

Understanding the Attraction of the Microcampus: A Quantitative Investigation of Students' Motivations to Enroll in Transnational Education

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ABSTRACT

As collaborative transnational education models are increasing in number globally, this study provides a snapshot of motivations for newly enrolled students at microcampuses in China, Cambodia, Jordan, and Indonesia. This research centers on the influence of country choice for students. We apply Nye's (1990, 2004) concept of soft power on student motivations and conduct quantitative analysis to trace enrollment influences. Mainly, in this case we find that U.S. soft power potentially influences students abroad to enroll in dual-degree programs. Other motivations related to cost and U.S. culture are apparent influences. Furthermore, findings provide greater insights into emerging trends in international student mobility. Our study also identifies strategies to sustain transnational education ventures in the face of challenges. Implications of this research are especially of use to university stakeholders, faculty leaders and policymakers who are working to advance U.S. education on an international platform.

Keywords: dual-degree programs, international education, partnerships, soft power, transnational education

INTRODUCTION

Recent shifts in the global sphere - such as increasing nationalism (e.g., Brexit, "America First"), the COVID-19 pandemic, and national calls for racial justice - have resulted in a recalibration of international relations and policies that have had an immediate impact on international higher education. Since the onset of COVID-19, universities are grappling with projected declines in international student enrollment and questioning student mobility as "the *sine qua non* of internationalization" (White & Lee, 2020, para. 28). The ongoing proposals to limit international student visas to the United States (U.S.) is a major concern (Anderson, 2020). Additionally, one in four international students in the U.S. are now concerned about their personal safety (Marklein, 2020). Several countries have reported that their students are reconsidering plans to study overseas (Mitchell, 2020; Niazi, 2020); hence, universities are transitioning

from face-to-face coursework to blended programs that combine online and in-person learning (Segar, 2020).

Even prior to COVID-19, international student enrollment had been in decline. The *Open Doors* survey from the Institute of International Education (IIE) recorded steady declines in new international student enrollment since the 2016-17 academic year. More recently, the 2019/20 data reveals that overall international student enrollment declined by 1.8% in the US and new international student enrollment declined by 0.6% (Institute of International Education, 2020). A survey conducted by NAFSA: Association of International Educators found that these dwindling enrollment numbers could be the consequence of shifting political agendas and warned that these declines could cost the US economy, in particular, to lose billions of dollars (NAFSA, 2020). Similarly, concerns have been expressed that international students are less likely to enroll in US universities due to neo-racist processes, such as visa delays, travel restrictions, and discrimination based on a person's place of origin (Lee, 2019; Royall, 2017).

Given these shifting tides, transnational education (TNE) programs offer much promise as a way to increase student recruitment (Levatino, 2017). For example, the University of Arizona's (UA) internationalization strategies, via the "microcampus" initiative, have increased its transnational network from one campus launched in 2015 in China to six campuses around the world today. The growth of the microcampus initiative stems from students expressing a desire to attain a US degree and to learn from U.S. faculty. From a student perspective, a U.S. university degree's global appeal, even if offered abroad, could be one reason for this growth. In turn, universities that establish dual-degree programs may do so to provide a wider range of educational programs, improve research collaboration efforts, increase internationalization, and raise global prestige (Obst & Kuder, 2012). Institutions also benefit from collaborative TNE programs as they facilitate collaborations with industry that can lead to investments in education through scholarships and pathways to internships (Yao & Garcia, 2018).

As we will detail in this article's conceptual framework, U.S. soft power may especially be at play as students decide to enroll in TNE programs. Nye's (1990, 2004) concept of soft power has been applied to higher education to demonstrate that universities personify - and are physical extensions of - a nation's culture and values. For example, Trilokekar (2010) applied the concept of soft power to explore the function of foreign policy on the internationalization of Canadian education. Other scholars have used the concept to understand the role of university rankings as a tool used by governments and university leaders to reshape higher education systems for greater global reach (Lo, 2011; Stetar, Coppla, Guo, Nabyeva & Ismailov, 2010). Soft power is thought of as a combination of organic attractions, such as a country's "ideals, tradition, art, and language," and these attractions are described as indicators that can persuade and attract others to a country (Stetar et al., 2010, p. 192). While onshore international student enrollment and (offshore) TNE program enrollment are two distinct internationalization activities (Levatino, 2017), we paid special attention to what motivates students to enroll in collaborative TNE programs such as microcampuses. It is unclear if there have been declines recorded in other TNE models, but given that microcampuses are growing in number, we asked the following question: *What motivates international students to pursue a TNE degree from a US university?*

