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Chapter 1

International Student Mobility: Examining Trends and Tensions

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ABSTRACT

Student mobility has increasingly become a key issue of policy and practice in higher education. This chapter presents a set of critical views about international student mobility globally, setting the context for emerging voices and critical lenses. The authors argue that educators should look into the bigger picture of mobility to understand its complex and multifaceted issues which go beyond counting enrollment numbers. Where do students go to study and why? Where do they come from and who was able to leave home? What obstacles do students face and how do they overcome them? There are some of the central questions of student mobility discourse. In this backdrop, the authors argue that students must be treated fairly by the simple logic of reciprocity: international students are “international” in the host countries in the same way as study abroad students will be “international” by default in the receiving countries. The only question is whether we are ready to accept a humane world where mobile students are valued as part of a global community and for global good, rather than just viewed in terms of mercenary drives of the market.

The wind caught him and carried him higher. “Do not be afraid,” the voice [of the Frog from the field below] called to him. “Hang on to the wind and trust!” . . . and the higher he went the clearer [his newly gained sight] became. . . . “You have a new name,” called the Frog. “You are Eagle!” (Story of the Jumping Mouse, Steptoe, 2010).

INTRODUCTION

Humans have always moved across borders--physical, political, socioeconomic, cultural, and others--and their movement has been amplified by advancements in the means of travel and communication. We move for survival, for opportunity, and for learning. We move away from where we are born and live, and we move back or further away, depending on push and pull factors that discourses about mobility have explored. Significantly, the only mobility that gets talked about is “international,” reflecting the dominance of *national*-istic framing in the discourse about human mobility. That framing has further limited the discourse about human mobility in general and international student mobility in particular within narratives and assumptions about language, culture, and economic prowess--exposing the faultline in the nationalized views about those other phenomena. Within the nationalistic framing of international student mobility, then, a Sri Lankan student is assumed to seek educational opportunity in the United States instead of India and for particular reasons, regardless of reality. There may be more mobility between the two neighboring countries--not just by numbers but by type, speed, reasons, and complexity--but they may all be rendered invisible by dominant interest and assumptions and discourses in the scholarship. So, like the *Jumping Mouse* in the Native American fable that we cited above, one has to learn to look beyond dominant narratives, rise above assumptions, look at the big picture, and tell stories from details that one gathers from clearer or closer views of reality. Like the Mouse, who symbolically turns into an Eagle in the story, scholars must acquire new perspectives and clarity in their understanding by venturing beyond the historical and geo-national limits of established disciplines and discourses.

In recent years, the mobility of international student has been viewed as one of the indicators of campus diversity, internationalization, and a prime source to boost the revenue of the institution of higher education in major destinations. This view of local interest has dominated the conversation about global mobility. Today, over five million students cross national borders for their higher education and that crossing is the dominant basis of discourse about mobility. This mobility trend of international students is of interest to universities, educators, business leaders, and the government not so much because it embodies greater flow and advancement of ideas, exchange of experience, and achievement of common interests across borders but because it offers monetary benefit and serves national interests. Globally ranked universities do aspire to provide meaningful international experiences for their domestic students; their leaders are also committed to the mission of global engagement and are willing to persevere in the face of challenges brought about by the current rise in anti-immigration rhetoric (Marklein, 2017). And yet, nation-based framing of the discourse--which further shapes perspectives about language, culture, politics, economics, and other terms of analysis--continues to make some questions seem less significant than others, some findings less meaningful, some realities less visible. This chapter presents a set of critical views about international student mobility globally, setting the context for emerging voices and critical lenses. Where do students go to study *and why*? Where do they come from and *who was able to leave home*? What obstacles do students face *and how do they overcome them*? These questions should not just be answered by using whatever perspectives are dominant in the places where students arrive, whatever theories are popular among those who do the studying. What do we miss from where we look at things? How could we add other perspectives we haven't adopted yet, as well as other issues we haven't discussed and other questions we haven't asked?

