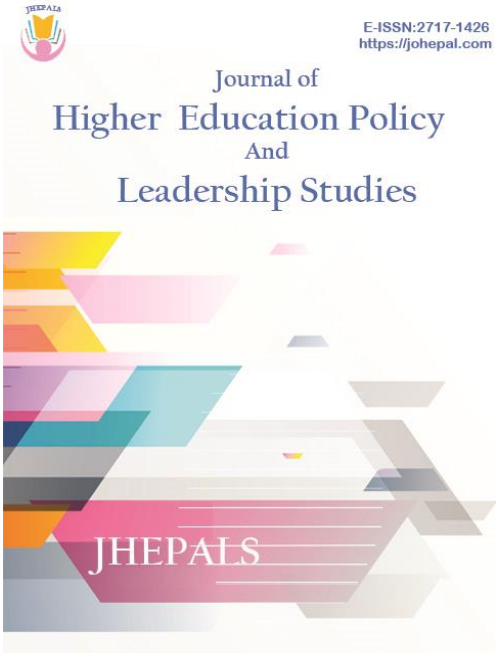
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Shifting International Student Mobility Directions and Factors Influencing Students' Higher Education Destination Choices

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Abstract

Student mobility is an integral facet of the internationalization of higher education. In the last couple of decades, the landscape of global student mobility has been influenced by economic and cultural reasons, national political climate, and global geopolitical realities. The paper attempts to trace student mobility flows, explore the historical developments surrounding international higher education which have caused the shift in student mobility directions, and highlight the emergence of new higher education destinations. The paper closely looks at the literature on student mobility in the US, UK, continental Europe, India, and China. It primarily explores the factors which have impacted international student mobility. The secondary data related to changing student mobility trends and factors influencing student mobility was extensively reviewed. The findings revealed that an array of factors such as linguistic landscape, national immigration policies, welcoming environment of the host country, quality of higher education institutions emerged as the central considerations for students choosing to study abroad. This paper argues for, against the shifting student mobility directions and flows, continental Europe may emerge and continue to be an important higher education destination. The significance of this study lies in the fact that considering the student mobility landscape is volatile and the factors influencing study choices of students are varied, policy-makers and higher education leaders need to be cognizant of student motivations while formulating policies and strategies in higher education.

Keywords: International Student Mobility; Higher Education Destinations; Student Mobility, Continental Europe

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Introduction: Shifting Trends in International Higher Education

The mobility of scholars has existed for centuries making knowledge international in its being. The 12th century witnessed the growth of universities of Bologna, Oxford, Cambridge among others, which involved scholars travelling abroad to learn about the Arabs and bringing those learnings back to England (Powar, 2014). In the past decades, there has been a shift in the rationales of internationally mobile students concerning their choice of host destination for their higher studies.

Higher education institutions, on the other hand, are caught in the conundrum of maintaining their distinct institutional practices in their national systems as well as move towards homogeneous education structures to survive the global competition. The growing enrolment numbers, dipping young populations in a few European countries, demands accountability from universities, reassessing the role of higher education in society, changing world war as a result of the end of the Cold War, the influence of information and technology are some of the unmissable features of higher education today.

In recent times though, besides the range of factors, the geopolitical realities have begun to turn the higher education landscape. The development of nationalist and populist forces tends to have visible effects on higher education policies in different regions. The recent controversy in Hungary juxtaposing liberal views of higher education institutions and authoritarian government (Matthews, 2017), potential possibility of Saudi Arabia withdrawing the scholarships of 7,000 students from Canada due to statements made by the Canadian Foreign Minister among others certainly point out the instability and unrest in international higher education landscape (Redden, 2018).

Therefore, a range of factors may influence the internationalization strategy or the university's response to the changing global trends. The higher education institutions have been in a quest to recruit international students on university campuses, enhance the attractiveness of their institutions, and provide a distinct learning experience for the students and faculty of the university. Students, on the other hand, too weigh different factors while choosing their universities abroad. Against the distinct features affecting higher education institutions and students, especially about academic mobility, it is interesting to unpack the realities underlying the student mobility flows, shaping the international higher education milieu.

The study attempts to explore the nuances of the international student mobility landscape as well, whether student mobility flows have witnessed a change in direction and its extent. For instance, it is important to consider that the recent Brexit referendum and immigration policies in the US may not only affect the student mobility trends in the UK and US but also rather influence the movement of students in continental Europe, India, China, Africa among others.

This study seeks to examine the factors which determine the international student mobility flows. The secondary data on student mobility trends was thoroughly studied. The literature on student mobility as well as factors influencing student mobility was reviewed. The central objective of the paper is to understand the factors influencing student mobility choices as well as estimate the future of international student mobility direction. The findings of this study would be valuable to higher education leaders and other stakeholders, who need to be aware about the factors determining student mobility directions in the

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world, and thus accordingly re-evaluate national policies and institutional strategies on student mobility projects.