The microcampus model can be understood as an example of a 'Collaborative TNE Provision' on Knight's (2016) framework of transnational education (TNE), as it is specified as a partnership between a host and a partner university located abroad (p. 38). Given the partnership between two universities, all microcampuses provide dual-degree programs. With several studies warning of the risks involved in

building and investing in TNE models (e.g., Alam, Alam, Chowdhury & Steiner; 2013; Harding & Lammey, 2011; Lanford, 2020), microcampuses offer a viable alternative as they utilize overseas partner university spaces to deliver their degree programs. Previously, researchers of the University of Arizona microcampus research and assessment team reported on two of the initial microcampuses in China and Cambodia (Castiello-Guetiérrez & Ghosh, 2018). This article builds on this past research to offer a deeper understanding of newly enrolled students' motivations to enroll in a microcampus program at two new campuses in Indonesia and Jordan. Little is known about what motivates students abroad to enroll in microcampus dual-degree programs, as opposed to travelling abroad for a degree or enrolling exclusively at a local university. As we embark in this "post-mobility world" (White & Lee, 2020, para. 4), a nuanced understanding of the factors that motivate today's newly enrolled TNE students would provide scholars with valuable details on new student mobility patterns and afford university leaders with information on ways to sustain or increase international student enrollment. We employ Nye's (1990, 2004) concept of soft power to explain the appeal of a U.S.-based TNE program to students. Further, we utilize Knight's (2016) terminology to place microcampuses on the TNE framework as a collaborative provision.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional TNE activities have been traced back to the late nineteenth century (Lanford & Tierney, 2016). Despite the investment risks associated with TNE programs over the past decade, such models are reported to have increased in "scale and scope" around the world (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Knight, 2011, p. 35; Obst & Kuder, 2012). The microcampus model is financially differentiated from traditional branch campuses in that the initial investment is kept low, as operational costs are shared between the partners (a collaborative TNE) and there is no need to invest in a brick and mortar space (White, 2017). Furthermore, another key feature that differentiates the microcampus model from other dual-degree programs is that students have the ability to spend each semester at a new microcampus location to complete their degrees. As the microcampus network grows, students have the option to graduate having lived in various countries within the microcampus network. The following section will review student and university motivations for dual-degrees and the challenges with TNE programs. We also include literature on US soft power to explain the appeal of a U.S. degree.

Student Motivations

Despite the increasing number of dual-degree programs, only a handful of studies report why students choose to enroll in TNE programs that offer dual-degrees. A well-known advantage of a TNE program is that it increases access to higher education as students can participate in programs while staying in their own country, thus eliminating relocating costs and alternative living expenses (Wilkins, 2011). A study with participants from a TNE program in Malaysia found that a combination of push-pull factors motivates students to enroll in TNE programs (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017). For instance, the lower cost of studying at home versus overseas is indicated by students as being important when choosing to enroll in a TNE program. The perception of increased employability is yet another motivator (British Council, 2014).

Additionally, student motivations are also influenced by the local political climate, economic outlook, and their families. For instance, students from China are often influenced by their parents to enroll in TNE programs (Bodycott, & Lai, 2012). Fang and Wang (2014) find similar motivations among Chinese students to enroll in a TNE, as local higher education conditions serve as "push" factors. However, their study reveals that Chinese students view enrolling in a TNE as a way to "regain access to reputable domestic higher education institutions" or go overseas for graduate school (p. 484). Their study also finds that, when

choosing to enroll in a TNE program, Chinese students are more concerned with the characteristics of the Chinese university that partners with a foreign institution; they believe that if the local university partner is reputable, then the foreign partner university will also be of similar quality. Other motivations included the overall marketability of the degree program offered by the TNE program, the safety of the country where it was being offered, and the language of instruction provided by the TNE program.

Yao and Garcia (2018) report that students are motivated by English language instruction, their perceptions of a foreign - specifically a German degree - as well as low tuition costs when choosing to enroll in a TNE program. Besides language, Wu (2014) documented that students were frequently motivated to learn from a new culture. When choosing to enroll in a program abroad, “intercultural immersion” was expressed as important in participants’ decision-making process as it helped them network (Wu, 2014, p. 431). These examples echo Li, Haupt, and Lee’s (2021) findings that, in addition to personal reasons, *macro and meso* level factors, such as labor markets and the program structure itself, influence student motivations.

TNE Challenges

Even though TNE programs are increasing, they often face serious issues of sustainability (Shams, 2016). After a few years in operation, numerous TNE programs have been reported to shut down operations or cancel their programs. Recently, University College of London decided to end its partnership with the Qatar foundation (Redden, 2019). This year, Yale-NUS unexpectedly announced its closure as well (Horowitch, 2021). In such cases, staff have been known to lose their jobs or be relocated to other campuses. Redden (2019) also states that closures are common, as cross-border programs have been known to shut down after a few years in operation. Students and faculty are often left to deal with the consequences of unpredictable closures on their own.

Altbach (2010a, 2010b) warns that TNE programs are not sustainable due to the challenges of hiring home campus professors, regardless of their professoriate rank, to relocate to international sites. The financial costs, as well as personal and professional risks all to relocate to a new country, can be too taxing. Often, such hiring challenges result in inequitable hiring practices that cause the partnership to be undermined (Lanford, 2020). Additionally, TNE programs might offer condensed course schedules since faculty are willing to make the trip for only short durations of time. These challenges can result in poorly designed academic programs and service to students. Furthermore, Oleksiyenko (2018) warns that unhealthy organizational environments can lead to the erosion of academic freedom. Providing the same level of quality despite the distance can be a daunting task in the face of different legal and political systems in the countries of partner universities (Wilkins, 2017).

