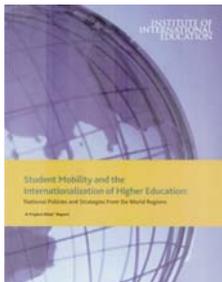


***Student Mobility and the
Internationalization of Higher
Education: National Policies and
Strategies from Six World Regions (A
Project Atlas Report)***

Rajika Bhandari, Raisa Belyavina, and Robert Gutierrez (Eds) (2011). New York, NY: Institute of International Education. ISBN: 978087206341 \$39.95



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The Institute of International Education's *Project Atlas Report* (2011) shows that the overall context of international students' movement has been changed in the past few years. Policies and strategies adopted by new host countries and their academic institutions and organizations are changing the patterns of international students' mobility. New players are redefining the field by influencing which international students want to go where and why.

Argument: As the title of the book—*Student Mobility and the Internationalization of Higher Education: National Policies and Strategies from Six World Regions*—promises, the editors bring together reports on student mobility from six world regions (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and Middle East/North Africa) including seventeen significant host countries. The book is rich in data about the changing mobility of these students; but its primary objective is to discuss the dynamics of key host and sending countries, focusing on national plans and strategies for attracting international students to their universities as well as encouraging their own students to study abroad. The global view of internationalization of higher education that the report sets out to provide is the result of the realization—and argument—that a productive conversation on new trends of international education (particularly student mobility) can only happen if data are collected on a global scale and also compiled and analyzed by using a common framework. In addition, the editors are also interested in presenting the shared global framework toward analyzing strategies adopted by nations, institutions, and organizations interested in the

internationalization of higher education. These strategies are briefly discussed in each chapter.

Approach taken: Each of the six regions introduces the major trends in the mobility data of countries within the region, as well as key highlights of the policies and strategies adopted by those countries (and/or by institutions and organizations). The introductory highlights of data and strategies allow the editors to discuss any shared/framing issues that the nations within the region may have. For example, countries in the European region share similar prospects and challenges as do those in Oceania. The editors have tried to avoid generalizing geographical regions by, for instance, splitting up the African continent into the Middle East and North Africa on the one hand and the Sub-Saharan region on the other. One small weakness of this approach is that it is not easy to see why the editors group together countries—as when they place Mexico along with the US and Canada—even when their situations as well as their global statuses are vastly different. There is also another weaknesses in the way the editors repeat the introductory highlights in the chapters on individual nations; while this redundancy could be seen as serving as a means of emphasis, the book would be a more interesting read if the editors had added discussion and analysis instead.

Similarly, in order to organize the report the editors use a number of visual representations of data in pie charts and bullet point summaries. Another, less visible, means for presenting a common frame for discussing the data is to answer a common set of questions about the numbers and the policies and strategies in each chapter. For example, in most chapters, the editors mention the increase or decrease of inbound and outbound students in recent years, challenges of providing higher education to citizens, ratio of inbound students to outbound students and if and how the country is trying to change it, reasons for attempting to increase international students and to encourage study abroad among local students, and whether a country has and directly implements national policies for enhancing international education (or if non-governmental organizations and universities implement the policies). The fact that the writers cover similar issues makes it easy for the reader to compare the data and the discussions. For instance, the ratio of outbound to inbound students in the US is more than 25% (whereas it is almost the reversed in China); the US enjoys a great leverage of its reputation and its



ability to receive large numbers of international students (whereas South Africa is struggling to provide higher education to its increasing number of local students and is only able to host students from the continent); the US largely leaves it to independent organizations and individual institutions to implement strategies for internationalizing higher education while the US government only uses legislation to affect those strategies (whereas China uses more direct strategies through its government organizations); north European countries like Sweden have historically accepted international students as a form of aid to developing countries and for enhancing the global exposure of their local students (whereas countries like the US have regarded internationalization of higher education as a source of revenue).

What's most interesting: One of the most striking findings that this report presents is about new destinations. For example, while almost a million students from China study abroad, almost a quarter of that number of students from other countries now goes to China for higher education. A related and equally striking issue that the report covers is about how immigration laws and other policies adopted by countries and strategies adopted by agencies of international education within those countries can make a big impact on student mobility. For instance, the report shows that the small but significant steps taken by the Japanese government toward improving the experience of international students—such as streamlining information about the visa and admission process, improving housing and other services, and integrating local and international students—have greatly boosted the number of international students in Japan in recent years.

Assessment: As indicated above, the report has two major objectives, one of which is to present a global picture and framework within which new trends in the flow of international students can be discussed, and the other is to discuss policy issues on the basis of that understanding of global trends. This dual emphasis seems important in itself. However, that dual focus also gives rise to a conflict of priority among the two objectives. The sheer amount of data that the editors try to provide for proposing a common global framework leaves little space within the limit of the 140 page book for them to substantively analyze and discuss the trends of student mobility. The discussion of strategies adopted by nations, institutions, and organizations for the internationalization of higher education receives insufficient attention as a result of great attention to the

data. It could perhaps be said that the editors are successful in “starting” the conversation on the new trends and on the strategies. But as a reader, while I enjoyed the breadth in the numbers, I found myself wanting more depth in the discussion of policy and strategies than seemed to be promised by the subtitle of the book: “national policies and strategies....”

Conclusion: This book is a must read—as well as a must have reference for data and issues—for scholars and researchers interested in international education in general and international student mobility in particular. Incidentally, readers can also benefit from other volumes edited by the authors and their colleagues (*Who Goes Where and Why*, and *Open Doors*, 2011). While I believe that the book could have analytically delved much deeper into the data and issues that it covered, there is no doubt that overall the editors provide within a short volume a significant compilation of data and issues for further research, conversation, and policy-making in the field of student mobility. In short, the book is a great primer on new trends in international student mobility in particular, but it also contains a range of thought-provoking perspectives on the new realities of international education that anyone interested in internationalization of higher education needs to know.

References

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About the Reviewer

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