to remain in the European Union's Horizon program, a much appreciated program designed to support excellence in science and innovation, and in highly specialized research organizations, including Euratom, ITER, and Copernicus. The Horizon decision (Horizon Europe in its new version) is especially sweet since, due to the European Union's recent internationalizing reform, the United Kingdom will participate on almost the same terms as before, once the United Kingdom's financial contribution is settled. That includes guaranteed access to European Research Council grants and the research fellowships of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. The Horizon decision is also welcome for the humanities and social sciences which, in national terms, lose out to STEM subjects. Horizon funds go to minority subjects like archaeology and classics, and specialized institutions such as those in the arts and music.

The Erasmus program is not part of the deal, despite a prime ministerial government promise. The government has instead launched a more modest made-in-Britain scheme (see [article by Guibert and Rayón in this issue](#)). In Northern Ireland (NI), the Republic of Ireland has come to the rescue in treating NI students as their own. Scotland and Wales were reflecting on how they too could stay in—but their ambitions were dashed.

## Immigration Policy

The UK sector was highly globally connected before Brexit. But while Brexit changes the rules, how much it will change the numbers of incoming students and academics is an open question.

Universities UK statistics from 2017 (before COVID-19) show the United Kingdom as leader in the field. Non-United Kingdom students and academics were almost 21 percent of the United Kingdom's 2.4 million total. Over 91,000 of these are from China, roughly the same as from the 27 members of the European Union combined, and just 16,700 are from the United States. Almost 30 percent of academics are non-British.

Outside short visitor stays, visas will now be the norm. All non-British academics or students hoping to work or study in UK universities will be subject to newly revised immigration rules. For academia, there are three types of visa: student visas; skilled worker visas; and global talent visas. A new graduate visa is in preparation. EU citizens in Britain before December 31, 2020, will now need to be approved for settled status.

## Abstract

This article reviews the implications of the Brexit deal for UK higher education and research. It argues that future scenarios will be based not only on the treaties signed with the European Union, but also on policy preferences as laid out in 2017 legislation on higher education and research, and two later policy decisions: to remain in the EU science and innovation program, and to enhance trading relationships, including higher education, with the Pacific region.

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While new EU students will now be subject to the high fees already charged to international students, EU citizens and their children already in Britain will be eligible for home fees. There are, however, details still to be settled. [Universities UK](#) is the best source for up-to-date information. For British citizens wanting to study or research in EU member states, there already exists an EU Directive of 2018 covering researchers, students, and interns from third countries. It is part of the drive to make the European Union an attractive destination for talent.

### The Trade Dimension

Internationalization has been a crucial source of UK higher education funding. The fees of international students subsidize UK teaching and research. There are over 400,000 international students in Britain and 666,000 international students working for British degrees delivered outside Britain (49 percent in Asia). The phenomenon of transnational education (TNE) takes in branch campuses, UK-local university partnerships, as well as other forms of study. Higher education earns GBP 10.8 billion in export earnings, a figure that has almost doubled since 2013. Its internationalization activities have created over 200,000 jobs.

Brexit is inspiring the UK government to take internationalization further. Higher education will be integral to the new and revised trade deals intended to orient trade away from Europe to the Pacific, once the United Kingdom is accepted into the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). While the CPTPP is projected to grow fast, the present trade gap between it and the European Union is enormous. Just 8 percent of UK trade in goods and 9 percent of trade in services goes to the CPTPP. Forty-three percent of trade goes to the European Union.

### Where Does Brexit Leave UK Higher Education?

In the post-Brexit world, the default setting for UK policy is the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act. This Act strengthens government control over the sector with the aim of making UK higher education institutions more competitive at home and abroad.

It allows the government to play a more strategic role in the funding of research. To this end, the Act brought the long-existing discipline-dominated research councils under a single body, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The Act is an encouragement to new higher education providers, or, as some would put it, puts a brake on a university monopoly. It has removed the distinctions between public and for-profit higher education providers. The Act also sets the scene for a category of teaching-only (undergraduate degree) universities. In doing so, it has broken the organic link between the university's traditional educational and research functions, most dramatically at the doctoral level. Not all universities will now be able to award the Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), one of their distinguishing characteristics.

The Act makes the government the degree-awarding authority (though not expected to interfere with the historic pattern designed to underscore university autonomy). Students explicitly become customers under a new Office for Students. Universities are rated under a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

Developments during the almost five years since the Brexit referendum suggest research will be subject to gentler treatment than teaching and learning. In acceding to the seven-year Horizon program, the UK government has followed the advice of a high-level report, *Changes and Choices*, that Brexit policy should focus on damage limitation before changing direction. The keywords were stabilization—transition—vision. But there is no parallel strategy report for the other missions of the university to ease the post-Brexit transition.

We can expect that Brexit will speed up changes in the university sector already implicit in the 2017 Act, that is, a growing gap between the global research universities and the rest. But how universities see new opportunities for trade in services will also mark their future. UK universities, historically united epistemically in their commitment to the creation and transmission of knowledge, will be coming to terms with Brexit ramifications for some time. Brexit is not just a matter of the law. It is an ongoing process. ▲

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# UK's Turing Scheme: The Challenges Ahead

José M. Guibert and Alex Rayón

The future of multilateralism in a world that currently exhibits strong unilateral tendencies is not clear. But in some fields, such as higher education, these last decades have shown that institutions collaborating in networks can achieve significant results. The Erasmus exchange program is a clear example. But the 2020 Christmas Eve Agreement will mark for posterity the day on which the United Kingdom formalized its exit from the Erasmus program.

The movie *The Imitation Game* is about the life of Alan Turing. Born in 1912, this Briton is considered the forerunner of modern computing. In World War II, Turing managed to decipher the Nazi codes, in particular those of the Enigma machine. The period of peace that the Western world has been enjoying for over 75 years is in part a result of his achievement. Little could Turing imagine that, several decades later, the new international mobility exchange scheme that the British government is setting up after Brexit would be named after him.

## From a Multilateral Program to Bilateral Agreements

Boris Johnson himself repeatedly stated that the Erasmus program, which has contributed so much socially, culturally, and educationally to Europe and its citizens, would not be in jeopardy. Put simply, aside from granting scholarships, Erasmus stimulates and facilitates mobility and standardizes institutional processes and credit recognition among its 33 member countries, including non-EU members like Iceland, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey.

Mobility may also be organized through bilateral agreements. However, these require significantly more work and make it more difficult to find scholarships for students. In response to these challenges, the Turing scheme is expected to be endowed with GBP 100 million (around USD 135 million), and it is announced that it will open the doors to the world's best universities. But the Turing scheme will face hurdles—we have already identified a few, presented below.