Literature Review

Student Mobility and Internationalisation of Higher Education

History of Student Mobility

The mobility of scholars has existed for centuries; students and faculty have travelled across for their academic visits since around the thirteenth century. However, what has changed today is the extent of these international activities and the number of internationally mobile students (McAllister-Grande, 2011). From the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, scholars did move for study purposes, but student mobility was restricted to a few who could afford to move. While the sixteenth century was seen as *"the golden age of wandering scholars",* ages of reformation had a negative impact on student mobility. The mobility of scholars was viewed as a loss of talent for the home countries. Interestingly, even around the fifteenth century the ideas concerning knowledge sharing, gaining intercultural competencies and recognition of academic qualities were fairly similar to ideas about creating an education space in European leisure (Ridder-Symoens, & Rüegg, 2003).

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed academic cooperation driven by cultural and political motivations. The export of the higher education systems, as well as the European influence in international developments of higher education, cannot be overemphasized. The statistical information about the mobility of scholars during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is limited. The ideas of academic exchange and cooperation were not so strongly practised until the eighteenth century. During the period of renaissance, students, who would travel to the renowned teachers, were driven by the ideas of cultural and academic immersion (Ridder-Symoens, & Rüegg, 2003).

In the twentieth century, at the end of the Second World War, there was a rise in international academic cooperation, particularly in the US. However, European nations were still recuperating from the financial and political turmoil of the Second World War, which resulted in European academics migrating to other parts of the world such as Canada, the US, and Australia. On the other hand, the Soviet Union had increased its control in Central and Eastern Europe, which also implied that investment in higher education was not a priority. Therefore, all in all, focus on international academic cooperation was not major, rather it was marginal. Countries entered into cooperation agreements and research collaborations mainly with national grants primarily for political reasons. Therefore, higher education was viewed as an instrument to enhance cultural diplomacy and establish particularly political influence, in the world economy. The student mobility numbers were not high and international higher education was not at the forefront (de Wit, 2002).

The period of the 1960s and 1970s was marked by the process of decolonization in the developing world. The international higher education landscape was characterized by the participation of the developing world in regional cooperation projects, mobility of scholars from south to north, the dominance of the western world in academia concerning English language scientific cooperation, influential models of higher education, and the shift in the roles of universities from a traditional one to that of creating human resources for

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global development. Soon, the Soviet Union as well as other countries such as the US, UK, Canada saw opportunities for investment of funds and faculty in the developing world. Therefore, though student mobility flows were seen in the direction of south to north, there were funds and training invested from north to south towards development aid. Interestingly, the then student mobility flows from the south to Germany, the US, UK could be understood in today's higher education context (de Wit, 2002).

Further, like Germany and Sweden, the European commission invested more in academic exchanges, student mobilities, and bringing industry-academia connect. The scenario of international higher education was continuously shaped by the geopolitical realities in the world. The fall of communism, the weakening of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the rise of the European community and Japan shook the dominance of the United States in the field of research and scientific cooperation. Furthermore, the changing geopolitical contexts also influenced the subsequent student mobility flows. The student mobility numbers were not high immediately after the Second World War; there was a movement of scholars from north to south around the 1980s and then universities steadily began to focus on international academic cooperation with other nations. Thus it is clear that in recent times, the development, direction, and extent of student mobility has been influenced by the internal national political climate, and external geopolitical realities among other factors.

Contemporary Developments in the International Student Mobility Landscape

International student mobility remains an important facet of the internationalization of higher education. The increasing demand for skilled labour had resulted in the mid-1950s witnessed a total of about 2,00,000 international students, which rose to 5,00,000 in 1970, then 1.2 million in 1987 and 2 million international students in the late 1990s (Teichler, 2008). The rise in international students to 4.1 million in 2013, double the figure a decade back, is testimony to the monumental rise in the number of international students across the world (UNESCO, 2016b).

The movement of students from the south to north, from Asia to English-speaking countries like the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, France among others has been well known among the higher education community. Some nations have taken efforts to expand student mobility. For instance, the introduction and impact of the Erasmus program have played an instrumental role in facilitating student mobilities within Europe. The figure 1 below depicts the rise in student mobility numbers over the past few years. In addition, the diverse and varied forms of student mobility patterns have begun to rise; for instance, Malaysia, China, Singapore have been emerging destinations of student mobility flows in the past few years (Altbach & Engberg, 2014).

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International Student Mobility

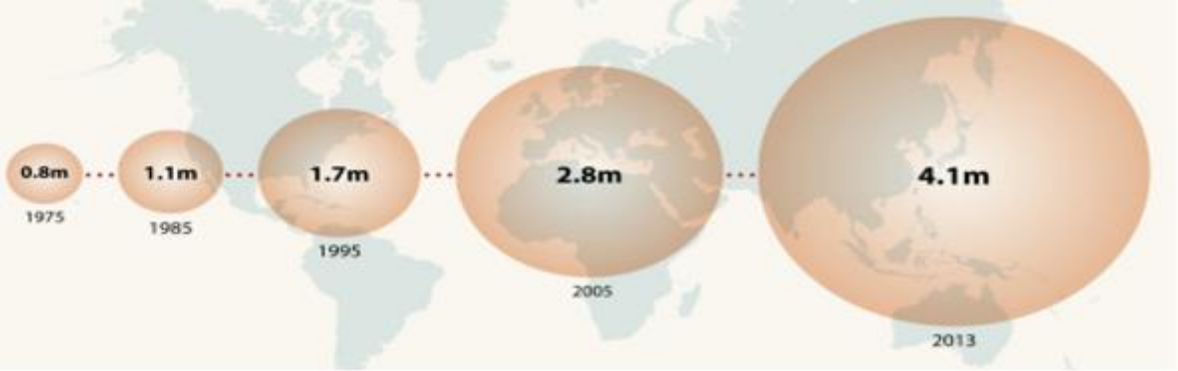


Figure 1. Long-term growth of tertiary-level international students worldwide, 1975-2013 [Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, June 2015]