Employability is yet another challenge for TNE programs. Knight (2011) argues that while dual-degrees may be attractive to students as they perceive them to increase their chance of being employed, each degree needs to be valid. A multi-stakeholder group study reported that employers do not view dual-degree graduates as more marketable and were “less likely to hire dual-degree graduates” (Culver, Puri, Spinelli, DePauw, & Dooley, 2012, p. 58). Another study found that eight out of ten employers specifically seek to hire foreign returnees, as they cite employee cultural-awareness as a highly desirable asset for their companies (Straits Times, 2019). While dual-degrees may be marketed as a promising venture that allows students to obtain two degrees, if the race to quickly accrue credentials does not translate to meaningful jobs, the sustainability of TNE programs comes into question once again.

TNE programs are commonly viewed as providing an internationalization at home experience, but they can offer a migration pathway to the partner country. In a recent study by the British Council (2014), which included data from 300 TNE enrolled students from ten countries; students reported that, by enrolling in TNE programs, their communication and analytical skills improved and their chance of employment increased. However, the study also found some evidence that enrolling in TNE programs can lead to brain-drain as the best and brightest leave their home countries for further studies at either the foreign institution or in other nations. While we currently lack global TNE data to fully understand the phenomenon of brain drain, the British Council's report cites one example of a university sending 350 students abroad and only 50 (14%) students returning, with most students choosing international contexts for work and further study.

To enhance their longevity, TNE ventures must address these challenges, especially to the needs of students. To gain a nuanced understanding of student motivation, we first define and place the microcampus initiative within the transnational education framework. Next, we apply the concept of soft power on international higher education to understand the appeal of TNE programs.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

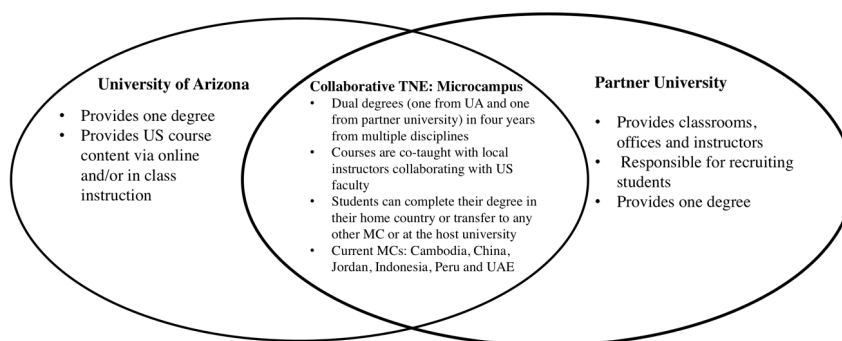
Placing Microcampuses within the Transnational Education Framework

We anchor the contributions of this research using two concepts. First, as Obst and Kuder (2012) have pointed out, definitions of TNE programs differ between institutions, and given that the microcampus initiative is new, we use Knight's (2016) Transnational Education Framework to distinguish and define this type of TNE. Second, we apply Knight's (2016) use of the terminology TNE, as opposed to cross-border education, to describe microcampuses as this model places an emphasis on the "movement of academic programs and providers between countries," as opposed to the movement of students (p. 36). Today, TNE has gained its meaning and popularity through everyday use—not through the conceptual foundation of the term.

Knight's (2016) framework distinguishes between collaborative and independent TNE provisions, as she specifies that independent TNEs are branch campuses or distance education programs. Collaborative TNEs, in turn, include joint/multiple degree programs, twinning programs, or locally supported distance programs where there is collaboration between institutions. Collaboration can be found in the provision of space, student services, and curriculum. From this framework, we identify the microcampus model as a collaborative TNE provision as it is a partnership between a host and a partner university that is located abroad. We offer this figure to further illustrate the microcampus model (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

A Collaborative TNW Between The University Of Arizona And A Partner University



Note: This figure illustrates this type of TNE provision, a collaborative TNE.

Our next objective is to identify student motivations for enrolling in a microcampus. Specifically, we want to understand the attraction of a U.S. TNE provision for students around the world. To help conceptualize our findings, we borrow and expand upon Nye's (1990, 2004) concept of soft power for the field of international higher education. Nye (2005) defined soft power as the "attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and foreign and domestic policies" (p. 11-12). Other scholars, such as Lo (2011), point out that Nye's concept of soft power places an emphasis on "co-opting people rather than coercing them" (p. 213). Similarly, Knight (2014) points out that the concept has been interpreted by some as neo-colonizing. Soft power is a particularly important influence when it comes to U.S. higher education (Lee, 2014). While students have several choices before enrolling in an educational program, certain factors seem to attract or motivate them more over others. Through this study's use of Nye's (1990, 2004) concept of soft power, we trace the influence of soft power on student motivations to study in a microcampus.

The Microcampus Model

A microcampus is located at the campus of a partner institution that is located outside the US. As of Fall 2019, microcampuses provide dual-degrees (with the University of Arizona) out of Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Jordan, Peru, and the United Arab Emirates. In the near future, additional microcampuses are set to launch in Hanoi, Mauritius, Manila and Iraq. Currently, students in China are enrolled in Law degrees. The Indonesia microcampus provides undergraduate mechanical and/or industrial engineering degrees. Jordanian students are enrolled in a Master of Science in engineering management, and Cambodian students are enrolled in civil engineering degree program. Microcampus students graduate with two degrees: one from the partner university and the other from the University of Arizona (White, 2017).