## The Challenges Ahead for the United Kingdom

First, the complex management that bilateral agreements require is clearly being underestimated. Agreeing on credit transfer, language course offer (a common demand of exchange students), academic calendar, and data protection, to name the most relevant, takes considerable time, especially with destinations such as Australia, Canada, or the United States, with their different academic regulations, requirements, and school calendars.

Second, the scheme may face difficulties in promoting social justice and mobility. There is substantial empirical evidence of the benefits of an international experience: It helps develop greater self-confidence, a more open and comprehensive perspective, and lifelong connections; it improves language skills; it strengthens one's appreciation of diversity; and it provides an intercultural understanding of a globalized world. The [Erasmus+ Higher Education Impact study](#) also provides evidence as to how it [increases job prospects and secures better salaries](#). This is especially important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Erasmus gives more scholarships to those who need them the most: students from low-income households or with disabilities.

To match these achievements, the Turing scheme will be depending on British institutions securing appropriate partner universities. Furthermore, reciprocity is key: The British government has so far only committed itself to funding outgoing student mobility. In exchange programs such as Erasmus, reciprocity is essential and universities

### Abstract

Brexit supporters did not like the Erasmus student mobility exchange program. During the past three decades, Erasmus helped students, especially those from low-income backgrounds who are the least likely to travel internationally, to gain better employment and improve their skills thanks to their study abroad experiences. Will the new Turing scheme, devised by the British government, be able to provide students with the same benefits?

*The complex management that bilateral agreements require is clearly being underestimated.*

take great care when developing partnerships, seeking to achieve a balance between outgoing and incoming flows. This is where the United Kingdom is at a disadvantage: It has a high cost of living; study visas remain undefined; and incoming students are apparently not included in the Turing scheme. If their students are not covered, what incentive will overseas institutions have to cooperate with Turing?

Another issue is related to the payoff of participating in the Erasmus program. According to UK government data, the revenue received through UK educational exports is close to GBP 440 million in living expenses in 2018, a 71 percent increase since 2010. Over 30,000 students and trainees have come to the United Kingdom through Erasmus each year (out of about 200,000 students participating in the program every year), spending money on food, accommodation, travel, and leisure activities. The United Kingdom is also a very popular destination for teachers and administrative staff. In terms of outgoing mobility, the [European Commission's Annual Erasmus+ Report](#) recorded over 18,000 UK students benefiting from an Erasmus+ study or work placement in 2018–2019. With regard to the research and innovation program, Horizon 2020, the United Kingdom is the second-largest recipient.

These figures reflect the attractiveness of the United Kingdom as an educational partner country. Cultural and linguistic factors are the most important drivers influencing student decisions to study abroad. In the present context, the time it has taken the British government to present its new initiative may work against its universities. European students may now be aiming for Ireland or countries that offer undergraduate and graduate programs entirely in English, such as the Netherlands. The impact of such a “leakage” on UK institutions will be challenging from a variety of perspectives.

The United Kingdom is planning for its new scheme to be up and running from September 2021. But, as mentioned above, setting up partnerships with universities outside the Erasmus framework will take time and a huge amount of negotiation—a very cumbersome task in the midst of a pandemic. And, last but not least, geography presents a challenge. Culturally and linguistically, the destinations closest to the British Isles, outside of Europe, are separated by oceans and continents. This implies considerable time differences (a burden to communication), expensive travel costs, and, above all, different educational contexts. Apart from that, encouraging student travel to distant destinations that are unreachable by train or other sustainable means of transportation will have a huge impact on the environment.

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### Conclusion

Democracy has once again raised a paradox: Those young British people who did not vote in the Brexit referendum, or voted to leave, may be forced to pay a very expensive price. International mobility experience is more than just spending a semester away from home. It is about opening up to a world that inexorably, once the pandemic is over, will be more global and intercultural than ever. That is why we find more challenges than opportunities for the new Turing scheme, compared to the well-established and accredited Erasmus program. ▲

# Russian Academic Excellence—A Long Struggle

Philip G. Altbach

In 2013, the Russian government established the Russian Academic Excellence Project, generally referred to as the “5–100 Project” because one of the aims of the enterprise was to catapult five Russian universities into the top 100 of the global university rankings. The primary goals, however, were to transform several top Russian universities into globally competitive research universities and to encourage internationalization. While the program, which is now completing its work, failed to achieve the desired rankings, much else was accomplished. Twenty-one Russian universities were selected from a larger group of applicants by an international council, and USD 2.3 billion was invested in these institutions over seven years, averaging around 9 percent of the annual university budgets. The government is now discussing a new initiative to further improve Russian universities. It is worth examining some of the successes—and failures—of 5–100.

## The Russian Context

Russia’s higher education system is large and varied, with a complex and troubled past preceding new, contemporary challenges. There are 4 million students in Russia’s 724 universities—one of the world’s largest academic systems—with 73 percent of high school graduates continuing on to higher education. While many of the top universities are concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg, excellent universities are also scattered across the country’s vast hinterland. Russia’s complex history continues to haunt current reality. During the Soviet period, higher education was harnessed for the needs of the state, with no autonomy and ideologically subservient to the Communist Party. Most of the traditional multidisciplinary universities were divided into smaller, focused institutions serving specific industries and ministries. Universities focused almost exclusively on teaching while research was conducted separately at institutes managed by the Soviet Academy of Science, largely ending a tradition that combined teaching and research at universities. (There were some exceptions: Several universities founded during the Cold War were research intensive.) Higher education was closely linked to the economic planning apparatus. Unsurprisingly, the entire academic and scientific system became highly bureaucratic. Further, academic links to the rest of the world were few—Soviet academe functioned in its own isolated universe. Despite the severe restrictions, several universities and research institutes, especially in such fields as physics and mathematics, were world-class, and the system, however flawed, had considerable influence in the larger, global Soviet sphere of influence. Further, there was significant accomplishment in fields related to the technical and military spheres.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, politics and the economy entered into a decade of severe instability. Universities and research institutes lost most of their government funding, and with few exceptions, standards collapsed and infrastructure deteriorated. For the first time in 70 years, academics and students had contact with the rest of the world and many chose to leave, never to return. Corruption, always a part of the Soviet system, flourished, as institutions and academics sought to survive in the context of economic constraint and political uncertainty.

Elements of the Soviet system continue to weigh heavily on Russian higher education and science, including high levels of bureaucracy and the bifurcation of teaching and research—despite significant efforts and some success at reforms.

## Abstract

The Russian excellence project, referred to as the 5–100 program, is coming to an end. While it did not accomplish one of its goals to catapult some Russian universities into the top 100 of the global university rankings, the project achieved a number of important objectives. These include internationalization, improved management, and strengthened research infrastructure and productivity. The Russian government is currently considering a new program for university improvement.