COMPLEXIFYING GLOBAL STUDENT MOBILITY

The concept of “international student” is very complex if we examine it from more than one, especially the dominant, perspective--as inter-national, only using nation as the unit of understanding learners crossing geographical spaces that happen to involve national borders. One critically important perspective is to use the framing of mobility as this book adopts. In a political sense, Adey (2017) writes in his book that mobility can be a “way of addressing people, objects, things and places” in ways that help us to “resist authoritarian regimes” (p. xv) as well as defy the predominance of nation-based framing of phenomena that should not be framed as such. In this sense, mobility can be a “desperate passageway” for some while it may be “banal and forgettable” for others. Mobility of some groups may “threaten a boundary” while mobility of others signify their privilege to cross it freely. Moving certainly has many meanings and manifestations in life and society, from moving as in rhetorically persuading an audience, to touching someone’s feelings, to presenting a proposal, to shifting place physically, and to settling in a new social space (Sharma, 2012). So, “[m]obility does not just exist out there for academics, students and researchers to examine from a distance” (Adey, 2017, p. xv). It is a mode of life for many who cannot survive within borders, as well as a way for many to find opportunity for success and growth.

Scholars of education and its various disciplines have generally adopted the nation-based or visa-based and often payment-based definitions, even when they have taken critical and empathetic perspectives about globally mobile students. Shapiro, Farrelly and Tomas (2014), for instance, note that an international student is “a student who moves to another country (the host country) for the purpose of pursuing tertiary or higher education e.g., college or university” (p.2). In the US, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, n. d.) defines international student as: “Anyone who is enrolled at an institution of higher education in the United States who is not a U.S. citizen, an immigrant (permanent resident) or a refugee.” They are classified as “a nonimmigrant class of admission, an alien coming temporarily to the United States to pursue a full course of study in an approved program in either an academic (college, university, seminary, conservatory, high school, elementary school, other institution, or language training program), vocational or other recognized non-academic institution” (USCIS, n.d., para 1). In this definition, nation is used as an exclusionary term, even as it includes partial or aspiring members of the nation state within insiders. Taking it one step further, the Australian government defines international students as “full-fee paying students studying in Australia on a student visa,” including financial contribution as a factor and implying that these students by definition do not deserve the nation’s financial resource. Similar to many cases of nation states that share cultural and social interests, citizens of neighboring New Zealand do not require a student visa to study in Australia. This also shows that open borders reveal a fissure in the nation-based definition of international students. Whereas the Government of Canada defines international students as “students in Canada on a visa or refugees, neither of which have a permanent residency status,” international students there “also include both those enrolled in a Canadian program from a Canadian institution that is not located in Canada (also known as offshore students) as well as non-Canadian students studying via Internet” (Statistics Canada, 2011, n.d.). This definition puts the financial factor above all else in an interesting manner. Together, these different definitions help to unpack political, economic, and sociocultural dynamics that affect globally mobile students. For all the variations, however, one common denominator remains: international students in the clearest sense are outsiders or others who are increasingly permitted to enter and study for the interest of the nation state and its political and economic interests. According to Merrick (2013),

The most immediate sense in which ‘international students’ are constructed is, of course, in the definition which determines that a particular set of criteria--be its nationality, visa status or education history--defines one group of students as ‘home’ and another as ‘international’. (p. 29)

What gets lost in the dominant views about international students and international education is, strangely, international good through education, that is, through the advancement and sharing of new ideas, through the application and mutual benefits of learning.

Bista and Foster (2016) have enumerated three characteristics as the most common for describing international students, notions that we build upon here and which other colleagues have addressed variously in their chapters.

1. **Identity in Transition:** The term “international student” refers to the temporary status, to holding a permit/visa, to restrictions and limited opportunities, to transitions and return to home countries.
2. **Geo-Political Definitions:** The term is defined differently in many host countries, reflecting different laws and regulations, regulations and expectations, and even political climate and discourse of the time.
3. **Global Academic Movement:** Another distinctive characteristic of mobile college youth has to do with mobility in the sense of “migration.” There are various pulling and pushing forces that shape the choices and interests of these international students.