The key waves of student mobility in recent times have been understood in three phases. The first wave between 1997 to 2003 was characterized by demand for high-skilled labour across nations; students were opting for research-intensive universities which were reputed and had funding opportunities (OECD, 2001). The US was one of the top host destinations for international students especially for students pursuing STEM courses (National Research Council, 2005). On the other hand, the creation of the European Higher Education Area and the Bologna Process had begun to open Europe's door for international students. The UK, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Austria were some of the key receiving countries, and China, India, and Korea had considerable outgoing mobility. However, the 9/11 attack in the US brought about considerable changes and dimensions in the higher education landscape. The second wave during the period 2006-2013 was hit by the heavy financial recession, where there was less funding available for international students (Choudaha & Li 2012). While the US and the UK were facing challenges, China was beginning to rise in the world economy. There was an emerging group of professionals who provided student support services including visa and counselling services (Bista & Foster 2016). The third phase has witnessed the rise of nationalist and populist forces which include the Brexit referendum and immigration policies in the US. Therefore, these three waves of student mobility since the late 1990s have had a long-lasting impact on the flow and direction of student mobility. Different phases of student mobility have also influenced the entry of new host destinations for international students.

Student Mobility Trends in the UK and the Emergence of Australian Higher Education Market

The government policies in the UK and Australia have focused on increasing international student enrolment since the 1980s. The reduction in subsidies and financial aid for international students and control on the number of enrolments of domestic students facilitated the international student mobility to Australia and the UK (though the student numbers were slashed in 2012 in Australia and 2016 in the UK). Some British universities were apprehensive about charging tuition fees to international students (Perraton, 2014). During the late 1990s and early 2000, the UK and Australia were at the forefront of attracting international students.

Australia and the UK attracted students from South East Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore among others) in the early 1990s. The economic growth in China during the late 1990s

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prompted the student movement from China (followed by India) to other parts of the world. The 9/11 attack in the US could have shifted the mobility of students from the US to other countries like the UK, Australia, and Canada. However, the global recession in 2007-2008 impacted the advanced economies and there were initiatives taken to reduce the net migration flows in the country. The global financial recession changed the face of societal economies. There was a bent witnessed towards protectionist policies, protectionism in the trade as well as stringent immigration policies. Therefore, visa restrictions and tightening of visa policies in 2009 in Australia and 2012 in the UK resulted in a decline in international students in these two countries (Ilieva, 2017).

Time-series analysis of international study destinations (Australia, the UK, and the US) revealed a positive relationship between the tight visa restrictions and reduction in the number of international students especially in the US after the 9/11 attack. Interestingly, based on the evidence from the US, the UK, New Zealand, and Germany, the research also showed that there was a strong association between post-study visa rules and international student enrolments in higher education institutions. Therefore, immigration policies play a crucial role in determining student mobility flows.

There was a drop in the number of international students between 2011-2013 in Australia (Ilieva, 2017). Interestingly, the student visa and immigration policies may affect the international student enrolments at the host institution, however, the policies may not have a considerable impact on overall student mobility, implying that the policies of the student mobility flow may shift and change.

Student Mobility Flows in Europe

The share of international students has increased from 200,000 in the mid-1950s to two million in the late 1990s. According to the estimates, while the share of international students has consistently been about two percent, the number of international students in Europe has been doubled from three percent to six percent over the years. Besides, the impact of the Erasmus program could be viewed in terms of 10,000 international students in 1988-89 to about 100,000 in 1998-1999 (Teichler, 2008).

Europe is the second-largest region concerning sending international students. A total of 23 percent of the world's mobile students is from Europe (UNESCO, 2018). Out of the 878,000 European students who study outside their home country, about 76 percent of these students study in other European member states (Eurostat, 2016; UNESCO, 2017). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports, there continues to be an imbalance in inbound and outbound student mobility between eastern and western Europe. While 24,000 students moved from eastern to western Europe, and only one-third movement was observed from the western to eastern Europe OECD, 2013). The Erasmus program has been a key instrument in enhancing the process of internationalization of higher education institutions in Europe. Between 2007 and 2013, the Erasmus facilitated the mobility of a total of 4.3 million students (European Commission, 2018). Additionally, the Erasmus program has recognized the need for traineeships and employment in the higher education market today. In recent years, there has been a cut in funding in German and French universities for research and teaching. Therefore, universities are finding it increasingly challenging to continue tuition fee education, which poses further challenges for the recruitment of international students (Streitweiser et al, 2015). The

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recent Eurostat findings (in figure 2 below) reveal the regions from which European member states receive students.