*The accomplishments of the 5–100 program have been significant, especially considering the challenge of improving universities anywhere, and particularly in the Russian context.*

### **An Awakening—Of Sorts**

By 2000, the Russian government and society recognized that academe and research were in crisis—at the same time that a modicum of stability was restored in society and oil revenues and the revival of industry provided renewed resources. Corruption was to an extent reined in. For example, an out of control corrupt student admission system was replaced by the Unified State Examination system in 2009 and it has worked well. Some Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) institutes were renting out space to private companies, a questionable and perhaps illegal practice, and this was ended. Problems continue, however. Recent reports of senior provincial politicians purchasing doctoral dissertations are an example.

Budgets for universities and the RAS were significantly, although still inadequately, improved. Greater importance has been given to research. Based on national competitions, 29 of the best universities were upgraded to “national research universities” and provided with additional funding. The government has provided support for international labs in Russian universities headed by prominent global researchers who spend time in Russia. Some prominent Russian academics who had emigrated have returned as lab heads. Guidance to modernize academic management was provided and faculty salaries, which had dramatically deteriorated after 1991, were increased, although still inadequate by international standards. As a result of all of these changes, academic productivity increased.

### **The 5–100 Initiative and Higher Education Reform**

The accomplishments of the 5–100 program have been significant, especially considering the challenge of improving universities anywhere, and particularly in the Russian context. Perhaps most important, 5–100 signified that creating world-class research-oriented universities in Russia is a key national goal. The funds allocated, while by no means transformative, were significant. Funds were allocated on the basis of specific academic plans and performance was carefully monitored—the universities were forced to think strategically and were then evaluated. Universities were required to spend their 5–100 funds on specific development projects. Over time, a history of academic planning with vague and unrealistic goals was replaced by more realistic and practical goal setting. As the program developed, the most successful universities received additional funding, while some others got less. Seminars for university leaders and others aimed at improving management, enhancing internationalization, and generating new ideas were organized. Senior management and other key academic personnel from the participating universities met to discuss common problems, and an atmosphere of friendly competition developed.

Recent studies document that productivity increased both at 5–100 universities and at other universities as well—the investment is paying off in terms of more and better research, the fulfillment of strategic goals, and the modernization of university leadership. Other Russian universities that seek to improve their prestige and develop a research profile are benchmarking against the 5–100 institutions.

### **Limited but Notable Accomplishments**

The 5–100 program was limited to 21 universities deemed to have the best potential for development into internationally competitive research universities. According to objective measures, all have made some progress, but results for at least a third of the group have been modest. A few have tried to “game the system” rather than produce measurable results. The top universities, however, have moved rapidly to join the ranks of key research universities worldwide. While a few of the universities have constructively involved Russian Academy of Sciences institutes, by and large the RAS has not been affected by reform and remains locked in the Soviet past.

Although none of the 5–100 universities have joined the upper reaches of the global rankings—too much emphasis was placed on these rankings and their metrics anyway—some improvements were made and several of the 5–100 institutions have done well in some of the subject matter rankings. Russia will need to pay serious attention to the rest of its sprawling higher education system, much of which remains of rather low quality. In this respect Russia is similar to most other emerging economies. Top

research universities are of course important, but they are a small part of a complex higher education system further complicated by the challenges of a huge country geographically, with weak institutions in many provincial areas. It is important to keep in mind that Russian universities have only rejoined the global higher education space in the past few decades, and even now international links and collaboration remain limited. This is a requirement for any hope that Russia has of building world-class universities.

What is clear is that Russia is one of the world's main higher education systems, with a huge reservoir of top talent. If Russia wants to join the community of top universities, succeed in making significant research contributions, and educate people for a sophisticated economy, it needs world-class research universities. The 5–100 program has been a good start in that direction. Now, with planning for an additional initiative under way, and with careful thinking and appropriate resources, Russia may be able to achieve the next step toward its ambitious goals. ▲

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## Russian Higher Education and the Demographic Revolution

Niyaz Gabdrakhmanov and Oleg Leshukov

Russia faces significant changes in its higher education system because of rather unique circumstances: an overall decline in the population, but an increase in numbers of university-age youth. Currently, the Russian tertiary education system is one of the world leaders in terms of massification. This is true both in terms of total number of students and gross enrollment ratio. The total number of students in Russia in 2019 was 4.2 million. The percentage of individuals aged 25 to 64 enrolled in tertiary education ranks fourth in the world, behind only South Korea, Japan, and Canada. Such a high enrollment rate is a consequence of the massification of university education that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The number of universities has doubled over the past 20 years since the establishment of the Russian Federation: At its peak, in 2006, the Russian education system included 1,314 universities (and more than 1,500 branches of these universities).

Unfortunately, the rapid growth in the number of institutions has led to the emergence of a low-quality segment of higher education. To meet this challenge, in 2011, the government launched a special program aiming to optimize university networks. As a result, in 2017, the total number of colleges and universities was halved, while the number of branch campuses fell by 65 percent.

These structural changes coincided with a general reduction of the student population, due to demographic factors. Over this period, the number of students fell by 35 percent. However, the forecast for 2019 indicates again a growth in the population of young people, and this trend is expected to continue over the next 15 years. The relatively fast growth in the number of youth is likely to lead to increasing demand for higher education and will have a significant impact on the system.

### A Risk of Decreasing Access

The predicted growth in the population of young people in Russia will lead to a risk of decreasing access to higher education. While the overall population will fall by 3.7 million by 2036, the population of 17 to 21-year-olds is projected to increase, as a result of Russia's emergence from the demographic collapse of the 1990s. The majority of Russian

### Abstract

The consequences of demographic revolutions influence the number of potential university applicants and higher education accessibility in Russia. An analysis of current demographic trends, at a time when the number of universities is shrinking, shows a threat of decreasing access to higher education, coupled with high regional differentiation in the availability of education, likely to worsen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and current economic crisis.

*The percentage of individuals aged 25 to 64 enrolled in tertiary education ranks fourth in the world, behind only South Korea, Japan, and Canada.*

students fall into this age range and their population segment will grow by 15 percent by 2024 and by 45 percent by 2036.

Another important feature is that the majority of high-school graduates continue their education at colleges and universities. Today, more than 70 percent of school graduates choose this path. This means that in the current situation of a substantial decrease in the number of educational organizations combined with a steady demographic growth of youth, educational accessibility may significantly decrease. More school graduates are likely to be pushed into the segment of vocational education.