The increasingly significant element of mobility that Bista and Foster pointed out is related to a wave of displacement around the world, caused by wars and famines, economic breakdown and instability, technological disruptions of traditional occupations and rapid urbanization. For these reasons, as Teichler (2017) pointed out, mobility has increasingly become a key issue of policy and practice in higher education “whereby absolute numbers of foreign or international students are the indicator most frequently referred to” (p. 4). But numbers alone cannot tell the full story of mobility and its complex and multifaceted issues. The fast growing border crossing activities including the migration of scholars, branch campuses, exchange programs, virtual and e-learning programs, bilateral and institutional initiatives, and shifts in geo-political and economic powers have affected international student mobility in unexpected ways. In these activities and discourses, students continue to be labeled based on their status of citizenship, nationality or passport. But the massive movements of international students traveling in all directions challenge not only our established institutional supports but also how to understand the students in the first place. They have been inducing change in institutions’ views about diversity, student engagement, curriculum and pedagogy, and the value and function of education itself. International student mobility and its market is highly associated with socio-cultural expectations, geo-political conditions, global employment structures, and bilateral collaborations and exchanges of ideas and goods. To meet the standards of the 21st century, to survive and serve today’s world, it is important for students, both local and international, to move and be mobile as it changes their perspectives, and develop worldviews. Thus, for scholars and stakeholders, it is important to understand the backgrounds and experiences, motivations and strengths of globally mobile students. And in this sense, international student mobility is an important discourse, as it “changes the way we understand society, culture, politics and community; it fundamentally reimagines how we make sense of the world” (Adey, 2017, p. 7). Even while they are

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often labelled as “threatening” and “polluting” (Adey, 2017, p. 10), they have been helping to rethink and update all aspects of education with increasing intensity and significance.

Global student mobility may be treated superficially but its impact can be quite deep. As Saw and Hesse (2010) suggest, it could be seen as “passing fads and fashions of the academic world” or it could be viewed as capable of opening our eyes to “the emperor’s new clothes” (p. 311). The latter possibility is increasingly true because while the discourse on marketing strategies sounds as if it is all about mere buzzwords like enhancing campus diversity, internationalization, and global awareness, globalization of student bodies have usually resulted in fundamental rethinking of various aspects of higher education, from what counts as timely education to educational experience of students and the sense of global citizenship that all students derive from a globally diversified learning environment. It is true that a dominant motive behind current endeavors increasing institutional revenue with increasing international student enrollment. “Cash cows” as they have often been perceived as, international students may end up in campuses where resources and support services are neither designed nor allocated to address their often unique needs. More and more institutions have their strategic plans of increasing international students population. Often missing from such bigger plans are thoughtful provisions of support services for these students and ways of integrating all students to foster campus diversity. And yet, mobility inevitably brings about new contacts, new challenges, and new opportunities in many ways.

Scholarship on international students has evolved and is lately taking significant turns. Past studies witness a plethora of research on international student mobility particularly over emphasizing adjustment and adaptation aspect of mobility including issues related to language challenge, academic writing, and cultural competency (Bista & Gaulee, 2017). New topics and themes emerging lately have also emphasized the value of integration of local and global perspectives in host institutions (Gaulee, 2016). While the majority of institutions are yet to develop systematic and organized programs that support mobile students and their faculty members, there are many excellent models and promising lines of new scholarship that highlight need of developing cross-cultural competency of all students, building a strong diverse campus community and marching towards internationalization of higher education. To revisit the European Commission’s (2009) argument, mobility is “important for personal development and employability as it fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures. It encourages linguistic pluralism, thus underpinning the multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area” (p. 4). The future of international student mobility and its market seems much more strong and promising than it was ever before in terms of scholarship and new programs. Several academic journals are dedicated to advancing the idea: *Journal of International Students*, *Journal of International Mobility*, *Transitions: Journal of Transient Migration*, and *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, *Mobilities*, *Journal of Global Mobility*, *Journal of College Student Development*, and *Studies on International Education* are a few leading journals. Moreover, hundreds of doctoral dissertations and individual articles are published annually in various other academic avenues (Bista & Gaulee, 2017). These publications have been expanding the scope of international student mobility in academia as well as suggesting new directions for improvements. As Adey (2017, p. 2) rightly points out, “mobility also exists in the pages of books, journal articles and reports; it is rendered in the thought and then in the imagination” of the authors who examine the issues and concerns of international students and study abroad students from different perspectives and documents their lived experiences in these publications.

