

Education in the Asia-Pacific Region:
Issues, Concerns and Prospects 17

Peter Kell
Gillian Vogl

International Students in the Asia Pacific

Mobility, Risks and Global Optimism



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International Students in the Asia Pacific

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International Students in the Asia Pacific

Mobility, Risks and Global Optimism

 Springer

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Series Editors' Introduction

In the last 10 years, the number of students studying outside of their home country has grown at an unprecedented rate. In 2007, UNESCO estimated that over 2.8 million students were being educated at the tertiary level in countries other than their homes, up from an estimated 1.7 million in the year 2000, and the numbers continue to grow. While most of the traditional host countries providing tertiary education services are seeing the numbers of international students continuing to rise, newly emerging hosts, not traditionally associated with education provision, are entering the competitive higher education market and are re-mapping the unidirectional flow of global talent.

This book makes an important contribution to the growing body of literature on student mobility in the Asia Pacific region and globally and provides an up-to-date perspective on the regional and global changes that have transformed student mobility over the last decade. This book offers a conceptual framework for analysis of the opportunities and risks associated with mobility. It provides a cross-national understanding of these issues in a changing social and global context. The chapters compare and assess differences in approaches to education provision for countries in the Asia Pacific region and the expectations of 'potential customers'. Empirical evidence and examples are provided on how young people negotiate the many options and opportunities made available to them in this increasingly competitive area, such as the processes that are used to assess costs and returns associated with different education strategies. This book attempts to consider all sides of mobility from the macro- and microlevels, such as from the perspective of education providers at a national and strategic level, from providers at an institutional level, and the students and the community in which they choose to live. Consideration of the latter issue is commended and is considered in detail in Chap. 11 of the book. It would be easy to overlook the importance of welcoming students to an institute and a community, a potential negative aspect of mobility that can leave students feeling isolated or even threatened.

Peter Kell and Gillian Vogl are world-renowned in the field of education. This book provides an interesting and wide-ranging discussion of the issues involved in international education and student mobility, and the authors are thanked for their valuable contribution in this area.

The Hon Kong Institute of Education
National Institute of Educational Research of Japan, Tokyo

Rupert Maclean
Ryo Watanabe

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Both authors initially worked at the University of Wollongong principally through and involvement with the Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformational Studies where the leadership of Dr. Lenore Lyons and then Dr. Tim Scrase were important in providing funds to develop some initial studies in international students. The funds to develop research into the questions about international students and the local community came from the Office of Community Engagement at the University of Wollongong, and Ms. Jan Sullivan is thanked for her support.

In 2008, the authors were able to gain funds from the IMB Community fund to assist a community working group, including international students conduct the first Welcome to Wollongong event which is discussed in Chap. 11. There is a team of people to be thanked in developing Welcome to Wollongong including Virginie Schmelitschek, Ann Maree Smith, Leanne Crouch, Ken Finlayson, Katya Pechenkina, Hong Jia Shao, Nick Wang, Natasha De Silva, Mardello Basset, Susheela Pandian, Monica Millar, Annette Engstrom, Les Dion, Darinka Radinovic, Mignon Lee Warden, Jennifer di Bartolomeo and Kate Knowles. The City of Wollongong played an important role in making Welcome to Wollongong and important initiative in international education and is thanked for its support.

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The book first emerged in 2007 as an initial draft during a sabbatical visit to the Universiti Sains Malaysia and was assisted by support from Professor Moshidi Sirat and the Malaysian National Institute for Higher Education Research. This book then remained in a hiatus until 2009 when Peter Kell worked for 2 years at the

Centre for Lifelong Learning Research and Development at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, and Gillian Vogl moved also to be working at the Centre for Social Inclusion at Macquarie University.

The Hong Kong Institute of Education funded a project on global student mobility in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, and Prof. Kerry Kennedy and Bob Adamson are thanked for their support. The research in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore was conducted in 2010, and thanks go to Emily Tsoi in Hong Kong, Dr. Dale Anderson and Mr Det Fisher in Singapore and Prof Ambigapathy Pandian in Malaysia for their assistance in this project. The book production was then accelerated in Hong Kong with help from Mr. So Hiu-Chun Benjamin, Shum Hei-Man, Cammy, Pak On-Na, Anna. In Darwin, the assistance of Ms. Rupa Khadka has also been valuable in assisting in the final stages of production.

These journeys meant that the book became a transnational project being conducted both in Australia and Hong Kong with a range of diversions to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Germany.

Austrade and Study Moves are thanked for their kind permission to use the images of websites in Chap. 9.