### **Regional Differentiation and Differences in Demographics**

Regional differentiation within Russia is high and there are major differences in demographic trends across the country. The fact that colleges and universities are located in large cities creates strong incentives for young people to move to these education hubs. Surveys show that people tend to consider large cities as providing higher quality education and offering greater opportunities for personal growth. As a result, only a fourth of Russian regions are attracting young people, whose migration has tripled over the past few years. This is partly a result of the adoption of the “unified state exam” in 2001 (a compulsory exam for everyone planning to enter a university), which has expanded the educational opportunities for applicants to enroll in universities outside of their home region. At the same time, this expansion has led to the draining of young people from most regions, which poses a serious threat to the stability of regional development.

Still, the situation may change in the near future, insofar as most regions are on the verge of experiencing a significant increase in the number of young people. This gives hope that at least some of the young population that has tended to move to more developed centers of education in recent years will now stay in their home regions.

It is also important to consider the effects of demographic trends on Russia’s more attractive cities and regions. One quarter of all students and one third of all universities in the country are concentrated in two cities—Moscow and Saint Petersburg. This uneven geographic distribution of centers of higher learning creates disparities in young people’s educational opportunities. The current demographic trends are posing another challenge to families: increasing competition for places at universities in regions that are experiencing an influx of young people from other regions. Access to higher education will therefore decrease for graduates of high schools in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, as they will be forced to compete with graduates from across Russia.

### **Conclusion**

In Russia, demographic revolutions have a direct impact on access to higher education. The COVID-19 pandemic and current economic crisis are likely to further exacerbate differences in socioeconomic status among young people. The most disadvantaged groups may face the greatest decrease in access to universities. Choosing a strategy of minimizing risks and reducing financial costs, families may redirect on local higher education markets and choose universities within their native regions. But in the current conditions of reduced higher education capacity, especially in remote regions (caused by optimizations of university networks), this can also lead to decreased access.

The government has recently taken a series of steps to even out these growing disparities. One important measure is the increase in the number of federally funded student places, which will rise by 28 percent between 2020 and 2024. This initiative will be specifically targeted at improving access to education in regions outside Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Other measures aim to expand online education formats and create national platforms for online courses and educational resources. This spread of online education may help improve access and change educational migration patterns. ▲

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# Are China's "Sea Turtles" Becoming "Seaweed"? A Changing Job Market

David Zweig and Zaichao Du

**A**nalysts of "reverse migration" emphasize the importance of talented people with a foreign PhD, who engage in cutting-edge research that enhances national power. But what of the millions who go abroad for a short-term master degree?

Compared with Chinese overseas students who are funded by the state, self-paying master students (MAs) are generally regarded as less capable. While returnees with advanced degrees are called "*hai gui*," or "returning sea turtles," people returning from "overseas" (*hai*) who are "waiting" (*dai*) for employment were first labelled in 2005 as "*hai dai*," a homonym for "seaweed." Were glorious "sea turtles" morphing into inglorious "seaweed?" The growth in the "saturation rate of MAs"—the number of returned MAs divided by the number of returned MAs + the number of domestic MAs—suggests that such a process may be underway. In 2011, the saturation rate of MAs was 27.2 percent; it jumped to 36 percent in 2012, and reached 45 percent by 2017, with 480,900 returned postgraduate students joining 578,045 local graduates in the job market. Even if these young people shift away from the United States as a result of an inhospitable environment due to politics and COVID-19, their share of reverse migration is likely to remain quite high.

The reverse flow of MAs since 2005 has led educators, policy makers, and journalists to ask if China was generating a glut of "seaweed" that would fill the ranks of disgruntled wage earners or unemployed at home. Still, in a 2007 paper, Han Donglin (Renmin University) and Zweig argued that concerns about "seaweed" were overstated, as 70 percent of returnees found a job within three months, while 90 percent were employed within six months. We also found a large "wage premium," relative to local graduates.

This article draws on several surveys. Three, carried out in 2006 by the ministry of education, yielded responses from returnees from Japan, Canada, and Hong Kong. A national survey, also in 2006, allowed Zweig to compare local MAs with the aforementioned returned MAs. A survey in 2016 on a website for single returnees looking for other returnees, yielded a further data set. In 2016, Zhaopin, a Chinese headhunter, received 1,589 usable responses on its website to a questionnaire composed with the Center on China and Globalization. Finally, drawing on the 2015 China Household Finance Survey conducted by the Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, Du *et al.* compared 482 locally trained and 482 returned graduate students by matching pairs with similar backgrounds.

## Why Did Students Return? "Push," "Pull," or Family?

To assess why students returned, Zweig flipped the "push-pull" perspective used to analyze brain drain to see whether "failing" or being "pushed out" from the West, or being "pulled" home by opportunities, affected their return. Zweig also included the option of returning for "family," and then tested these three explanations on seven outcomes, including (1) length of job search, (2) level of work satisfaction, (3) life satisfaction after returning, (4) a comparison of the benefits and costs of overseas study, (5) estimates of the time it would take to recuperate those costs, (6) actual income, and (7) estimated income.

An interesting paradox was found among respondents to Zhaopin's 2016 survey. On a positive note, using only variables significant at the .05 level, those who were "pulled" back took less time to find a job, enjoyed better work and life satisfaction, saw the benefits of going abroad as greater than the costs, and earned higher incomes. Those

## Abstract

Analysts of China's "reverse migration" largely ignore returning, short-term MA students, who comprise close to 70 percent of all returnees, seeing them as less significant. Drawing on surveys of the past 15 years, this article makes four points: The share of returned MAs in the domestic job market is huge; MAs who plan their overseas sojourn well, succeed after coming home; returning because of "family" issues is problematic; and a 20 percent "wage premium" for an overseas MA persists.

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“pushed out” from overseas, and felt compelled to return, faced difficulties only in “recouping their costs.” However, those who returned for “family” took more time to find a job and recoup the costs of going abroad, and they had negative scores in “work” and “life satisfaction.” The message, then, to youth in this strongly family-oriented culture: “Don’t go home to satisfy your parents or you will be miserable.”

The 2016 Zhaopin data also portrays two groups of returnees: Those who “get it” and those who “don’t.” The former group succeed because they know the domestic market, plan out their careers, and develop a skill that the market needs. But some in the latter group go abroad because they cannot enter a good Chinese university, a problem that they compound by ignoring the needs of the domestic job market and engaging in poor career planning when picking what turns out to be the wrong majors to study abroad. These mediocre students who are “pushed back” to China are destined for mediocre careers back home, where, despite a lengthened job search, they are still dissatisfied with their job choices and easily morph into “seaweed.”

### **Does Overseas Study Increase Returnees’ Incomes?**

Returnees’ salaries in 2006 yielded a significant wage premium. Comparing the income of returnees from Japan, Hong Kong, and Canada with 6,000 urban residents from across China showed that returned MAs earned 83 percent more than locals with similar academic degrees.