Aside from classroom spaces and offices for faculty and staff, each campus provides students with study areas, campus library, and online access to the host university's library materials. Tuition structures differ by location. For example, tuition for the first half of the program is priced by the partner institution, and this revenue is collected by the partner university. When students begin the second half of their dual-degree program, they pay a premium on their tuition as they begin taking UA classes that are co-taught by a local instructor and a UA professor - or by a UA faculty member based in the host country. This tuition is then split equally between the partner institutions. Initial costs are low since there is no need for investing in building spaces for students.

As the microcampus model grows, one unique feature is that it would showcase a new type of student mobility, as students can move between campuses without being in the same country throughout their degree. This initiative has also paved the way for the University of Arizona to expand its international network. In 2020, as a response to COVID-19 imposed restrictions on student visas and international travel, the university announced the launch of *UA Global Campus* which will provide students opportunities to study across five continents in 34 countries (University of Arizona Global, 2020).

Soft Power and International Higher Education

Soft power impacts global outcomes and international activities. It is especially evident in international higher education. Nye (2004), who coined the term, suggests that university leaders' efforts to internationalize an institution are in fact promoting U.S. soft power. He defines soft power as a combination of a country's cultural, political and foreign policies that have the power to influence and attract others. For instance, if a nation's cultural norms can have a broad ranging appeal to others, soft power is generated. Soft power is also enhanced when a country's political values emphasize democracy

and its foreign policy promotes human rights. A country's soft power values also need to be attractive to other countries' citizens. Another dimension of foreign policy enhancing or impacting soft power is via the current digital revolution. McClory and Harvey (2016) reported that world leaders and diplomats now maintain an online presence, and their communications via these major social media platforms impact foreign diplomacy and soft power. While most of the literature on soft power by these political science scholars points to the universal appeal of a country's policies and politics, Stokes (2017) highlights that, for some nations, U.S. soft power appeal is enhanced through cultural exports, such as music, film, and television programs.

Scholars such as Nye have argued that the U.S. has seen a decline in soft power (Nye, 2004, 2005). *The Soft Power 30 Study* reported a further decline in soft power due to a rise in nationalist policies and an overall fragile state of global alliances (McClory, 2019). The removal of the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement, the U.S. - China trade war, government shutdowns, and immigration bans and restrictions have each contributed to the decline of U.S. soft power and given rise to more coercive forms of power (McClory, 2019; Nye, 2004). This trend, coupled with challenges caused by COVID-19, indicates that the future of U.S. international higher education activities may be grim. However, in the meantime, as Mitchell (2020) stated at the recent *International Higher Education Forum*, TNE initiatives could offer universities some semblance of an alternative as the academic world plans its recovery. We argue that the soft power concept is particularly important during these unprecedented times to predict future performance of TNE programs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

To understand newly enrolled student motivations across four microcampuses, this study utilizes quantitative analysis to answer the following research questions:

1. What motivates students to participate in a microcampus dual-degree program? Are there differences by degree and location?
2. What are the future academic and career plans of students who enroll in a microcampus dual-degree program?

Data Collection and Sample

The students surveyed in this study were all newly enrolled in a microcampus dual-degree program and between the ages of 17-22 years. We administered online surveys via Qualtrics to students in the China, Cambodia, Indonesia and Jordan campuses. The survey was adapted from a previous study by Lee et al. (2017) on student mobility and motivations. The survey was modified and piloted with microcampus administrators and students. Using feedback from the pilot, we tailored the survey to ask questions about motivations for enrolling in the dual-degree program and students' future plans.

A total of 60 respondents from four microcampus locations are included in this study. A total of 22 (19%) students from China, 12 (13%) students from Indonesia, 10 (100%) from Cambodia, and 16 (84%) students from Jordan completed the survey. A majority of participants from Indonesia (62%), Cambodia (63%) and Jordan (75%) are male. From China, 6 out of 22 participants declined to provide gender information. Out of those who responded to the gender question, female participants accounted for (50%) from China. (Note: All percentages correspond to participation rates.)

Data Analysis

In addition to descriptive statistical analysis (means, standard deviation, range) to understand the dimensionality of potential constructs from the items in our survey, we conducted an Explanatory Factor

Analysis (EFA). The overall intention of the EFA analysis is to identify underlying factors that help us to make better sense of potential reasons that contribute to the motivation of students to enroll in collaborative TNE programs. In the past, scholars have documented that students who pursue a foreign degree do so to either experience a different culture, learn English, or pave the way to better career options (Pyvis & Chapman, 2007; Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012; Wu, 2014; Yao & Garcia, 2018). Through an EFA, this study would also contribute to understanding the current reasons students from these four countries are motivated to enroll in collaborative TNE programs.