ESTABLISHED DISCOURSES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Student mobility has been so far driven by a number of general assumptions, such as perceived quality of education, especially shaped by the amalgamation of national exceptionalism and strategically created Zeitgeist. For instance, global rankings of universities are not actually based on globally agreed-upon criteria of quality, impact, or admiration. As recent developments have shown, the rankings are themselves a reflection of which nations have been most economically and politically dominant and, to a great extent, are able to project an image of greatness for their academic institutions. Marginson (2013) shows how this dynamic manifests in prevalent beliefs shaping social discourse about foreign students in the United States (as well as institutional policies and practices). “In the United States international students contribute to the national knowledge economy and American foreign relations,” Marginson notes, adding that both receiving countries and foreign students benefit from international education; “But for international students in general, and more so for non-white students from emerging nations, the exchange is premised on less than equal respect and treatment” (p. 9). This lack of respect may manifest rarely in public, such as when the US President Donald Trump reportedly called developing nations with black and brown populations “shithole countries” (BBC, 2018), but the general public also ultimately adopts the same assumption. “If it is difficult for international students, the thinking runs, why do ‘they’ come? Clearly ‘our education’ is superior to what ‘they’ have at home. And being supplicants, as it were, ‘they’ ought to ‘adjust’ to the country of education to the degree necessary to absorb its bounty” (Marginson, 2013, p. 9). So, from discourses about who comes from where and why to what support foreign students need, policies and practices about foreign students are shaped by often-problematic ideologies about national power, political ideology, and even implicit racial prejudice. In reality, the “quality” of education could also be defined in terms of its relevance to the society and profession to which it is applied, in terms of the inclusiveness of the education and its ability to affect social justice, in terms of its ability to survive change and foster progress in the world, and in terms of advancing common human good by creating opportunities and solving problems in the benefit of all. What we have instead is value claims made by whichever country or its universities have the greatest prestige in the world.

Similarly, based on the current fact that most international student are moving from non-English-speaking countries to English-speaking countries (e.g. USA, UK, and Australia), it is assumed that *English-speaking* identity of the destination is somehow an independently significant factor of mobility. Economic development in highly populated parts of the world have sustained the flow of students to traditional destinations, in spite of rapidly rising cost of international education--giving the impression that most international students continue to opt for English as the chosen language of instruction, as well as Western culture and universities. According to Project Atlas (2017), the top host destinations of international students were United States 24% of 4.6 million), United Kingdom (11%), China (10%), Australia (7%), France (7%), Canada (7%), Russia (6%), Germany (6%) and other countries (23%). In the 2016/2017 academic year, the number of international students in the United States increased to a record high of 1.08 million (IIE, 2017). A much smaller number of American students, 325, 339, received academic credits for studying abroad. Similarly, the top five sending countries of international students to the United Kingdom were China (97,850), United States (28,125), Malaysia (18,400), Germany (18,205) and India (18,015). The same year, Australia received the majority of its international students from the following countries: China (114,006), India (44,775), Nepal (15,211), Malaysia (14,721), and Vietnam (13,949). Middle East and Asia are similarly attracted to Western English speaking countries to further their education, based on government incentives. Because governments of many Middle East

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countries often provide full scholarships to their students to study in English-speaking countries, the US, UK, Australia, Canada remain their primary destinations. However, the global picture could be quickly changing, leaving a hole in the perspectives of even the most thoughtful scholarship. This view of mobility can be described as what Streitwieser (2014) calls vertical mobility in that it applies hierarchy of power, prestige, or privilege in usually unidimensional forms, rather than looking at the messiness of mobility as lateral, multidimensional, and unpredictable dynamics. On smaller scales, prompted by local, transnational, and family-level issues (not necessarily driven by geopolitics and market forces), students seek varied experiences, have unique connections, want to pursue different dreams, and accept opportunity by serendipity. Examples of lateral mobility is students in UK going to Spain for a semester to obtain a few transferable credits, but not for the degree; or it is the mobility of a Bangladeshi student studying in India while her father is posted in New Delhi for a few years by the country's embassy. Yet, on the global platforms of scholarship, for decades now, assumptions about best universities in English-speaking countries have dominated the discourse.

The third framing about international student mobility, namely, the idea of “top” versus “middle” and “emerging” destinations, is relatively more innocuous, or at least seemingly so. This assessment of mobility is entirely about numbers on first sight. But then, numbers do not bear out the argument either; In Table 1, China is #3, ahead of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (as well as few other countries that are assumed to be more popular and prominent centers of international education). In the past decade, numbers-based discourse of mobility has identified countries like Germany, France, Norway, Finland, Spain, and Italy as “middle destinations” and China, Dubai, India, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore as “emerging destinations” (Clark, 2009). Unfortunately, the change in numbers today isn't likely change the discourse accordingly, neither among general public around the world nor among many scholars.