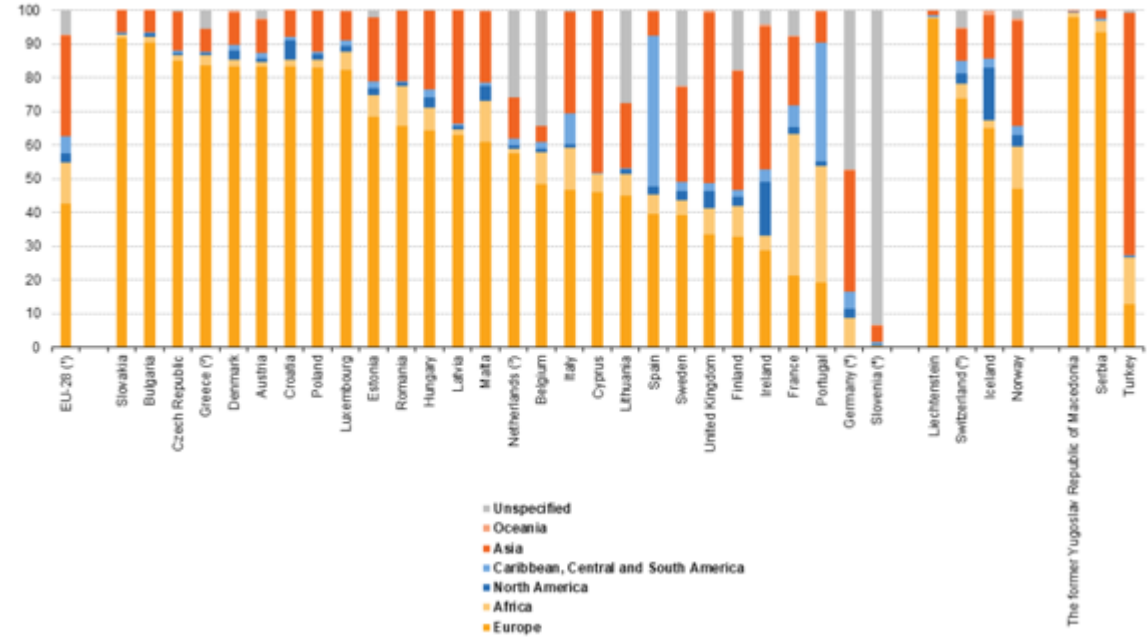


Figure 2. Share of tertiary education students from abroad by continent, 2016 (% of all tertiary education students from abroad) [Source: Eurostats, 2016]

About 1.6 million international students studied in Europe in 2016, accounting for 43 percent from Europe, 30 percent from Asian countries, and 12 percent from African countries.[*] Interestingly, there were more than 51 percent of students in the UK from Asia. However, the recent nationalist rhetoric in different European countries has caused instability in international student mobility and higher education in general. For instance, the nationalist governments in Poland, the Czech Republic may influence the higher education policy. Even the countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and France which do not have a strong nationalist regime in power, the parties are still able to influence the public discourse (Altbach & de Wit, 2018).

Student Mobility Flows in India

There has been an imbalance in inbound and outbound mobility flows in India, in terms of the destination countries as well as the number of international students. While India receives a large number of students from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia; Indian students often opt to study in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Singapore, Canada, Australia among many others. Concerning the inbound mobility of students, India boasts of strategic advantages such as its geographical location, English as the medium of instruction in higher education, cost of education among others (Krishnamoorthy, 2019).

[*] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20181116-1?inheritRedirect=true

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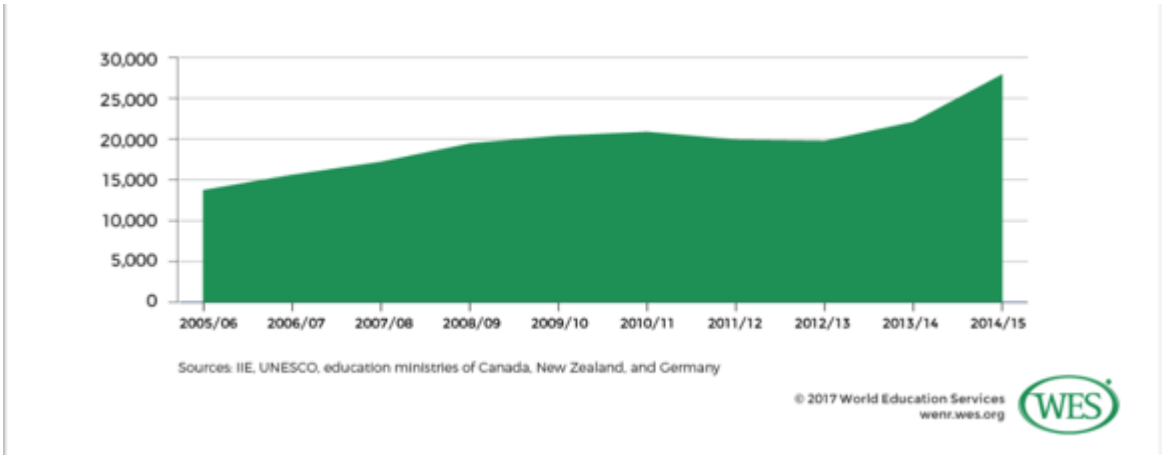


Figure 3. Indian Student Mobility to Seven Top Receiving Countries 2005-2015 [Source: 2017 World Education Sciences]

Interestingly, the US continues to be one of the top leading student destinations for their higher education, accounting for 55 percent of Indian students enrolled in 2005 and 47 percent of them enrolled in 2015 in the US. While the Indian student enrolments have not seen a major difference between the years 2005 and 2015 in countries such as China and Germany, it is interesting to see the rise in Indian student enrolments in Canada in ten years. Moreover, the student enrolments of Indians in the UK have almost reduced by half in ten years, and Australia too has seen a drop in Indian students.

