

Current Trends in Higher Education: Internationalization in Asia and Oceania

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As the demand for tertiary education continues to increase, new means for expanding educational access must also continue. A 203 percent increase in postsecondary enrollments in Asia and a 116 percent increase in Oceania over the past 20 years have coincided with internationalization trends (*Almanac of Higher Education* 2009). Internationalization trends in higher education are certainly not new, but modes of exchange, as well as common countries of origin and destination for exchange, are changing. Asian countries are becoming a more popular destination for study abroad and international exchanges, and more students from Asia are also studying abroad.

According to the Institute of International Education, there was an overall 10.4 percent increase in the number of students studying in the United States from Asia in the 2007-2008 academic year, and a 16.4 percent increase from Oceania. The top four places of origin of international students in the United States are all from Asia: India, which experienced a 13 percent increase of students from the previous year, China, which experienced a 20 percent increase, South Korea, which experienced an 11 percent increase, and Japan [Institute of International Education (IIE) 2008]. Such exchanges are not unidirectional. Asia has also become a more popular destination for US students studying abroad: increasing 20 percent over the previous year (IIE 2008). Australia, China, and Japan are all among the top ten destinations for worldwide academic exchange.

A related trend is the increasing establishment of international branch campuses, defined as “institutions that have the name of and are run by a foreign institution, and that award full degrees from that institution”

(Jaschik 2009). A study by the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education indicates that there has been a 43 percent increase in international branch campuses in just three years. Only 35 of the campuses in the study existed prior to 1999 (Jaschik 2009).

While institutions from the United States still dominate the international branch campus landscape, other participating countries include Australia, which now is second in terms of the number of institutions with established international branch campuses, and India ties with France for fourth. The United Arab Emirates is the top host country for branch campuses with 40, but China, Singapore, and Qatar are also among the leads.

The most prevalent model for such branches is “North to South,” where colleges and universities in developed nations create campuses in the developing world. However, thirty percent of branch campuses are now considered “North to North,” with exporting and host nations both considered “developed” nations. Much of this growth has taken place with branches in Singapore and Australia. There are also now 26 “South-to-South” branch campuses, in source countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, among others (Jaschik 2009).

Another growing approach to satisfy the increasing demand for tertiary education is distance learning. The governments of many countries, including India, Turkey, and New Zealand, among others, have supported distance education as a means of promoting greater educational access. In fact, online learning is the fastest growing market segment of adult education and has grown faster over the last six years than any other sector of higher education (Clothey 2008; Kolowich 2009). Education had become the eighth largest export industry in Australia by 2004, in part due to the proliferation of web-based tertiary courses (Walsh 2007).

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China has long been a leader in distance education, utilizing television to improve access to education since the early 1960s. Now more than 10 percent of China's 19 million university students are engaged in online learning. China's oldest and most-established distance learning project, Shanghai Television University (STUV), was named as a laureate for the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication and Technologies in Education in 2008.

The potential for fostering international interactions, accessing global resources, and communicating with a wider range of people is now easier than ever, and these trends are likely to continue as ever-new modes of interaction are found and the demand for tertiary education around the world ceases to decline.

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