Table 1. Global mobility trends: In-bound students in selected countries (UNESCO, 2016)

Country	2015	2016	% Change (+)
United States	974,926	1,043, 839	7.1
United Kingdom	493,570	496,690	0.6
China	377,054	397,635	5.5
France	298,902	309,642	3.6
Australia	269,752	292,352	8.4
Russia	250,251	282,921	13.1
Canada	239,665	263,855	10.1
Germany	218,848	235,858	7.8
Japan	139,185	152,062	9.3
Spain	71,533	76,057	6.3
Netherlands	70,659	74,894	6.0
New Zealand	46,659	50,525	8.3
India	39,517	42,420	7.3
Sweden	32,602	33,181	1.8
Finland	30,191	30,827	2.1
The Philippines	6,432	8,202	27.5

The term “top” is likely to linger, like an aroma behind the names of the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. What is common among these countries is not just the fact that they are economically advanced and majority English-speaking (although Canada is actually officially bilingual) but also the assumption that students go there because of these reasons. In reality, the politics of Brexit has severely curtailed the numbers and attraction among international students in the UK and it is likely to drop their proportion below five percent in US (a nation of immigrants); other countries aren’t likely to easily gain the same “top” status even if they have English-medium instruction, larger numbers of foreign students, larger proportions to their domestic peers, great academic advancement, and largest numbers of scholarships for foreign students. Fareed Zakaria (2015) describes how the economic crisis of the 1970s led to dramatic drops in students from India to the United Kingdom, making the United States the new attraction for Indian students who had the talent and desire to study abroad but needed scholarship due to the weaker value of Indian rupee. Today, the numbers are shifting to unprecedented destinations such as China, Russia, Japan, and Mexico, but the discourse doesn’t reflect the shift.

EMERGING CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL STUDENT MOBILITY

Given that the most dominant driver of global student mobility is financial, its greatest regulator political, and its most significant educational shaping force cultural assimilation in one form or another, there is a need to look beyond the ultimately nationalistic framing that each of the above force boil down to. We argue that global social mobility must be an equally important framing for assessing global student mobility: the movement of these students should also foster social upliftment of those who are not privileged by financial strength, political power/privilege, and cultural/national identity. International education should not become a catalyst for a global educated plutocracy. Educators need to develop and provide a “global social mobility index” to institutions in order to help them measure and report how many international students they enrolled on scholarship, to foster diversity in different ways, to support nations and communities that are in need of greatest support. For example, although a large number of female students are globally mobile, there is a gender gap in international education (Bhandari, 2017). As the statistics show, a large proportion of male students are in the STEM fields and a disproportionate majority of them receive scholarships from their governments and institutions to pursue overseas education. In global context, institutions of higher education need to consider how they can attract more female international students to their STEM programs (Bhandari, 2017). In the race of internalization, effective institutional support services for international students are designed to address the basic concerns of these mobile students instead of recognizing their prior studies, language and cultural diversities, work experiences, and family responsibilities. Academic support, as well as academic policy and programs, should be developed with keen awareness of justice and fairness to students. They should be careful not to allow the prevalent “othering” of international students (Marginson, 2013) to blur the differences among the students, to reinforce or ignore differences within them. Policy makers and scholars of international students should also look at both the loss of trained human capital and brain drain and the positive aspects of brain circulation or brain gain that help increase global competencies of mobile students and returnees. Ultimately, we must see how mobile students are a unique asset that benefit not just one nation at a time but the global human commune--not to mention that their movement should not just be seen as a zero sum game between sending/losing and receiving/gaining nations.