Between 2010 and 2013, while all the five nations saw a drop in Indian student enrolments, Canada was the only nation that received a consistent inflow of Indian students. The possible reason could be safe; which is one of the priorities for Indian students. For instance, in 2008-2009, there was a drop of 19 percent of Indian students in Australian higher education institutions given the rise in racial attacks on Indian students in Australia (Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013). The cost of education in terms of the lower rate of the dollar compared to the US dollar as well as the liberal immigration policies have facilitated the movement of Indian students to Canada. In the Australian context, while Australia remains to be one of the important destinations for Indian students, the racial attacks and the cost of education have had a considerable impact on student decision-making. The UK has seen contrasting trends concerning the incoming mobility of Indian students. The linguistic and historic influences, the reputation of British universities have been some of the enablers in students' decision-making processes. However, the rising anti-immigrant sentiment, as well as the steady relaxation in post-study work visa rules would be some factors that would play a role in Indian students' perception of the UK as a host destination. In the German context, the reputation, cost of education, English as the language of instruction as well as immigration rules have gone in favour of Germany for hosting Indian students (Gu, 2017).

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International Student Mobility

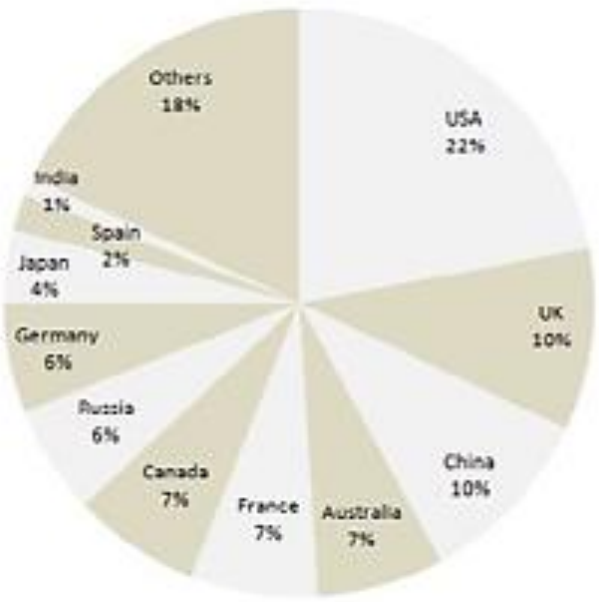


Figure 4. Country-wise Inbound % based on Project Atlas 2018

Place of Origin	UG, Diploma, Certificate	PG & Integrated, PG Diploma	Research	Total	% of Total
Nepal	9997	1474	50	11521	24.97
Afghanistan	3137	1213	28	4378	9.49
Sudan	1971	237	12	2220	4.81
Bhutan	1775	206	18	1999	4.33
Nigeria	1578	220	68	1866	4.04
Bangladesh	1301	226	39	1566	3.39
Iran, islamic republic of	944	432	182	1558	3.38
Yemen	1009	258	204	1471	3.19
Unitedstates	1274	122	22	1418	3.07
Sri Lanka	1061	152	35	1248	2.7
Malaysia	1225	8	1	1235	2.68
UnitedArab Emirates (UAE)	1032	86	3	1121	2.43
Tanzania, united republic of	602	135	15	752	1.63
All othercountries	10206	2681	904	13791	29.89
Total	37113	7450	1581	46144	100

Figure 5. Country and Program Wise Foreign Students (Source: AISHE 2017-2018)

It is clear that the inbound student mobility has not been encouraging compared to the outgoing mobility of Indian students abroad from Figure 4 and Figure 5. The majority of the international students in India come from the SAARC countries as they find the cost of education in India reasonable and the language of instruction being English has facilitated the inbound mobility of students. A similar observation was pointed out in a recent study (Pawar et al, 2020) which showed that though policy makers needed to formulate strategies

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to attract international students in India, the cultural appeal, the quality of education and the language of instruction attracted international students to Indian universities.

It is visible that while the US and the UK have been the conventional student destinations for Indian student enrolments, in recent times this trend has undergone visible changes. The emergence of Australia, Canada, and Germany cannot be overlooked, and given the anti-immigrant sentiment and populist voices, the direction of student mobility is set to change.

With regard to international student mobility, there is rigorous data on the push and pull factors influencing student mobility (Tantivorakulchai, 2014; Wadhwa, 2016). At the institutional level, rankings are often associated with the reputation of the universities. The quality of the program, institutional strategies, university management and student-faculty output become relevant with regard to institutional reputation (Bedenlier et al, 2018). At the macro level, Massification of higher education, policies in higher education, Brexit and COVID-19 are factors whose influence on international student mobility cannot be ignored (Petersa et al, 2021).

Thus, an in-depth review of the literature revealed that there has been a visible shift in student mobility trends and thus it was significant to understand the factors which broadly have influenced student mobility trends. The next sections will elaborate on the methods of data collection and analysis which were employed and some of the key factors influencing student mobility trends.