Additionally, the EFA method allowed us to identify the latent variables factor structure of the scale, remove items that did not fit the resulting factor structure, and measure the validity and reliability of the motivation scale. Afterwards, we performed a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to measure if there are differences between countries in students' motivation to enroll in their respective microcampus programs. This additional step provides a quantifiable method of understanding how students from different countries form their decisions to enroll in a collaborative TNE.

FINDINGS

Overview

The findings confirm through EFA that U.S. soft power factors play a major role in motivating students to enroll in microcampus dual-degree programs.¹ In particular, we find that a degree from a U.S. university and deeper immersion in U.S. culture are most appealing to students. Our findings echo that of Wu (2014), in that our study's TNE students are motivated by intercultural immersion when they choose to enroll. Our data also show that students, despite their nationality, were motivated to learn from U.S. faculty and to learn more about American culture. These findings resemble Stetar et al., (2010) as they reiterate ways in which U.S. soft power can be used as a strategy to attract students and advance an institution's global reach.

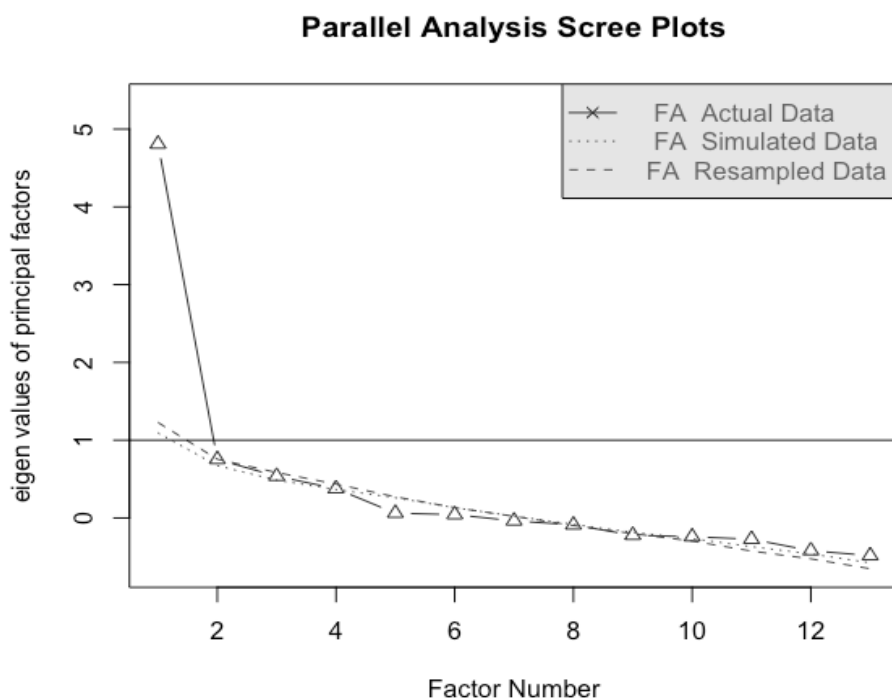
Similar to Yao and Garcia (2018), we also find the cost of tuition to be a motivator for students. The overall economic advantage of the microcampus tuition rates allows students to stay in their home country yet pursue a degree from a U.S. institution. In analyzing the data using EFA, we provide further survey item details and quantitative results to understand the motivations of newly enrolled students.

EFA Results

Sixteen items encompassing a range of motivations that encourage students to participate in a dual-degree program were administered to newly enrolled students at four microcampus sites. We conducted a scree plot test (See Figure 2) and found that a four-factor structure (Figure 3) of the motivation scale was the best structure to describe these data. We label the four factors as: US Education, Cost, Language Skills, and American Culture. Two items that did not fit the four-factor model were dropped to improve the overall factor structure. For our analysis, we consider the following factors to fall under the US Soft Power framework: *US Education, Language Skills and American Culture*.

¹ The results of this study only represent the motivations of students enrolled in the University of Arizona (UA) microcampus network. To date, Arizona is the leading institution behind microcampus initiatives. While our findings corroborate the results of previous studies (e.g., Stetar et al., 2010; Wu, 2014), we emphasize that our findings do not necessarily generalize to the motivations of other students who are enrolled in TNE programs from the U.S. or any other country.