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Mobility trends and enrollment patterns are shifting. In the rise of nationalistic movement around the world including the “Brexit” in the United Kingdom in 2016 and political shifts along with President Donald Trump’s travel bans against individuals from seven Muslim countries in 2017, there are serious concerns and negative impacts on international student global mobility. This is causing major shifts in the mobility patterns of international students. While the traditional major destinations such as the US and UK have witnessed declining international enrollments, new destinations are increasingly being popular. China has been on the rise for upward mobility and is aggressively strategizing to attract over 5000,000 international students by 2020. China’s “One Belt, One Road” foreign policy initiative has facilitated the rise of University Alliances of Silk Road, a consortium of 132 universities from 32 countries (Gao & de Wit, 2017). New connections are being formed and new opportunities between Asia and Europe are being explored. These national and transnational disruptions in political and political conditions and relations are also causing disruptions in global student mobility and the ways in which they may be treated. Such shifts should also be closely observed and the challenges they cause countered by all concerned.

In fact, the changes happening in the very nature of mobility must also be taken into account. For instance, branch campuses and international faculty are increasing international activities and support services. Worldwide, more than 180,000 students enrolled in 249 international branch campuses (Garrett et al, 2016). The top five countries --US, UK, Russia, France and Australia have established 181 branch campuses across the globe while there are just a few “home” countries including but the host countries are spread all over the world. Not surprisingly however, China hosts the highest number of IBCs followed by the UAE, Singapore, Malaysia, and Qatar. Similarly, the role of international faculty who hold academic appointments at universities around the world is significant in international student mobility and campus internationalization. Increasing number of returning academic diaspora and expatriate faculty members have materially internationalized institutions worldwide and stimulating incentives toward creating better support services and resources for international students while also advancing conversations on cross-cultural experiences for all students.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MOBILITY

A closer look to current trends helps us explore complexities of the established discourses, prompting us to ask whether international students might choose to study in English-speaking countries if they find their time in another country more pleasant and productive. It also helps us to ask questions that go beyond numbers, directions, and established narratives. In the current US political turmoil, the President Trump has criticized, accused, labeled, and demonized immigrants (BBC, 2016, Leonhardt & Philbrick, 2018). Where would journalists Jorge Ramos from Mexico or Fareed Zakaria from India decide to go for higher education if they were leaving their countries for further studies today, given that the home country of the first is associated with the word “rapist” and the religion of the other with terrorism? Would Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (influential literary critic and university professor) be ready for the life mortgage or would the Renu Khator (University of Houston President) imagine the US as a viable destination of higher education? How many Pakistani students would rather go to China if they could return to greater economic opportunities at home, than to the United States where they believe they are not very welcome? What do we make of socio-economic forces whereby only the rich are increasingly part of the globally mobile students, while even the richest universities seem to be in the “internationalization” mission for the business of it? Scholars studying global student mobility should not just report the numbers and

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trends as they emerge but also ask questions about their causes and effects on society and world. We must generate new perspectives and questions, seeking to not only promote critical thinking but also affect positive change. Objective study and unbiased analysis of findings are essential foundations of research, but scholarship can and must also be driven by a desire to leave behind us a better world than what we inherited. Power and politics, market and economics are human constructions or machineries set in place: human knowledge must strive to point out their weaknesses and to show remedies where they don't serve human good.

In the past three decades, international student mobility has been an important part of international education in tertiary education. The number of international students increased from 2.7 million in 2005 to 4.6 million in 2017 (UNESCO, 2017). Many universities and higher education organizations have focused institutional efforts toward increasing international student enrollment. Past studies show that diverse international student population on campuses has been an important element of internationalization as an advancement of higher education (de Wit, Gacel-Avila, Jones, & Jooste, 2017; Lee, 2013; Ryan, 2013). Globally, government agencies have also been promoting the idea of recruiting international students for quality and quantity of higher education and international relations (Clark, 2009). What the institutions have not yet done is to view and affect mobility in terms of providing study abroad experience to their domestic students, update assumptions about how to prepare international students for success when they return to their home countries, or even translate their mission of internationalization into curricular and pedagogical programs and practices. The global mobility of learners that doesn't go beyond the counting of bodies and assumptions about where students go and why, cannot make education meaningful for international students, or for domestic students for that matter.