However, parents’ social class could override the income gains of studying abroad. Why say this? The regression model of the 2016 *Haigui Zhixin* survey found that an overseas degree increased a returnee’s income significantly. However, when we introduced family income, and whether either parent had been an official, into the model, the impact of studying abroad is no longer statistically significant; instead, family income, and whether parents are officials, become significant. Thus, while going abroad could benefit many young people, it did not necessarily help the children of the elite.

The survey of 2014 analyzed by Du and his colleagues at SWUFE is even more definitive because of their “matching pair” analysis. The findings, significant at the .05 percent level, was that returnees with a graduate degree earn 19.3 percent more than locals with the same degree, while there are no income differences between returnees and locals with bachelor degrees. They also tested a “human capital” effect, which returnees got a higher salary because of their abilities, versus a “signaling effect,” which employers paid them higher salaries simply because the returnee had studied abroad. Their finding, that the longer returnees work in a firm the larger the salary gap with locals, suggests that studying abroad pays dividends, in that higher salaries for returnees follow only after their employer finds them to be more productive.

As China maintains its transnational ties, foreigners should be comforted with the knowledge that the young professional with whom they are interacting—whether in a foreign or domestic company, an NGO, a university, or a government office—is likely to have had an overseas education. This group of talented individuals, though maligned as “seaweed,” are the same people that will allow China to maintain its leading position as the preeminent member of the “developing world,” and will, in their own way, contribute to China’s rise and its deeper integration with the global system. ▲

# China: Graduates Brace for the Toughest Job Market

Ying Lu and Yuan Gao

COVID-19 has taken a toll on the global economy and job market, exacerbating challenges faced by job-seekers. In China, the difficulty for university graduates in landing a job has been increasing in recent years, due to such factors as an increase in higher education (HE) enrollments and an overall economic slowdown. In 2020, universities and colleges in China turned out a record 8.74 million graduates, 400,000 more than in 2019—leading to even stronger competition among them. This situation has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing the number of jobs offered by small- and medium-sized enterprises—the sector hardest hit—to the lowest in decades. To make matters worse, international travel restrictions (along with new study abroad and visa policies induced by the coronavirus and by political frictions, particularly directed against Chinese students), have forced many to abandon their study abroad plans and, instead, to seek to enter the job market in this highly challenging environment.

In the face of such grim prospects, a number of initiatives have been ushered in by the Chinese government in collaboration with higher education institutions (HEIs) to ease employment pressure. These relief policies and measures may be summarized as the expansion of HE enrollment; the reinstatement of “second bachelor’s degree” programs; the development of research assistant positions; and support for entrepreneurship and innovation.

## Expansion of Student Enrollment

Widely perceived as an effective measure to ease immediate job market pressure is the policy to further expand the scale of enrollment within HE. In early March 2020, the ministry of education (MOE) published a new policy document aimed at mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the employment market. According to the document, the scale of enrollments at the master’s level are expected to expand by 189,000, an increase of 23.5 percent over the previous year. The expansion involves some of the leading HEIs, with Tsinghua University, for one, enrolling some 6,110 master students in 2020, up 4.8 percent from 2019. Taking advantage of the added quotas, HEIs in China are not only accepting more students, but also ramping up admission processes and adopting non-traditional selection practices. For instance, graduates whose study abroad plans have been interrupted by international travel bans or hostile immigration policies, have been given the option to apply for master programs at a number of domestic universities, skipping the routinely required entrance examinations.

## Reinstatement of “Second Bachelor’s Degree” Programs

With the rapid development of Chinese postgraduate education in recent years, it was decided that the “second bachelor’s degree” program (SBD)—first introduced in the 1980s to allow students to pursue a second bachelor’s degree after obtaining their first—was no longer needed. At the end of May 2020, however, not long after the ministry’s announcement, in July 2019, of the program’s cancellation, the MOE issued a Notice for Higher Education Institutions to Continue Enrolling Students for Second Bachelor’s Degrees, followed by a long list of over 3,400 accredited SBD programs across some 500 HEIs. This reactivation of the program in 2020 is interpreted as a sign of the authorities’ intention to cushion the graduating class of 2020 from some of the immediate job-hunting pressure that they would otherwise face. Not only will students admitted to SBD programs have the opportunity to seek a second bachelor degree, they will also be afforded a further two-year extension of campus life to prepare for future academic and professional pursuits.

### Abstract

COVID-19 is posing grave challenges to higher education graduates seeking employment in a job market that has been severely impacted. How will countries cope to help new graduates brace for what is now a very tough job market? China has put in place a number of initiatives to provide both short-term and long-term solutions, and higher education institutions will have to play a key role.

*In the face of such grim prospects, a number of initiatives have been ushered in by the Chinese government in collaboration with higher education institutions (HEIs) to ease employment pressure.*

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### Abstract

Latin America leads the world in the size of legally for-profit private higher education. This reality astonishes, given three contrasting realities: The region had zero such enrollment a quarter of a century ago; its for-profit enrollment is concentrated in three countries; and the size of its total private enrollment is only a third of that of Asia. Latin America's astonishing leap raises questions about what future for-profit private higher education might have in the vast remaining region.

### Development of Research Assistant Positions

In June 2020, the ministry of science and technology, the MOE, and four other ministries jointly issued a policy document to encourage institutions implementing research projects to create research assistant (RA) positions for HE graduates. The document specifies that universities, research institutions, and enterprises undertaking national research projects should develop RA positions to offer to HE graduates. The intention is that these contract-based positions (often of a temporary nature) will provide those seeking employment with an income, while giving them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with China's research system and prepare for further academic studies. It is worth noting that the document specifically states that "the number of positions created and the number of graduates employed will count as performance output as monitored by the 'Double World-Class' Project indicators," putting pressure on the 137 "Double World-Class" universities to take direct action. For instance, Beihang University, a leading research university in Beijing, has created 119 RA job openings. Similarly, at both Fudan University and Shanghai University, 150 RA positions have been created.

### Support for Entrepreneurship and Innovation

These past five years, a series of guidelines on the promotion of "mass entrepreneurship and innovation" has been released by the Chinese government, as a means of boosting economic growth and creating employment in the modern digital era. Entrepreneurship education—an important means of nurturing entrepreneurship—has seen rapid development at China's HEIs. A 2019 Renmin University report on student entrepreneurship concludes that entrepreneurship education at Chinese HEIs has a positive impact on students' motivation to set up businesses and the performance of their start-ups. In recent months, the government has reemphasized the importance of "mass entrepreneurship and innovation" and the role of universities in various initiatives. However, as an entrepreneurship ecosystem is yet to be properly developed and confidence has been shaken by business closures across parts of the country, it is hard to predict the number of post-COVID job-seekers who will be able to take on such challenges.