Methods and Analysis

Having closely understood the history and trends in international student mobility, it was important to understand the factors which influenced the mobility of students and against the shifting trends in student mobility, what would be the future of international student mobility in the years to come.

For this purpose, a thorough literature review on factors influencing student mobility was carried out. The major sources of data remained journal articles and book chapters. The policy documents and country-wise reports were also studied in order to fathom how literature on each country had emerged and how different factors had affected the flow and direction of student mobility. The data collected was therefore, secondary in nature. The journals which were referred to were Journal of international students, journal of studies in international education, journal of higher education policy and leadership studies, journal of research in international education.

The key words such as ‘mobility’, ‘movement’, ‘pull-pull factors’, ‘student recruitment’, ‘international students’, ‘overseas students’, ‘foreign students’, ‘global citizens’, ‘global ambassadors’, ‘student diversity’, ‘Erasmus students’, ‘domestic students’ were located in the articles, the relevance of the presence of these words and the impact they had on student mobility was studied. Whilst one part of data collection involved analysing different case studies related to international student mobility, on the other hand, the literature factors influencing student mobility were also reviewed. The countries which were closely looked at were the US, UK, Australia, India, China, and European member states. Finally, the results were reviewed and clear conclusions were drawn regarding the future direction of student mobility.

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Findings

Factors Affecting Student Mobility

There was a range of factors that students consider in their choice of higher education study destinations. The authors identified quality of universities, university rankings, the role of Erasmus, consular issues, the attitude of the society towards incoming and outgoing student mobility, linguistic landscape, and the political climate as some of the students' considerations in choosing their higher education destinations.

Quality of Universities

As geopolitical developments in the world continue to shape the direction and future of student mobility flow, higher education institutions are caught in the conundrum of grappling with the growing nationalist forces as well striving to make their university campuses essentially international and diverse. The internationalization strategies and policy documents of the universities are aimed at providing international students a holistic academic and intercultural experience of learning. The rise of English taught programs to attract international students has been a visible trend in many countries. But do these internationalization measures affect quality, teaching processes in the universities? Are national students losing out in universities' journey of internationalization? The nationalist-populist parties, driven by anti-immigration and anti-international students' agendas may essentially contribute to the end of the internationalization of higher education. The other pathway would be to focus on quality, all students and faculty including national and international beneficiaries, thus making the internationalization of higher education an experience driven by core values and aspirations (de Wit et al, 2018).

University Rankings

The growing importance given to world university rankings reflects the importance to attain global competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy. For instance, the stir created by a drop in two Malaysian universities' rankings as compared to the rankings in the previous year reflected in the world university rankings in the Times Higher Education World Rankings in September 2005, resulting in the resignation of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya. A drop in the university's position was due to a change in the ranking methodology. Similarly, different ranking agencies may have a range of indicators of university performance and unfortunately, the small universities are unable to score high in world university rankings. In the context of internationalization of higher education, like internationalization practices, the presence of international students and faculty are considered some of the significant indicators of a university's performance. A close look at the world university rankings brings forth some interesting insights about the performance of universities and their performance concerning the international outlook. For instance, the Times Higher Education Rankings 2019 indicate the presence of a few American and British universities in the top ten universities of the world,[*] however concerning international

[*] https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats

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students and faculty on board, these select American and British universities do not make it to the list of top ten universities with the highest international outlook.* Therefore, though the international outlook including the international students and faculty in university campuses may influence the students' choice of mobility for higher education, those university campuses may not necessarily be highly ranked institutions and vice versa.

Impact of Erasmus in Europe and the Rest of the World

Internationalization of higher education and enhancing international student mobility has been some of the key priorities of the European Union. Since its launch in 1987, the Erasmus program has seen not only a constant increase in the number of students taking part but also in the quality and diversity of the activities proposed. At the onset, the Erasmus program aimed at making ten percent of the European students mobile to another European country for a while (Kelo et al., 2006). The Erasmus credit mobility, with its core focus on skills development, is a central element of the European Commission's strategy to combat youth unemployment, featuring prominently in the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs.

In 1987, 3,244 students from 11 countries spent a study period abroad under the Erasmus Program. In 2012-13 nearly 270,000 students and more than 52,000 staff from 33 European countries spent time abroad with an Erasmus grant (Commissie, 2014). In 2014, there were more than 4000 higher education institutions participating as members of Erasmus (Commissie, 2014). For the vast majority of these institutions, taking part in the Erasmus has led them to innovate in key areas such as teaching and learning, recognition of study periods abroad, student support services, cooperation with business, and institutional management.

Mobility supported by the Erasmus has thus promoted the internationalization of the European higher education system, contributed to its modernization, and paved the way for the Bologna Process. It now supports the Bologna goal that by 2020 at least 20 percent of all graduates from the European Higher Education Area should have spent a period studying or training abroad.

The Erasmus cooperation projects have led to long-term structural changes and strategic initiatives. These include the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System that promotes transparency and transferability in European higher education, and the "tuning" of academic degree programs based on learning outcomes, and the many joint curricula developed over the years.