National policies play a powerful role in the numbers, directions, and trends of international student mobility. Due to the ability to invest more in education, changing global power balances, and so on, new players are emerging in the global market that have been not only adopting advanced Western educational approaches and programs, but also building world class universities on their own terms. For instance, China has attracted a large number of international students from an array of diverse countries around the world. The number of international students studying in China continues to climb, reaching 442,773 last year, according to new statistics from the Ministry of Education, and putting it on track to reach its target of hosting half a million international students by 2020 (Marsh, 2017). The number of international students studying in China has risen substantially over the last five years, up 11.4% from 2015 and seeing a 35% rise since 2012. Overall last year, students came to China from 205 countries, but Asia accounted for the lion's share – around 60% – followed by 18% from Europe, and 11% from Africa. Korea was the top source country, sending 70,540 students, or just under 16% of all international enrolments. The US, accounting for 5.4% of all students, was the second-highest sending country with 23,838 students, followed closely by Thailand sending 23,044 students.

In fact, in the case of China, there seems to be a tectonic shift in the making. Recently, China has introduced a number of higher education reforms and bilateral collaborations with foreign universities to improve its quality of higher education which is in fact an attractive option for international students. For instance, China's *One Belt, One Road* initiative has established strong regional ties in Asia and elsewhere (Custer, 2017). Nearly half of foreign students studying in China are from Belt and Road countries whose economies are growing at remarkable speed. In addition, China has also reformed its visa policies to allow international students to obtain enough work experience and or internship opportunities as well as obtaining permanent residency in major cities. China also supports about 11 percent of its international students through its government scholarship programs. Currently, China has 29 top universities

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and planning to increase its international footprints aggressively through its international programs and collaborations (Schulmann & Ye, 2017). Investment in research and development funding, production of scientific literature, increasing respectability of its institutions, and the sheer power of the economic opportunities that drives the engine of higher education in today's China can no longer be overlooked on the global stage. Similarly, Russia is recruiting international students to strengthen its "soft power" in former Soviet states rather than gaining any significant income from foreign enrolments (Grove, 2017). About 283,000 international students studied at Russian universities last year, making it the sixth largest market for globally mobile students behind only the US, UK, China, France and Australia (IIE, 2017).

While numbers only tell a part of the complex changes happening, even the trends in the demographics are pointing to deeper, more complex changes that are afoot. In this context, we urge scholars and practitioners of international education to pay attention to new trends, develop new perspectives, and rethink established wisdom and practices about globally mobile students.

CONCLUSION

Recent global political turmoil (e.g., from populist uprising across the European Union, to Brexit, and the U.S. President Donald Trump's puerile decisions on immigration and foreign policies) have disrupted the traditional one-way flow of student mobility. The total number of international students is increasing while the mobility trends diverge in multiple directions dramatically breaking the usual patterns of modern history. While the factors driving international student mobility have persisted for decades, e.g. better educational choices and advanced professional goals, trends are indicating change in the nature of these same driving factor now intertwined with the idea of access and equity. These changes are probably calling for scholars to deconstruct and rethink student mobility from a transformative perspective. The desire to design, implement, and embed student mobility into the tertiary education is to create a more globally aware global workforce for the future. Scholars of higher education must acquire new perspectives and clarity in their understanding by venturing beyond the historical and geo-national limits of established disciplines and discourses around student mobility. They should ask questions that go beyond numbers, directions, and established narratives of student mobility.

Looking into the future, on the one hand, we expect positive role of student mobility on global workforce demand. Increased choices provided by multiple study abroad destinations, the competition for market share among global institutions, and the perceived value of education among mobile students, are challenging the elite institutional brands. English-taught degree programs in non-native English-speaking destinations are gaining popularity leaving a question whether English will continue to be the language of the academe or new host destinations will conjure up appreciation for their native languages hence obfuscating the hegemony of the "world language." The rapidly changing educational shifts with research universities led by the economic powerhouses of Japan and China, the distribution of regional and national funding to promote internationalization programs and policies, the growing middle class and Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations are creating a press that will shape the landscape of higher education worldwide, hopefully leading toward the democratization of access and massification of opportunities. On the other hand, the political turmoil of our time are so alarming that they don't just make global student movement uncertain; they could also start another world war or a similar disruption on a global scale.

In spite of the anxieties and uncertainties of our time, however, we should not hesitate to aspire for, plan, and create the ideal situation where focus on integration of international students and development of intercultural competences for all students. Students must be treated fairly by the simple logic of reciprocity: international students are “international” in the host countries in the same way as study abroad students will be “international” by default in the receiving countries. The only question is whether we are ready to accept a humane world where all countries are recognized for their own uniqueness, for the intellectual merit, and not limited to mercenary drives of market.

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