These initiatives—some of which may only delay problems or have a temporary impact—are initial efforts to address what is shaping up to be the "coldest winter" for job hunting. While universities may contribute to providing temporary solutions, the current challenges serve as a serious reminder for universities in China and beyond of the need to rethink ways of effectively preparing their graduates for a post-COVID world and helping them better connect with the new job market. ▲

## For-Profit Higher Education in Latin America: Exception or Precursor?

Dante J. Salto and Daniel C. Levy

A major new form of higher education—legal for-profit higher education—burst heavily onto the Latin American scene a quarter-century ago, yet remains largely unnoticed in most of the region, let alone beyond. Concentrated in just three countries, it is so weighty in two of them that Latin America leads all other regions in total for-profit enrollment, even as for-profit higher education grows in most regions. Will for-profit

higher education continue more as an exception in the Latin America region, or is it a precursor of a trend? To begin pondering such a consequential question, we must first gain a sense of the regional private higher education (PHE) context, and why and how exceptions have emerged and fared.

### **A Strong Private Club, but Nonprofit Only?**

Like the bulk of the world outside the United States, Latin America has had a mostly public higher education monopoly and public-dominant national systems since independence in the early nineteenth century. By the mid-twentieth century, however, Latin America had become the first region with PHE in nearly all countries. Today, with one out of two students in PHE, Latin America is easily the leading region in terms of the private share of total enrollment.

Whereas Latin America has had ample opportunity to accustom itself to the idea of PHE, the legal for-profit sector has burst in as a controversial new creature, even a competitor to both the private nonprofit and public sectors, generating considerable divisiveness. Even private nonprofits themselves, long regarded with scorn by their public peers as lower-tier institutions of dubious legitimacy, mistrust the new cousins and question their purposes. Nonprofits often join their public counterparts in denying the compatibility of profit and educational values.

Much confusion about legal for-profit boundaries derives from sloppily inconsistent definitions. It is surplus distribution to shareholders that legally defines profit-making institutions, whereas nonprofits ostensibly must reinvest all gains back into the institution. Misunderstandings arise largely from nonprofits taking advantage of the legal definition's tight bounds to benefit financially. Although discussions about "for-profits" often include anything from nonprofit sector revenue generation to nonprofits owned by international corporations (e.g., Laureate's large Mexican presence), those realities do not strictly define what constitutes *de jure* for-profits. Confusion also arises from nonprofits taking advantage of monitoring and enforcement difficulties to make and distribute profit illegally.

*Much confusion about legal for-profit boundaries derives from sloppily inconsistent definitions.*

### **The For-Profit Leap to the Global Zenith**

However much one could legitimately doubt the nature of much of its nonprofit PHE, Latin America has remained true to its European roots by preventing legal for-profit PHE well into the 1980s. This is despite having very much uprooted the tradition of public near-monopoly by having over 30 percent of total enrollment being private. Except for a Chilean niche in the 1980s, legal for-profit remained absent into the 1990s. Yet today, even as for-profit grows rapidly in most other regions, Latin America stands first in raw for-profit enrollment. This is especially striking considering that Asia's total private enrollment is three times that of Latin America. Equally startling is that still only five Latin American countries have for-profit enrollment, fewer than in Africa, the Arab region, Asia, or even Europe. Moreover, Latin America's for-profit PHE is concentrated above all in Brazil, followed by Peru and then Chile, while Costa Rica and Bolivia round out the list. Asia's for-profit enrollment is also concentrated in two large private sectors (in Indonesia and the Philippines) having major for-profit components. But neither of these approaches Brazil's in magnitude, and other Asian for-profit PHE does not make up the difference. Asia's three largest private sectors outside Indonesia—India, Japan, and South Korea—proscribe for-profit PHE. In this way, Asia's for-profit share of PHE (and of total higher education) is small compared to Latin America's.

Brazil is by far the Latin American *and worldwide* for-profit giant as it enrolls 3.3 million out of its 8 million students within the private for-profit higher education sector. Peruvian for-profits probably enroll more than 700,000 students. In both countries, the private for-profit sector enrolls more students than their private nonprofit or public counterparts. Nor is Chile's enrollment in for-profit postsecondary centers insignificant, though recent legislation may well cut a significant chunk from the estimated 343,000 students enrolled in that sector. Costa Rica adds about 40,000 students. Thus, for-profits in just these four countries (Bolivia is omitted for not providing official data or estimates) enroll about 4.4 million students, representing 32 percent and 17 percent of Latin America's private and total higher education enrollment, respectively.

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*Program for Research on Private Higher Education (PROPHE) contributes a regular column to IHE.*

The key to for-profit legalization in both Brazil and Peru was presidential conviction that for-profits in disguise were fraudulent for the citizenry, their illegitimate nonprofit exemptions depriving government of tax revenues. Government thus forced extant and future private institutions to choose: real nonprofit or *de jure* for-profit. Quickly, those choosing for-profit status found market success in focusing on unmet access desires. These have facilitated the further massification of their systems, usually as low-tier, nonelite, demand-absorbing institutions. Prestige is concentrated in public institutions along with bold, nonprofit private exceptions, though some for-profits find useful job-market niches.

### Here to Stay?

Though the future of Latin America's for-profit PHE is of course unknown, we have some basis for informed speculation. The Chilean case illustrates swaying uncertainty. Latin America's modern regional for-profit breakthrough came to Chile, before Brazil or Peru. Yet Chile's permission, forced under the military dictatorship in the 1980s, was restricted to postsecondary training centers, mostly specialized in technical and vocational arenas. Legalization of for-profit never reached the university level and, with recent student protests and populist legislative changes, even some training centers are switching to nonprofit status.

Indicators from beyond Chile are also mixed. The huge recent spurt in Brazil and Peru suggests Latin America's foundational countries are not retreating from their for-profit path. Other cash-strapped governments may seek to follow suit in gaining tax revenues by peeling away nonprofit disguises. Meanwhile, the rapid for-profit growth in other regions could help legitimize the form, or at least provide further cover under which to meet growing demand without digging into COVID-impaired public budgets. Concentrated still in so few countries, Latin America's vast private sectors and continued overall higher education expansion might hold significant room for for-profit expansion in its other 18 countries. On the other hand, some countries might prefer to keep for-profits in disguise to avoid intensified open controversy. This is all the more likely as left-leaning populism spreads and student activism regains the visibility of yesteryear. The 2011 Colombia reversal of a proposed pro-for-profit project, like the Chilean student protests against profit, may counterbalance the forces pressing in favor of spreading legal for-profit PHE beyond its few present strongholds. ▲

### Abstract

The massification of Indian higher education is accompanied by a proliferation of private universities. The relaxation of several national policies has reduced the proportion of students from historically marginalized groups, while maintaining the dominance of higher caste and class students from the Hindu majority. With privatization, there is a need for stronger equity policies to avoid perpetuating the privilege and status of elite and powerful groups.

