

The Internationalization of Higher Education and Cultivation of Talents

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Introduction

Is there any value in the movement of students to the North with respect to the intellectual, knowledge, expertise and skills needs of countries in the South, and the development and enhancement of the higher learning and teaching and research capabilities of higher education institutions in the South?

Yes - however, particular normative, structural, and other conditions need to be created if the movement of students from countries in the South is to optimally and significantly contribute to these twin goals.

Internationalisation

Movement of students between underdeveloped and developed countries is a long-standing phenomenon and an important dimension of the process of internationalisation of higher education.

The value and benefits of the movement of students and the internationalisation of higher education in its various forms for individuals, higher education institutions and countries are well acknowledged.

- For individuals: can contribute to advancing learning and scholarship, increasing communication and respect between people of different cultures, nationalities, languages and religions, and appreciating difference and diversity.
- For higher education institutions: can strengthen academic provision, help develop individual and institutional teaching, research and community engagement capabilities, enhance knowledge production, and enrich institutional knowledge, academic, student, and social cultures.
- For countries: students and academics are provided opportunities for intellectual development, and the acquisition of knowledge and professional expertise and skills that

are needed for economic and social development and also facilitating international relations.

The new context of the movement of students

New trends in the movement of students between countries:

- Scale of movement has increased significantly - 2.45 million in 2004
- South to North movement has intensified - 159 000 in 2004 from sub-Saharan Africa alone
- Financial benefits gained by recipient countries have increased significantly - United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand derived \$28.3 billion in 2005
- *Internationalisation* centred on the idea (if not always in practice) of mutual benefits for individuals and originating and recipient institutions and countries, has been eroded. Instead have *trans-nationalisation* - mutual benefit and value are lesser considerations than international students as valuable sources of potential expertise for enhancing recipient countries economic development and of income for recipient higher education institutions and countries.
- While the principal recipient countries derive significant financial benefit from international students, in 2004 official bilateral and multilateral development assistance to higher education amounted to only \$3.8 billion
- Citizens in the South spend large amounts in financing students in the North. Thus, Indians spent \$3.1 billion in 2004, Malaysians \$850 million and Indonesians \$515 million. The expenditures of some South countries take on especial significance when they are compared to domestic public expenditure on higher education as a percentage of GDP.
- Some countries which are recipients of large numbers of sponsored or private fee-paying international students and whose institutions have also embarked, often with strong state encouragement and support, on the 'export' of higher education through various kinds of provision in other countries have vigorously and successfully campaigned to include higher education within WTO the GATS.

Developments have their roots in various conditions.

- Coincide with and to some extent have been facilitated by globalisation – especially, with the advent of the ‘knowledge economy’, the importance of scientific knowledge and expertise in economic development
- Well reflect the enduring North-South divides of global development and underdevelopment and continuing lack of capabilities and capacity of higher education institutions in the countries of the South to meet citizen and national needs.
- Outcomes of currently hegemonic ideologies, under whose influences higher education has been re-conceptualised as just another ‘industry’, ‘service’ and commodity. In this ideological discourse, higher education becomes an object of ‘trade’, ‘import’ and ‘export’, export earnings and profits, and students are ‘clients’ and ‘customers’.

Impact on higher education profound and pernicious:

- Contributed to commodification, commercialisation and marketisation of higher education and the production and dissemination of knowledge.
- Has reduced value and ‘relevance’ of higher education principally to preparing students for the labour market and economy and to be productive workers and contributors to economic growth, and corroded notions of higher education as an important public and social good, and as possessing great social and cultural value for democracy, citizenship, social equity and social justice.
- Incorporated higher education into a “thin” conception of development - essentially economic, and reducing the idea of development to economic growth and enhanced economic performance as opposed to “thick” conception of development - embracing issues of structural economic change which widens ownership and eliminates or reduces income inequality, unemployment and poverty; greater social equality; equity and redress for socially disadvantaged and marginalised groups; expansion of human, economic and social rights and civil liberties; the institutionalisation of a substantive democracy and vibrant civil society; deracialisation and decolonisation of intellectual and cultural spaces; and extension and the deepening of political and citizenship participation.

In contemporary movement of students from the South to the North three tendencies predominate:

- Movement of students provides the North an important pool from which to recruit professionals for replenishing and enhancing scientific and other expertise, and for maintaining and extending their economic dominance and competitiveness.
- Such movement is also integral to increasing 'export earnings' through the provision of higher education.
- Enhancement of the higher learning and teaching and research capabilities of higher education institutions in the South, and the intellectual, knowledge, expertise and skills needs of countries of the South through principled mutually reciprocal and beneficial relationships are relatively marginal concerns.
- Unequal exchanges that have historically characterised relations between North and South are being extended into new domains with much the same detrimental outcomes for countries in the South.

Under current conditions, movements of students do not always contribute optimally to the intellectual, knowledge, expertise and skills needs of underdeveloped countries and the development and enhancement of the higher learning and teaching and research capabilities of their higher education institutions.

Towards a new framework

Not in dispute that internationalisation, in the forms of student enrolments, the employment of international staff, bilateral and multilateral partnerships around research, curriculum and knowledge development, student and staff exchanges, and the sharing of knowledge and expertise, is vitally important for the dynamism, vibrancy and development of the South's higher education institutions, academics and students.

Key question is: what particular normative and structural conditions need to be created and policies, strategies and initiatives need to be developed if movement of students from countries in the South to the North is to significantly contribute to the intellectual, knowledge, expertise and skills needs of countries in the South and to developing and enhancing the higher learning and teaching and research capabilities of higher education institutions in the South?