Figure 2
Scree Plot Test

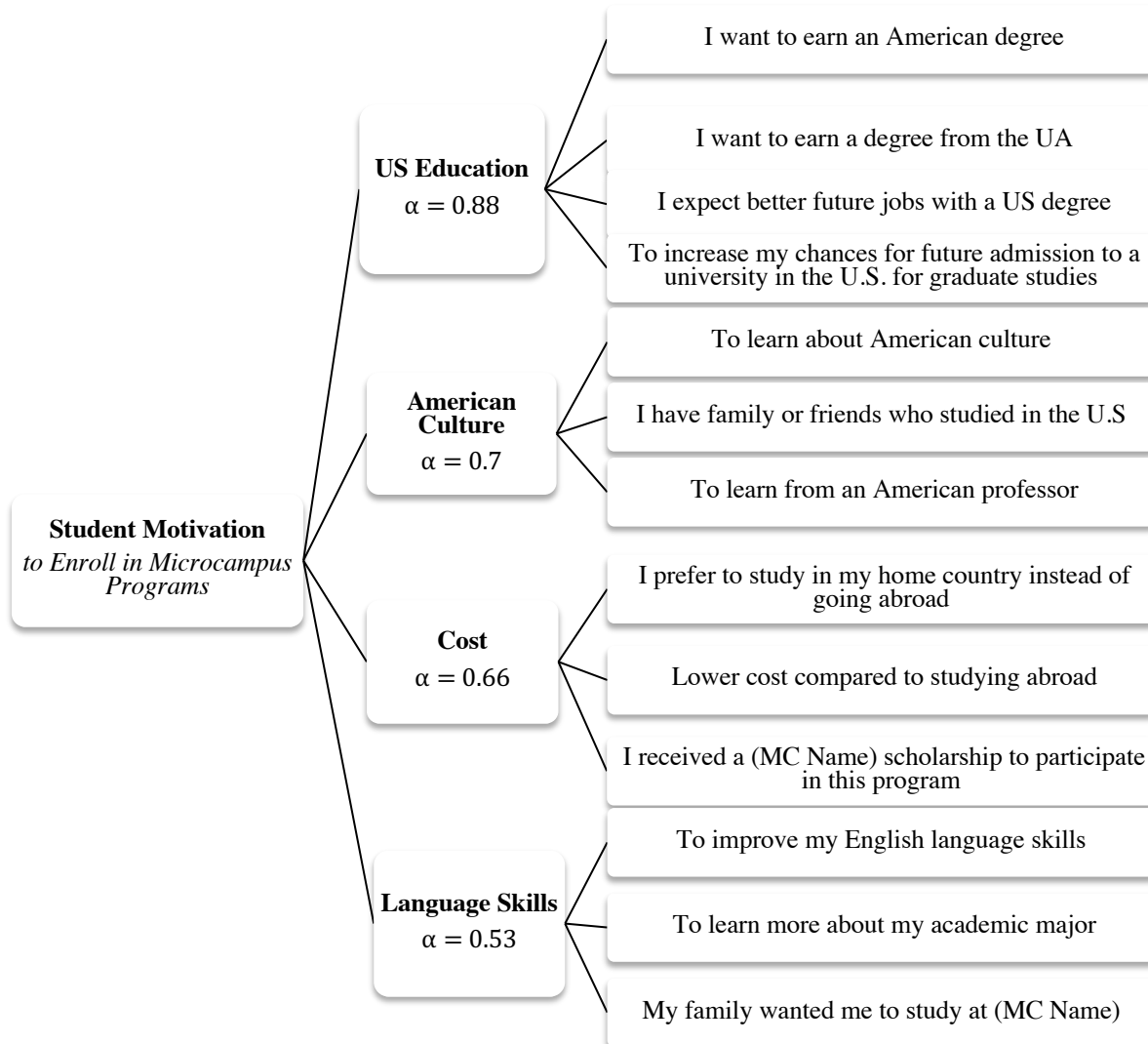


We used DeVellis's (2003) internal consistency standards to interpret our EFA results. DeVellis categorizes internal consistency as follows: an internal consistency number of above .90 would indicate that the scale can be shortened, 0.8 to .90 is very good, .70 to .80 is respectable, .65 to .70 is minimally acceptable, and .60 to .64 is undesirable. All numbers < .60 are unacceptable.

After Varimax rotation, the EFA results show that a four factor-structure of the motivation scale explained 56.8% of the variance in the pattern of relationships among the items. The US Education factor alone explained 20.7% of the variance. The Cost factor accounts for 13% of variance, American Culture accounts for 8.5% variance, and the Language Skills factor accounts for a further 14.6% of variance. Results show a Tucker Lewis Index of factoring reliability of 0.98. This is an acceptable value, as it is above 0.9.

The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability value for the US Education factor had the highest reliability at 0.88 (Very Good). The items included in U.S. Education factor include items that ask about the motivations to gain a degree specifically from the U.S. Items labeled under the second factor of American culture have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 (Respectable). This second factor has items that relate to US life and culture. The third factor, Cost, which relates to items concerning the cost of tuition and scholarship, has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.66 (Minimally Acceptable). The final factor, Language Skills, which includes items concerning students' desire to learn English, has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.53 (Unacceptable).

Figure 3
Four Factor Structure



To further investigate the differences in motivation between countries, we conducted a one-way between groups MANOVA (Figure 4) to understand the differences in motivations between newly enrolled students from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, and Jordan. Considering the small sample size of this study, we used Pillai's trace as the test statistic in the MANOVA. It appears that there is a statistical significance between groups on at least one factor, as shown by Pillai's trace statistic $I^{(s)}=1.292$, $p=.001$, $F=2.213$.