Visa Issuance and Immigration Policies

The policy towards international students in host destinations plays a vital role in student mobility flows. For instance, government policies about incoming and outgoing students influence the extent to which higher education institutions can recruit international students. The government's attitude towards immigration, and its policies towards welcoming immigrants, and its response to tightening border security influence the students' decision-making in choosing a host destination for their higher education. The ease in visa issuance, immigration policy as well as policies on work visas contributes to the

*https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/scores_international_outlook/sort_order/asc/cols/stats

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attractiveness of the higher education institutions. The policies driving the work opportunities for international graduates and short-term exchange students are certainly a crucial factor in the decision-making of their higher education destination for students.

Given the tight work visa restrictions and general immigration policies in the US and UK, Indian students with an academic background in any of the STEM courses, are likely to seek alternatives regarding host countries, which comparatively have flexible work permits for international students. There might be a shift towards countries such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (Minu, 2017), countries that have adopted a global market strategy towards attracting international students. Similarly, as there are limited seats, the cost of private education in India and expensive education in the US and UK, medical students from India are likely to go to Russia, China (Krishnamoorthy, 2019).

How Welcoming the Society Is in General?

The higher education milieu at the host institution and the receiving higher education institutions contribute to the students' decision-making about their higher education destination. The receptivity of international students on university campuses is an important determinant in the student experience and satisfaction of the student community in general. Factors of loneliness and racism have been pointed out to be challenges for international students studying in Australia (Marginson et al., 2010). The attacks on Indian students in Australia which caught the attention of media as well as the higher education community point out the apprehensions and concerns looming on Indian counterparts if safety and security are at threat (de Wit, 2010). Brown's study on international students revealed their student experiences, in particular the religious tensions which the student had to go through. The findings revealed that the 9/11 attack, rising fundamentalist rhetoric, geopolitical tensions had a close association with the geopolitical tensions faced by the Muslim international students.

Linguistic landscape

The US and the UK have been the leading student destinations for several years, however, there has been about a ten percent decrease in their market share of international students. The possible reasons could be the cost of education and the fact that there are a growing number of countries introducing English-taught programs to enhance the attractiveness of their higher education institutions (Dennis, 2018). In the global academic community, the growth of English taught programs has fuelled some concerns in recent times. In the Netherlands, there is an ongoing debate on the widespread English taught programs and how the expansion of these programs needs to be discontinued so that even the national students receive adequate support and resources in teaching and learning. Similarly, in Denmark, Germany, and Italy, there have been growing concerns about how the rise in English taught programs especially, to attract international students may affect the quality (Altbach & de Wit, 2018). Therefore, by and large, too many English taught programs in higher education institutions have raised concerns about the quality of teaching, local students' reception to English as the medium of instruction as well as the potential decay of numerous national languages in academia.

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Political Climate and Geo-Political Realities in International Student Mobility

The growth rate of outgoing mobility of international students is expected to drop from annual growth of 5.7 percent (2000-2015) to 1.7 percent in 2027.[*] The number of host country destinations for higher education has risen, as different countries compete to offer quality higher education as well as introduce conducive post-study work policies. Therefore, it is likely that some countries may politically and economically focus on making their higher education systems better, which may perhaps have an impact on the outgoing student mobility from those countries (Malley, 2018).

Apart from the social and economic challenges, altering demographic changes, immigration policies, religious tensions have had an impact on student mobility in Europe (de Wit & Hunter, 2015). The Brexit referendum may have a long-term impact on student mobility to the UK and continental Europe. However, given how the global higher education scenario is ever-evolving, the Brexit referendum and current higher education in the US cannot be studied as isolated events. Both these events were a response to larger themes guiding the world economy today, for instance; challenges of globalization, global inequalities, technological advancements, changing world order, increase in migratory trends, and so on (Dennis, 2018).

In addition to this, an increase in the cost of health insurance and stringent visa policies may also negatively affect student mobility flows in the UK. Likewise, the stringent visa issuance and the screening processes of the international students' applications have had a fairly direct impact on student mobility to the United States. Furthermore, the issue of the Mexican wall and the restriction of the F-1 Stem program has impacted the mobility of Indian students. Also, the possibility of terminating the diversity lottery program or ceasing the temporary protected status program in the United States could impact the extent of student mobility in the US. The feeling of not being welcome as an international student on university campuses is certainly not pleasant.

Some early reports by the Institute of International Education indicate that the number of international students has been considerably hit. As there has been an increase in the global competitors for recruitment for international students, the US market share has felt the blow. Probably the impact would be felt more by the public and small universities in the US than the Ivy League universities as such. Importantly, not only the number of international students would drop, but, rather, given the present higher education in the US, the economic stability of the universities may be affected. Moreover, while the public funding has been considerably cut in some of the states, the universities are compelled to rely on increasing the number of international students.

Given the US and the UK have been key players in terms of recruitment of international students, the Trump administration and Brexit referendum may have a serious impact on international student mobility. A similar rise of nationalist forces has been noted in the Czech Republic, Poland, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and so on, which may indirectly or directly influence the decision-making bodies, thus reinforcing the nationalist tendencies in the international higher education landscape. There is an emerging concern about the negative impact nationalism may have on international higher education (Altbach & de Wit, 2018).