Peter Kell returned to Australia in 2011 to take up a position and Charles Darwin University in Northern Australia to complete a global circle, and this book has been completed in Australia with final support from colleagues in the School of Education. Final thanks go to the team at Springer which includes Mr. Harmen van Paradijs, Ms. Alix Wurdak, Ms. Yoka Janssen and Ms. Annemarie Keur for their support and assistance through the various stages of production. Finally, thanks also to the Series Editor Prof. Rupert Maclean in assisting this book on its journey to a successful conclusion.

Darwin, Australia
Sydney, Australia

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Chapter 1

Transnational Student Mobility: Introducing New Paradigms for Researching International Students

One of the features of contemporary higher education is an exponential increase in the number of students who study outside their own country and become international students. International students are generally considered to be ‘students who have left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purposes of study’ (OECD 2007, p.314).

Between 1975 and 1990, the number of international students increased from 600,000 to 1.2 million, and by 2006, it had reached 2.9 million (Douglas and Edelstein 2009; Ruby 2009).

International education is dominated by several nations termed the ‘Big Five’. The ‘Big Five’ are the major competitors in transnational education and include the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, France and Australia. In 2005, five out of every ten foreign students went to this small group of countries (OECD 2007, p.304). The USA, the UK, France and Germany are estimated to account for 52% of all students studying abroad (OECD 2007, p.304).

These nations have largely divided the globe up and established distinctive catchments in various regions and countries to source international students. Skeldon (2005), along with others, argues that with the exception of the USA which has global dominance, these nations have developed specific features and programs to attract students. Aside from the advantages and prestige attached with studying overseas, several countries like Australia, Canada and the USA have the added attraction of possibilities for permanent residence on graduation and opportunities to establish a new life in a developed nation.

The growth in some countries has been nothing short of spectacular, and the presence of international students has significantly altered the demographics of the student population in these countries. For example, in 2000, in Australia there were 150,000 international students, and this number has increased to 560,000 in 2009. After 9 years, Australia has a higher proportion of international students relative to the total population than any other country in the world with almost 20% of all enrolments being international students (HRC 2010; OECD 2007).

Germany and France have approximately 20% of the world's international students and essentially attract students from European nations or those who have linguistic or cultural ties with them. They have also managed to attract students from China and India. Smaller nations like Japan, Canada and New Zealand share approximately 13% of the world's international student population (WES 2007).

In recent years, Malaysia, Singapore and China have allocated large amounts of resources to develop a 'world-class' education system and have attracted increasing numbers of international students. In 2006, combined, they shared approximately 12% of the international student market. The increasing use of English as a language of instruction and relatively inexpensive tuition fees are contributing to the growth of students in Malaysia, Singapore and China (WES 2007).

Asian students make up the largest group of international students enrolled in OECD and partner countries. In the OECD, students from Asia make up 47.7% of the total of international students, and in the OECD partner countries, Asians are 57.7% of enrolments. The participation of Asians in international education is most evident in Australia, Greece, Japan, Korea and New Zealand where more than 76% of their international students are from Asia (OECD 2007, p.310). Chinese students make up the largest group of students who enrol in OECD countries making up 16.7% (OECD 2007, p.310). (This does not include a further 1.5% from Hong Kong.) In 2010, Chinese students are the largest group of students in the USA, the UK and Australia. Other students from Asia include India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore (OECD 2007, p.310). Asian students have demonstrated a strong preference for business, commerce, information technology courses and engineering programs at the undergraduate level (OECD 2007, p.312; Kell and Vogl 2010).

The predictions for growth developed by joint British Council and Australian International Development Program (IDP) research entitled *Vision 2020: Forecasting International Student Mobility, a UK Perspective*, suggested that globally international student places will increase from about 3 million in 2010 to 5.8 million in 2020. The highest growth is expected to come from Asia representing 1.8 million places or a total of 76% of the global demand for the five major English-speaking destination countries by 2020 (Böhm et al. 2010, p.6). The growth from the Asia is evident in the following Table 1.1 with Asian growth at 7.8% surpassing global demand by 1.8%.

The *Vision 2020* report approaches the future of global student mobility with considerable optimism but recognises that international education is subject to considerable shifts and changes. However, the report and its investigating authors analysed student mobility through the prism of a global market where students make rational choices in the context of what the report describes as 'push' and 'pull' factors. The prestige of universities, the cost of living, tuition fees, visa regulations, the language and cultural context, the attractiveness of specific destinations and opportunities for work and settlement there, as well as market 'trends' were seen as influential factors in determining decisions by students and their families. The outcomes of these decisions and the subsequent journey of students are referred to as 'movements' and 'flows' of students across the globe. Contrived within a paradigm of choice and markets, other aspects associated with the processes of personal experience of students are often ignored or at best marginalised as an unimportant subjective category.