## Privatization and Unequal Access in India

Vishal Jamkar and Christopher Johnstone

India is the second largest higher education system in the world, with about 800 universities and nearly 40,000 colleges attended by 35 million students. It took India more than 55 years to move from an elite model of higher education to a mass model, and this growth shows no sign of slowing down. As an example, India's gross enrollment rate (GER) grew from 1.5 percent in 1961 to 5.9 percent in 1991, and further to 27 percent in 2017. As India's higher education continues to massify, several key features are emerging in the sector: greater diversity in the course offering, especially by engineering colleges and polytechnic institutes, which have begun to offer more applied science courses; the emergence of private universities and colleges to meet increasing demand; and growth

in access of students from traditionally marginalized or minoritized groups in India, such as those labeled Scheduled Caste (SC) (also known as *Dalit*, formerly “Untouchables”), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Class (OBC), as well as from Muslim communities, a religious minority in India. Despite increases in access, however, higher education enrollment is still dominated by higher caste and class students from the Hindu majority.

### Privatization and Inclusion

In contemporary Indian higher education, two main narratives and approaches have emerged over the past few decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, higher education was inclusive in terms of socioeconomic representation. Both public and government-aided private universities offered affordable tuition fees, providing hostels, scholarships, fee exemptions, books, and reserved seats for a targeted number of SC, ST, and OBC students, as well as for women.

However, since the early 1980s, the Indian government’s support of pro-poor policies such as academic and hostel fee waivers and scholarships has dwindled, and government support to public universities and aided private institutes has stagnated. Both central and state governments have enacted policies giving financial autonomy to private institutions to mobilize resources without government underwriting, also allowing policy autonomy. Privatization continued to increase in the 2000s. At that time, the Indian judiciary also played a pivotal role in allowing private institutions to raise their own funds and eliminating institutional reservation quotas aimed to increase enrollment of SC, ST, and OBC students.

While public support for marginalized and minoritized communities has weakened over the past several decades, privatization has simultaneously increased overall enrollment. Data from the National Sample Survey indicates that from 1995 to 2014, the share of postsecondary students in private unaided institutes increased by more than four times, from 7.1 percent to 32.7 percent, while enrollment in public institutions decreased significantly, from 57.5 to 41.4 percent. According to the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), there were more than 35,000 colleges in 2015, out of which more than 22,000 were private unaided, 5,000 received private aid, and nearly 8,000 were government funded. At present, nearly 78 percent of colleges are private, and these colleges enroll 67 percent of Indian students.

### Privatization and Equity

The massification of India’s higher education has been carried forward primarily through the proliferation of unaided private institutions. During this period, SC, ST, and OBC students have been jeopardized in two instances. First, the supreme court ruling that these institutions need not abide by reservation quotas has led to an equity dilemma as the higher education sector continues to grow: India’s affirmative action policies meant to redress historic injustices now only apply to a minority of institutions. Second, gradual shifts in scholarship, fee waiver, hostel fee waiver, and loan policies has limited the choices of lower-income students, reducing their opportunities for affordable private education.

Massification and privatization appear to have brought about an increase in enrollment among all groups, but mostly among those of higher castes. Private, unaided universities located in tier-1 and tier-2 cities in India are increasingly making education available largely to urban and rich students and are not required to make it affordable to students from poorer backgrounds, nor to abide by affirmative action policies. Further, under the auspices of the human resource development ministry, premier public institutes such as the Indian Institute of Management have been allowed to do away with reservations for PhD programs by leveraging meritocracy and “quality of education” arguments. In these same institutions, faculty demographics reinforce stratifications of access and mobility. According to the AISHE report of 2017–2018 released by the ministry, for example, 56.8 percent of teaching staff were from the “general” (majority) category, 8.6 percent were labeled SC (compared to 15 percent of the general population), and only 2.27 percent of faculty positions are held by those labeled ST (compared to 7.5 percent of the general population). These disparities may have a reproductive effect on admissions into institutions and may impact on how equity is envisioned in academic programs.

*The massification of India’s higher education has been carried forward primarily through the proliferation of unaided private institutions.*

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### Conclusions

The massification and privatization of universities and colleges in India has in general led to a wider range of options within higher education. Over the past several decades, the gross enrollment ratio has increased for a variety of groups, yet enrollment disparities still exist. Massification has increased choices, but in an unregulated way. Relaxation of fee caps, removal of government support grants for housing and fees, and a lack of affirmative action protection in private universities mean that enrollment disparities may grow. The location and the fee structure of private universities and colleges have disproportionately increased opportunities for rich and higher caste students. The elimination of mandatory reservations in private universities has also reduced the flow of students from historically marginalized groups and Muslims students. As private higher education strengthens its hold in India, policy makers and private institutions need to identify diversity as a target for social responsibility and social good. Failure to do so will reinforce the social stratification that has existed in India for millennia. ▲

## Poland: A Decade of Reforms (2010–2020)

**Marek Kwiek**

### Abstract

A decade of reforms has changed almost every aspect of university functioning. Poland has moved from privatization to deprivatization and from deinstitutionalization to reinstitutionalization of the research mission of its universities. The research internationalization agenda has led to introducing quantitative, research-focused indicators and new funding and assessment systems. However, the system of incentives to internationalize Polish research has so far proved to be ineffective. These reforms were pursued in politically turbulent times.

During the first two decades following 1989, Polish universities remained largely unreformed. Core features of the system during that period—such as noncompetitive research funding modes, strongly collegial and ineffective governance, and a complicated multilevel system of academic degrees and positions—remained virtually untouched until the early 2010s.

Research was underfunded, and the research mission undervalued. System expansion and teaching-related privatization (serving huge numbers of fee-paying part-time students) were the main policy directions. However, starting in the mid-2000s, the long-term implications of declining demographics became clear to policy makers and institutional leaders. Indeed, while in 2006, there were about 2 million students, by 2020, their number had fallen to 1.2 million. Consequently, by the late 2000s, research became a new national policy focus.

### A Decade of Reforms

The 2010s were a decade of reforms that changed almost every aspect of university functioning. Research was reinstitutionalized as a main university mission and a new grant-based research-funding system was introduced. Poland moved from privatization to deprivatization and from deinstitutionalization to reinstitutionalization of the research mission in its universities.

