

As an English-speaking country, Australia has traditionally been an important destination for students from the Asia-Pacific region. Australia has led “Study in Australia” campaigns with the slogan “Live. Learn. Grow.” The newest version of this marketing campaign, “Study in Australia 2010,” includes a A\$2.8 million drive to support the international education sector. The plan includes a focus on six key markets: China, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, although Australia Education International officials note that they will continue to reach out to other emerging markets such as Brazil. AEI has 25 offices in 17 countries that serve both as outreach centers for potential students and as the international student market research center for the government.

CONCLUSION

The competition for international students is heating up. Regional strategies are growing. Europe is intensifying its efforts to create an attractive European higher education area; Singapore is established as a regional hub. Other nations such as Malaysia and Japan have set national goals for international student numbers. The Gulf states are also intensifying their efforts to become regional hubs. Trends and vigorous national efforts suggest that US pre-eminence is no longer a given and that international students have many choices. ■

Recent Trends and Issues in International Student Mobility

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International students in the past months have reached the headlines in the news around the world. We have seen intensive coverage by the media of presumed (and later questions for their accuracy) racist attacks on Indian students, which threaten the success story of the increased number of students from India studying in Australia and their contribution to the economy.

More emphasis is now being placed in the media on the contribution international students make to national and local economies. In New Zealand it generates more earnings than the export of wine; in Canada more than lumber and coal; and in the United Kingdom more than automotive or financial services. NAFSA: Association of International Educators esti-

mates that foreign students and their dependents contributed, in the 2008/09 academic year, approximately \$17.6 billion to the US economy. For Australia, it is the fourth export product after coal, iron, and recently—as a result of its sharp increase in price—gold.

The fact that these figures are becoming so dominant in the debate about international students relates to the shift from social/cultural and academic to economic rationales in international student recruitment, which is increasingly evolving in a multinational industry.

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TUITION FEES

The dominance of income generation in the drive for international students has been present in the United Kingdom (early 1980s) and Australia (mid-1980s), when the concept of differential, cost-related tuition fees for international students was introduced. Until recently, this was not a factor in continental Europe and the United States—with the exception of the public sector, where inner and outer state fees (also for international students) always have existed. In Canada, other factors such as immigration policy and development cooperation were more dominant in their recruitment policy.

The policy of nondiscrimination between international and local students on tuition fees has survived for a long time in continental Europe. Only in recent years, countries like Denmark, the Netherlands, and Slovakia have introduced full-cost fees for non-European Union (EU) students, as is also the case for Malta and Ireland. Sweden and Finland are considering this option as well. Five German states have introduced tuition fees, which have increased the cost of study in those parts of the country for international students. Other countries, though, like Austria—where the introduction of tuition fees was revised during election time in 2008—Greece, Italy, Spain, and France have no plans to introduce higher fees for national and/or international students.

INCREASED GLOBAL COMPETITION

While in northern Europe tuition fees for international students are introduced and in the United States and United Kingdom increased, one can see two other trends in international student circulation. First, there is increased competition for international students to the traditional top countries: United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Australia. That completion is coming from other industrialized countries such as Canada, New Zealand, Japan, and continental Europe but also from emerging economies such as China,

Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, South Africa, and the Middle East—also still the dominant sending countries. With local increasing capacity in higher education, especially at the undergraduate level as well as increased foreign presence in the sector, they compete for students from their region with the traditional recipients. In Malaysia and the Middle East, the Islamic education is also used as an attractive alternative for the increasing anti-Islam attitude in Europe and the United States. The Global Education Digest of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in 2009 observes that students are increasingly staying within their region of origin. This is in particular the case for Latin America and the Caribbean (11% in 1999, compared to 23% in 2007) and in East Asia and the Pacific (from 36 to 42%).

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RECRUITMENT OF TOP TALENTS

A second visible trend is a shift from massive recruitment to selected recruitment of top talents, students who not only are invited to study but also to stay and work. Accounting for this shift, skilled migration fills the needs of the knowledge economy and replaces the shrinking educated labor forces in the graying societies of Northern America, Europe, Australia, and Japan. At the same time, countries like China also need these talents to serve their economies. John Douglass and Richard Edelstein of the Centre for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley, in their report *Whither the Global Talent Pool*, in 2009, estimate that the United States needs to double its international student enrollments from 625,000 in 2008 to 1.25 million in 2020, in a time of increased global competition. Japan—after the completion of an earlier target of 100,000 international students—has set a target of 300,000 by 2020; Malaysia set a target of 100,000 international students in the coming years; Singapore 150,000 by 2015; and Taiwan 30,000 in the coming four years. Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou justified this target by stating: “It is urgently important to make local universities and colleges internationally efficient so as to recruit more students from other countries to help Taiwan sharpen its competitive edge,” as well as a reference to the fact that Taiwan has the lowest birthrate in the world.

REPUTATION AND EMPLOYABILITY—NEW PULL FACTORS

Initially, a contradiction appears between the introduction of full-cost tuition fees for international students in northern

Europe and the increased global competition for them. In Sweden, universities are asking the government to delay the decision, given the present economic crisis and the sharp fall in number of non-EU degree-seeking students in Denmark after the introduction of higher tuition (a drop in two years of 50%). Reputation and employability, however, are more important pull factors than costs in the decisions by students, their families, and donors concerning where to go, as shown in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is for that reason that the Danish science minister is not worried about the drop of non-EU students. In the *University World News* (January 24, 2010) he stated that by maintaining free education, the risk and costs of a massive inflow of poor or mediocre international students would be high and a combination of high tuition fees and a scholarship schema will provide better changes to recruit top talents. A similar approach appears to exist in the Netherlands, although the scholarship schemes are under threat due to the economic crisis.

World rankings have increased the importance of reputation. The presence of top international students and scholars results in a higher position in these rankings and, as a result, the attractiveness for excellent students and scholars to be there. As a result, the divide between the top and other levels becomes wider.

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BRAIN DRAIN

Disadvantages are suffered by people who do not have a chance to study at all or to go abroad and escape from the poor conditions in their home country; and countries at the end of the chain, who see their small elite of educated children go away and never return. The global competition for talents has placed the issue of brain drain again on the agenda. Countries like Vietnam recognize this problem. In December 2009, the Vietnamese government organized chat sessions with Vietnamese students abroad (currently about 50,000) to stimulate them to come back after their studies instead of staying away. Other countries open their higher education to private foreign providers by lack of public funding. But those at the far end of the chain can only survive by development aid: bringing in academics from the developed countries to fill the gaps created by the brain drain to these countries—a strange, costly, and ineffective way to complete the brain circle. ■