1. Key challenge: 'is to stem current and forestall future educational inequalities and hierarchies by fostering systems of international academic mobility, exchange, collaboration, connectivity, and regulation that generate and sustain empowering knowledge networks that are guided less by the polarizing and profiteering pressures of the market and more by the developmentalist and democratizing demands of global "public good"...We must resist the temptation to naturalize contemporary trends and ideologies that debase rather than elevate human dignity' (Zezeza, 2005:41).
2. Of fundamental importance: 'the future of higher education linkages requires bold visions of internationalism, of alternative globalization, that transcend the edicts of market accountability and narrow commercial calculations and embrace the ethics of social accountability and an expansive humanism that will elevate and empower all our people...' (Zezeza, 2005:54-55).
3. If countries of the South are to achieve economic development *and* social equity, engage proactively, critically and creatively with globalisation, and participate effectively in a highly competitive global economy, a developmental state and science and knowledge are fundamentally important. Higher education is indispensable and a crucial component of national development and any state committed to addressing the legacy of underdevelopment must have in place a policy framework for the higher education of its citizens that facilitates the creation and/or utilisation of knowledge and the development of graduates for national economic and social development.
4. Adequate financial support and high quality provision are critical issues if institutions are to make any meaningful contribution to national development goals. In the absence of vibrant and high quality higher education, the movement of students to other countries and especially countries in the North will continue unabated.
5. However, even if the provision of high quality higher education is assured, there are still good reasons why movement of students (and academics) is to be encouraged. Apart from the benefits for individuals, imaginative and well-designed and conceptualised initiatives that facilitate the movement of students and academics as part of a strategy of

the formation of high-level labour can also yield great benefits for local higher education institutions and countries.

- Students can acquire knowledge and expertise in disciplines and fields that may be non-existent or relatively undeveloped in local institutions but are important for the achievement of national goals.
- Local higher education institutions can build the expertise of their academics and potentially their own institutional capabilities in specific disciplines and fields and become better equipped to serve national high-level labour needs.

6. Key challenge with respect to the movement of students from the South to the North is the question of the extent to which there exists in countries of the South a receptive institutional environment outside of higher education and its absorptive capacity for the high level labour that may be educated abroad. It cannot be blithely assumed that formation of high level professionals, for example in the natural science, technology and engineering fields, in higher education will have positive effects irrespective of the 'external' institutional and structural order. High level graduate formation through higher education is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition for economic and social development and global competitiveness. In the absence of appropriate political and economic conditions and opportunities this labour cannot be put to work in the interests of national development. This is one of the determinants of whether students moving to countries in the North and elsewhere return home and are available for national development efforts or are lost to other countries.

7. Opportunities for study abroad provided to students and academics from the South through bilateral and multilateral funding are to be welcomed. However, 'development assistance programmes of powerful G8 governments and UN organizations are difficult to disentangle from a geopolitics too often concerned with promoting a radical "free trade" regime while taking limited action with regard to the most exploitative practices of economic globalization' (Unterhalter, 2007:95). Thus, if opportunities for study abroad are to indeed contribute to the intellectual, knowledge, expertise and skills needs of countries in the South and to developing and enhancing the higher learning and teaching

and research capabilities of higher education institutions in the South certain conditions need to be in place.

- The development by countries in the South of the capability to continuously define the kinds of knowledge, expertise and skills that are required and need to be supported.
- To ensure that those who acquire such knowledge, expertise and skills are provided the opportunities to utilize them for promoting national development.
- To insist on bilateral and multilateral agreements that are equitable and accord priority to the high level labour needs of underdeveloped countries.

8. The deployment of public funds or private funds of higher education institutions to support students and academics abroad provides a lever for the pursuit of the key strategic goal of developing local institutional (as opposed to simply individual) academic capabilities through the cultivation of mutually respectful and beneficial partnerships with overseas institutions with the necessary capabilities. Such partnerships need not be routinely with institutions in the North and should, indeed, increasingly be forged with other high quality higher education institutions in the South. There are a number of advantages to developing such South-South relationships:

- The costs of education and training are likely to be considerably cheaper than in the North.
- The developmental contexts are more similar and the content of education and training could be much more appropriate.
- Mutually beneficial centres of academic excellence can be developed, the overall capabilities of higher education in the South can be enhanced, and South-South academic networks can be promoted.

9. Reality is that in a global context characterised by unequal relations and exchanges between the North and South, and notwithstanding countervailing initiatives on the part of underdeveloped countries, the South will for the foreseeable future continue to witness the movement *and* loss of students and academics to the North.

- Challenge is to develop imaginative strategies and innovative mechanisms that can connect countries in the South with their diaspora's in a manner that can harness their

expertise and experience to build and strengthen the institutional capabilities of local higher education institutions.

- Good ethical grounds for recipient countries and international donor agencies to provide aid for facilitating the diaspora's contribution to the development of higher education in the South.

Conclusion

For countries in the South that must combat a global regime of unequal relations and exchanges and seek to fashion a way out of underdevelopment, high quality higher education is a vitally necessary condition for any path of development that is simultaneously 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy' (Sen, 1999:3).

A combination of normative and structural conditions, institutional arrangements and policies and strategies are needed to ensure that the movement of students from countries in the South to the North makes a significant contribution to the intellectual, knowledge, expertise and skills needs of countries in the South, and to developing and enhancing the higher learning and teaching and research capabilities of higher education institutions in the South.