Figure 4
One-Way Between Groups MANOVA Results

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0.982	149.169	13	36	0	0.982
	Wilks' Lambda	0.018	149.169	13	36	0	0.982
	Hotelling's Trace	53.866	149.169	13	36	0	0.982
	Roy's Largest Root	53.866	149.169	13	36	0	0.982
University	Pillai's Trace	1.292	2.213	39	114	0.001	0.431
	Wilks' Lambda	0.173	2.221	39	107	0.001	0.442
	Hotelling's Trace	2.488	2.212	39	104	0.001	0.453
	Roy's Largest Root	1.284	3.752	13	38	0.001	0.562

Next, from the MANOVA results, we performed post-hoc analysis of one-way ANOVAS. For the U.S. Education factor, MANOVA Least Significant Difference (LSD) comparisons showed that newly enrolled students in China place less of an emphasis on valuing U.S. Education than students from Jordan, Indonesia, and Cambodia. Microcampus students from China were also least motivated to enroll by the Cost factor. Students from Jordan were least motivated by the Language Skills factor. Furthermore, students from Indonesia were most motivated to enroll in the microcampus program to improve their English language skills and learn more about their major. While students are not required to be in the U.S. at any time during their dual-degree at a microcampus, this finding could suggest that they are motivated by the potential impact of receiving an education that is delivered partly by U.S. faculty through English instruction. The importance placed on language and on learning about their major further suggests that students weigh the impact a microcampus experience would have on their future career prospects. No differences were found across the nationalities for the American Culture factor. Cambodian students were the most motivated by the Cost factor, but this finding was not statistically significant given the small sample size.

Next, we examined mean values (Table 1) for the motivation items by country to gather nuanced information for each item by country. In examining mean values, we deviate slightly from the MANOVA results as we understand how each item in the scale was rated, as opposed to analyzing whole factors from EFA results. By doing so, we developed a fine-grained understanding of how an item fares by country. For instance, do students from a specific country rate (high/low) that they want to "increase their chances for future admission to a university in the U.S. for graduate studies" by enrolling in a collaborative TNE program? An analysis of the itemized means provides tangible implications for university leaders to improve their TNE ventures.

Table 1
Student Motivations For Enrolling In A Dual-Degree Program

Motivation Items	Cambodia	Indonesia	Jordan	China	All Students	
I want to earn an American degree	3.67(0.71) ¹	3.58 (0.51)	3.81 (0.4)	2.82 (1.01)	3.43 (0.81)	**

I want to earn a degree from the UA	3.44 (0.73)	3.58 (0.51)	3.25 (0.68)	2.53 (1.01)	3.13 (0.87)	**
I expect better future jobs with a US degree	3.89 (0.33)	3.75 (0.45)	3.69 (0.48)	2.94 (0.97)	3.5 (0.75)	**
To learn from an American professor	3.67 (0.5)	3.17 (1.03)	3.06 (0.85)	3 (1)	3.17 (0.91)	
To improve my English language skills	3.67 (0.5)	3.83 (0.39)	3.19 (0.83)	3.28 (0.96)	3.44 (0.79)	
To learn more about my academic major	3.44 (0.73)	3.58 (0.67)	3 (0.82)	3.12 (1.05)	3.24 (0.87)	
To increase my chances for future admission to a university in the US for graduate studies	3.56 (1.01)	3.58 (0.51)	3.31 (0.87)	2.71 (1.1)	3.22 (0.96)	*
To increase my chances for future admission to a local university for graduate studies	3.11 (1.17)	3.25 (0.62)	2.81 (0.91)	2.29 (1.05)	2.8 (1)	*
I have family or friends who studied in the US	2.78 (1.39)	1.83 (1.11)	2.44 (1.21)	1.94 (1.14)	2.2 (1.22)	
I prefer to study in my home country instead of going abroad	2.78 (1.3)	1.92 (0.9)	2.63 (1.09)	2.12 (0.99)	2.33 (1.08)	
Lower cost compared to studying abroad	3.67 (0.71)	2.83 (0.94)	3.19 (0.98)	2.71 (0.99)	3.04 (0.97)	
I received a university scholarship to participate in this program	2.11 (1.45)	2.92 (1.44)	2.53 (1.25)	1.41 (0.8)	2.19 (1.32)	*

I received a private loan to participate in this program	2.33 (1.58)	2.42 (1.38)	1.25 (0.68)	1.41 (0.8)	1.74 (1.17)	*
My family wanted me to study at [University name]	3.11 (1.17)	2.58 (0.9)	1.5 (0.89)	2.12 (1.27)	2.2 (1.19)	**
To learn about American culture	2.78 (1.09)	2.92 (1)	2.63 (0.89)	2.88 (1.02)	2.79 (0.97)	
Other	2.5 (1.73)	2.5 (2.12)	NA	NA	2.63 (1.51)	
N	10	12	16	22	60	

Notes: Survey scale: 1= Not true/Not important to 4 = Most true/ Important; ¹standard deviation in parenthesis next to means; difference between country level groups is significant at the *0.1, **0.05, ***0.001 level

One similarity is that the majority of students from all countries believe that they will attain a better job in the future with a degree from a U.S. institution. However, such a belief is still not the top motivator for students in Jordan and China. Students in China reported that the top reason for wanting to enroll in a dual-degree program is to improve their English language skills. Similar to findings from other studies (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, Huisman, 2012; Yao & Garcia, 2018), the improvement of English language skills remains to be a key indicator of Chinese students' motivation to enroll in a U.S. degree. For the same question, students from Jordan reported that their top motivation is that they want to earn a U.S. degree.