Table 1.1 The global demand for international student places in HE in major English-speaking destination countries by main student source region (000s)

	2003	2005	2010	2015	2020	Growth ^a (%)
Africa	63	67	87	113	146	5.2
Middle East	37	39	49	60	73	4.2
Asia	528	612	943	1,347	1,862	7.8
America	127	134	156	181	209	3.0
Europe	226	235	262	289	313	2.0
World	988	1,096	1,507	2,000	2,614	6.0

Source: Boehm et al. (2004, p.5)

^aCompound annual growth

Despite of the 1997 financial crisis, the international reactions to September 11 and the more recent global financial crisis, growth in student mobility has been unrelenting and persistent, and this has facilitated an optimism that the growth in student mobility evident from 2000 to 2007 would extend endlessly into the future.

However, these optimistic and unproblematic perspectives on student mobility predicting unlimited growth, generally advanced by the recruiters, marketing agencies, university managers and many governments are challenged and questioned by Sidhu (2006) who sees the student mobility as a more complex phenomena saying that:

When read as part of an unproblematic panoply of choices, opportunities and desires of individuals that are set against a background of greater access to technology, transport, booming home economies and the disposable income of a burgeoning middle class, the trends and flows of international students become no different from the flows of tourist, business expatriate and cosmopolitan academics. (Sidhu 2006, p.25)

In common with the British Council and the Australian IDP, who commissioned the *Vision 2020* report, this book also recognises that global student mobility is a dynamic phenomenon which is subject to rapid and profound shifts and changes. But rather than simply observe global student mobility as a market with series of options, this book looks more critically at how power and influence are distributed and how the interests of international students are balanced against the 'institutional ensembles' of governments, business and higher education who are committed to a market view of student mobility (Jessop 1990).

Exploring Global Student Mobility as an Asian Phenomena

Importantly, *International Students in the Asia Pacific Mobility, Risks and Global Opportunity* explores and documents the experience of international students in the Asia Pacific region. In doing so, this book explores the nature and character of global student mobility as a unique Asian phenomenon and the relationships that

operate within and across the region. This book also explores questions about the relationship between Asia and some of the nations of the developed world which make up the most numerous destinations for students, notably Australia, a country which is both located in the Asia Pacific and is one of the 'Big Five' destinations.

We argue that there is a need for new ways of exploring the phenomena of international student mobility. Many of the theoretical frameworks used to interpret international student mobility do not adequately account for the complexities that characterise transnational higher education and experiences of international students. In the context of globalisation and the heightened anxiety in the post-September 11 period about immigration, the authors argue that discourses around international students have identified international students as a 'risk' to the integrity of the nation state and as offering new dangers to higher education providers.

But, according to the authors of this book, the evidence of the experiences of students overwhelmingly suggests it is more often the students who encounter dangers and experience 'risk'. The authors present an argument that suggests that the life of international students is profoundly shaped by the commodification of transnational markets and that this experience contributes to new forms of isolation, alienation and the fragmentation of social bonds. It is a tendency that many of the responses of the nation state and the higher education providers contribute to in their rush to meet the demands of the global higher education market.

We argue that approaches to researching international students and mobility have tended to omit the importance of the students as agents of their own destiny. Present approaches have ignored the possibilities that international students offer for a new form of global citizenship. There is a need to substitute sentiments that see students as a source of anxiety and fear. Rather than being treated as passive recipients of Western wisdom and knowledge, there is a potential to reshape perspectives about the international student experience to ensure that themes of exchange, reciprocity and interaction with host communities are recognised and developed. Through focusing on a number of case studies from Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, the authors seek to provide new ways at looking at student mobility which explore the new relationships, affinities, associations and connections that can be developed through overseas study.

The escalating levels of students studying outside their country of origin and the exponential growth of transnational education see global student mobility as a major feature of educational policy which interfaces with migration, national development and economic growth. The recruitment of international students and the provision of services to them have grown beyond the education portfolio and are now a transnational big business which has implications for national accounts and financial sustainability of many countries. Seeing the potential earnings from international students, many governments have developed ambitious plans to attract and connect international students with research, innovation and the development of downstream activities such as real estate and urban development from their presence. Aside for their value as students, government and business often situate overseas students as the catalyst for modernisation and the transition from the old economies associated with manufacturing to the new frontiers of the knowledge industries.