With research back as a national policy focus, research grants became competitively distributed by a new national research council (the NCN, established in 2010). Public subsidies for research became linked to faculty performance and national assessment. Internationalization of research became a keyword in all major policy documents of the decade.

New funding and assessment mechanisms fueled vertical stratification in the system and the gradual emergence of two types of institutions: those that were strongly research oriented, and those with limited research output and funding. Additionally, the new Excellence Initiative—Research Universities (the IDUB national program for

2020–2026) started in 2020, with the aim to provide additional funding to 10 large universities selected on a competitive basis. IDUB's total funding is about USD 1 billion for seven years, and its spending is discretionary, based on special institutional development plans and linked to revised institutional strategies.

However, the system of incentives to internationalize Polish research has so far proved to be ineffective. The new, highly competitive way of distributing research funds did not result in positive changes in the structure of Polish scientific output, as had been expected. The share of output published as a result of international collaboration has been one of the lowest in Europe, even though the number of internationally indexed publications has grown substantially. Poland was not able to make full use of European Union research funds, especially those from the European Research Council. Low expenditures on academic research have contributed to the failure of internationalization policies: A radical change in the management of research funds (the new grant system) was not accompanied by a radical change in the level of financing of academic science. In addition, the system of academic promotion and the principles of research assessment exercises (termed “parameterization”) in 2014 and 2017 did not promote research internationalization strongly enough.

*The system of incentives to internationalize Polish research has so far proved to be ineffective.*

### First Wave of Reforms

There were two waves of reforms in the 2010s. The first wave was carried out between 2009 and 2011 by minister Barbara Kudrycka (the Kudrycka reforms) and the second between 2016 and 2018 by minister Jarosław Gowin (the Gowin reforms). Within the framework of the Kudrycka reforms, the Polish system was reconfigured on the basis of multilevel governance, with new intermediary coordinating institutions situated between higher education institutions and the state, the NCN being a good example. Financing of academic research became more directly linked to the assessment of measurable research productivity, targeting about 1,000 basic academic units, mostly faculties.

Prior to the Kudrycka reforms, the state was directly involved in coordinating higher education. In the new governance architecture, higher formal autonomy of institutions and academics became combined with higher levels of accountability. The new intermediary agencies are, in principle, independent of the state in that they are either directly managed by academics elected by the academic community at large, or indirectly influenced by academics through governing boards. The state continues to define global levels of public funding, priority areas of national research, and the primary division of funds between main funding agencies. However, decisions on how to allocate research funds are taken by academics within these agencies.

### Second Wave of Reforms

The fundamental ideas behind the Gowin reforms (carried out in 2016–2018, but with delayed implementation until 2022) were meant to differentiate the higher education system further and internationalize Polish academic knowledge production. The two main concepts discussed were *system differentiation* (teaching-oriented versus research-oriented institutions) and *research internationalization* (national versus international research).

While teaching was important in the Gowin reforms, the main focus was on the differentiation of the system along teaching and research lines, and on the internationalization of research. The main recent changes to the higher education system focused on research: new institutional structures in universities, formed along a newly defined list of research disciplines; a new research evaluation system (expected to start in 2022); a selection of 10 research-intensive universities receiving additional funding in the framework of the IDUB Excellence program; and new doctoral schools established in universities with a visible research output, rather than scattering doctoral education across the whole system. Another important change was the strengthening of rectors and their management teams—at the expense of traditional representative bodies such as the senate and faculty councils.

This research internationalization agenda meant introducing heavily quantitative, research-focused indicators to the funding and assessment systems: What was expected was more international collaboration, more internationally visible (through global

datasets) research, and more internationally coauthored publications, at the individual, institutional, and national levels.

### **Universities and Big Politics**

In the 2010s, universities were not politicized and were kept protected from big national political shifts throughout the two waves of reforms. In particular, the change of power in 2015 from centrist to rightist political parties did not lead to any change of higher education policies. University reforms and universities themselves have been spared the devastating political clashes, with strong populist overtones, of the past few years. No politically motivated changes were introduced; however, in the past few months, the theme of “renationalization” of higher education, especially in the social sciences and humanities, as opposed to its ongoing “internationalization,” has been discussed in political circles. It is hard to predict to what extent national politics may change the general higher education policy directions of internationalization of research, vertical stratification in the system, and competitive funding modes in the future. However, looking at the experience from the periods from 2009 to 2015 (centrist governments) and from 2015 to 2020 (rightist governments), prospects to continue reforms at the systemic level seem relatively good, despite some turbulence on the surface. Hopefully, the reforms will be strengthened and consolidated rather than stopped or reversed, and universities will not be pushed in new, possibly populist, directions. ▲

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## CIHE PUBLICATIONS

The Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) has now published Volume 49 in its [book series](#), *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*: Balbachevsky, E., Cai, Y., Eggins H. and Shenderova S. (2021). *Building Higher Education Cooperation with the EU, Challenges and Opportunities from four Continents*. Brill/Sense, Leiden/Boston.

A full list of CIHE-affiliated publications is available on the [CIHE website](#).

## CIHE UPDATES

CIHE welcomes the opportunity to connect with readers of *International Higher Education* in a number of ways:

### Professional Development Courses

[Registration is now open](#) for our online CIHE Summer Professional Development Series. This year's offerings include:

- Making Quality Work in Higher Education (June 3–6, 2021; asynchronous)—Taught by Gerardo Blanco, Academic Director, CIHE, Boston College.
- Inclusive Practices in Education Abroad (June 14–25, 2021; synchronous meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00–1:15 pm EDT)—Taught by Nick Gozik, Dean of Global Education, Elon University.
- Internationalizing the Curriculum for All Students (June 28–July 2, 2021; asynchronous)—Taught by Betty Leask, Professor Emerita, La Trobe University.

### WES–CIHE Summer Institute

The annual WES–CIHE Summer Institute will be held on June 9–11, 2021, in a fully virtual format. All graduate students and early-career professionals are invited to [submit a proposal](#) on the theme of “Innovative and Inclusive Internationalization in Higher Education.” **Proposals must be received by May 1, 2021.**

### CIHE Conference

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, CIHE has made the difficult decision to postpone our first biennial Conference on International Higher Education for another year. We now hope to be able to welcome friends and colleagues to Boston College on October 20–22, 2022. Further information about the conference, including information about how to submit a proposal, will be available in early 2022.

### IHE's growing audience

From now on, IHE is also available to lecturers of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Around 500 lecturers, who support universities in over 110 countries in the field of German studies and German as a foreign language, will be provided with IHE's comments and analyses on trends and issues of importance to higher education systems, institutions, and stakeholders around the world. For more information on the program, please visit the DAAD [website](#).



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