Findings also revealed that the provision of scholarships from the Indonesian partner university is an important factor, leading students to enroll in their dual-degree program. Interestingly, apart from Chinese students, Jordanian, Indonesian, and Cambodian respondents report that enrolling in a dual-degree program with the microcampus would increase their chances for graduate admission to a university in the U.S. The lower costs of studying at a microcampus is most attractive to Jordanian and Cambodian respondents. Students from Jordan are enrolled in graduate degrees, whereas students at all other sites are enrolled in undergraduate degrees. Our finding that the cost of tuition is a key influence in graduate students choosing to enroll in microcampuses is similar to Yao and Garcia's (2018) finding where Vietnamese graduate students were found to be motivated by the cost of German education via a collaborative TNE program.

Our study's limitations included a small sample size from each of the countries. Since our sample consisted of newly enrolled students, it was challenging to recruit students via our university email since students were still getting acquainted with the various online university platforms at the time of this study. Another missing piece of information is that we do not know the reasons that deter students from enrolling in microcampus programs. In the future, it would be worth conducting parallel studies that include interviews with students enrolled in other similar, competing programs to further understand their enrollment decisions. Despite these limitations, we believe this is the first study that compares motivations of newly enrolled students across multiple countries to enroll in collaborative TNE programs. The factors identified by this study have also been corroborated by previous similar studies (Culver et al., 2012; Wilkins et al., 2012; Yao & Garcia, 2018).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Immediately deducible from our findings is that newly enrolled students across microcampuses are most motivated by the U.S. as the country of choice to pursue a degree. This finding potentially highlights an important distinction between collaborative TNE students and international students in their motivations to enroll in U.S. education. Over the past decade, U.S. education has become “a harder sell” (Marklein, 2011), and the continued drop since 2016 in international student enrollment further suggests a decline in the appeal of U.S. education (Fisher, 2019). Nevertheless, our findings indicate that when U.S. education is offered via a collaborative TNE provision, students are motivated to enroll. Motivations differ between students from each country. However, our MANOVA results indicate that students from China, when compared with the other countries’ participants, were least motivated by the U.S. Education items. The size of China’s education market could be one major reason why students are more motivated by other factors. Travel restrictions and political tensions due to the Trump administration’s xenophobic rhetoric could also be another factor that could have influence on this finding. It could be that students were more motivated to enroll at the Chinese partner university because of its prestige, or 985 status. For the dual-degree program, the Gao Kao score requirement was lower compared with the score requirement for other programs at the university. This meant that for some students with lower Gao Kao scores enrolling in the dual-degree program made it possible to be admitted into the Chinese partner university (Fang & Wang, 2014). This implies that there is not “a one size for all” approach when building TNE programs. The sustainability of these programs can perhaps be maintained if leaders organizing TNE programs are adaptable to changing political and sociocultural events.

Secondly, findings demonstrate that participants, overall, are influenced by factors that fall under the U.S. soft power framework. While domestic politics and immigration policies may have resulted in a decline in U.S. international education enrollment, our results indicate that a collaborative TNE provision may provide students with an alternative - one where they can remain at home, but still earn a U.S. degree and gain English language skills. Scholars have pointed out that soft power prospers when the “nation projecting it is well-respected on an international scale” (Stetar et al., 2010, p. 192). In the case of the U.S., the global reputation of the country’s higher education system seems to be a particular draw. However, challenges remain. Along with the ramifications of COVID-19 (such as halted travel and deglobalization) (Irwin, 2020), the U.S. concurrently bears the brunt of two additional multifaceted challenges. First, the nation potentially faces a looming economic recession (World Bank, 2020). Second, the recent national reckoning of systemic racism has resulted in unrest across several states. These intricately layered complexities can, if not remedied soon, undermine U.S. soft power as a civil society is crucial to enhancing soft power (Nye, 2008).

Our study provides a clear indication that students value U.S. education and the acquisition of a degree from a U.S. institution (in this case, a research-intensive public university). U.S. institutions with similar characteristics might be encouraged to offer TNE programs. An unsurprising, yet important, finding is that the cost of programs matter to students and their families. For TNE programs, it is more so a concern, as students often struggle with the choice of either acquiring a degree from their local education systems (which would result in significantly lower tuition costs) or taking on additional debt by pursuing foreign degrees. Given that the majority (above 60%) of our study participants, regardless of country, represent middle class and low-income groups, the cost of tuition needs to consistently remain affordable. Competitive tuition rates and scholarships are important, especially considering the warnings of an

impending global recession during this decade (UNCTAD, 2019). Given that the international monetary fund (IMF) reported a rise in global debt, particularly in low-income developing countries (Mbaye & Badia, 2019), higher education policymakers and university leaders should factor in global economic performance as they plan TNE programs or the expansion of existing programs. Ultimately, soft power is not fixed; it is mediated by social and political factors, including racial protests, public health management, and geopolitical relations. Given the documented declines in U.S. soft power (McClory, 2019; Nye, 2005) as we approach a post-COVID world, we recommend studying the concept of soft power through similar TNE programs to monitor changes to international student motivations to enroll in dual degrees.

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