[*] https://monitor.icef.com/2018/02/new-study-forecasts-slowing-growth-in-international-student-mobility/

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International Student Mobility

The English-speaking countries still largely tend to fundamentally dominate the higher education landscape. The slowing down of the higher education market in the US and the UK may benefit countries like Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. In the European context, France, Germany, and the Netherlands have a considerable lot of English-taught programs that may continue to make their presence felt as promising destinations for international students. Though it would be pertinent to determine if these changing trends would be at the forefront of the nationalist forces will make a larger impact on higher education; continental Europe might not be the biggest beneficiary in the years to come by.

The new geopolitical climate is starting to mark distinct flows and directions of international student mobility. The inter-regional mobility may increase within Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The student mobility numbers may rise from Africa to Asia in the next few years. In recent years, for instance, China and India have made efforts to drive international higher education, however, a limited number of seats and resources have been some of the hurdles.

It is more relevant than ever before to recognize that the recent political developments are set to change the tone and rhetoric of international student mobility. The unlimited growth in English taught programs and the increase in the number of international students point out how nationalist agenda could affect student mobility and on the other hand how quality, academic freedom, and ethics are some of the issues concerning the global academic community. Therefore, it is important to shift focus on quality, local needs, and local context to make international education a holistic experience (Altbach & de Wit, 2018).

Discussion

Future of Student Mobility

While the UK and the US have been characterized by heavy student mobility flows, the entry of Canada, Australia, and Germany in recent years has brought about a change in the dynamics of the future of student mobility. Interestingly, a closer look at the rate of increase of Indian students in the higher education institutions reveals a drop in the number. A fall of 16.43 percent was reported in 2016-2017 compared to its previous year. The stringent visa policies and impediments in procuring an H1B visa have been some of the hurdles faced by the student community in the US. On the other hand, British universities are grappling with the growing political uncertainty and geopolitical turbulence. The relaxation in the post-study visa guidelines may indicate the willingness and keenness of British universities to attract more international students. The decision of the UK to leave the European Union has had evident repercussions concerning inbound mobility, which witnessed a five percent drop in the EHE inbound mobility in 2016.

This paper, finally, argues, in the light of changing political trends, that continental Europe may eventually attract more international students in the long run. Though the nationalist presence has been noted in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands, and the students have begun to also consider destinations other than the UK and the US, continental Europe may be the next preferred choice of higher education destination by the international students. While external challenges such as consular issues, changing linguistic landscape, and increasing scepticism towards immigrants including the

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student community continue to still exist; certain uncertainties may enhance the attractiveness of the higher education institutions in continental Europe, thus helping them attain global visibility.

The uncertainty looming over international higher education in the UK cannot be overlooked. If the decline in the inbound European Higher Education Area (EHEA) student mobility continues, the changing trend may impact the diversity in British university campuses. As the budget for the Erasmus has been doubled to 30 million for the next cycle, it is likely to continue to benefit student mobility in continental Europe. The harmonization processes, credit recognition, and the mutual recognition of the academic qualification in Europe may motivate international students to consider continental Europe as one of the destinations for their higher education. The reasonable tuition fee charged in some of the universities in Europe may help attract international students. Moreover, the rise in the English taught programs in Europe has certainly driven international students. The table below indicates the rise in English taught programs, distributed across regions in Europe between 2007 and 2014.

Conclusion

Academic student mobility plays an instrumental role in enhancing the academic, intercultural, and international dimensions in higher education (De Wit & Hunter, 2015). International student mobility is one of the significant political and economic facets of the national governments. Having overviewed the international student flows in the past few years, it is apparent that largely there has been an increase in internationally mobile students; even though the direction and the number of the internationally mobile students may have had unevenness. Historically, the political and cultural make-up of the societies played a vital role in steadily making international higher education at the forefront. The end of the Second World War defined world politics for years to come by.

Though the number of international students from the European Union to the UK dropped in 2017, the number of international students in the UK is about half a million. Similarly, though immigration policies have caused unrest in student communities in the US, the presence of 1.2 million international students in 2017 and 1.16 million international students in 2016 point out the long dominance of the US as a host destination for higher education.[*] Therefore, though political changes may have slightly altered the numbers in the US and the UK, the regions which may feel the brunt of the global political unrest are the countries in continental Europe. While Danish institutions are concerned about their aid systems being exhausted by the international students, Austrian universities have been compelled to open their institutions to their German counterparts. Similarly, some Italian universities are forced to start English taught programs and the Dutch universities have been concerned about how the growing number of international students may have an impact on national students concerning resources and space. On the other hand, France and Germany have been striving to enhance the attractiveness of their higher education institutions and

[*] https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/international-students-united-states#targetText=Today%2C%20the%20United%20States%20remains,million%20enrolled%20worldwide%20in%202017

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therefore are encouraging in increasing the number of international students in their universities as well as not slash funding for international students.

Amidst these trends, continental Europe could be the next preferred destination for higher education. The Erasmus program, the Brexit, and the diversity in continental European universities may be some of the influential factors attracting international students.

Thus it is clear that student mobility flows are continually evolving and they are here only to shift for the motivations guiding student mobility choices may differ across different points in time. However, given these complexities encompassing international student mobility, the decision-makers at the national and institutional levels need to keep in the shifts in international student mobility if they wish to emerge and survive in the global higher education space.

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