International Student Recruitment and Mobility in Non-Anglophone Countries

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The literature on international students usually focuses solely on English-speaking countries with a majority of inbound students. This may lead one to believe the lack of literature focusing on non-Anglophone countries is because these countries don't have international students attending their HEI's. This is false. The non-anglophone countries of China, France, Russia, Germany, Japan, and Spain, house 32% of total international students, while 20% are in "other" countries, who are predominantly non-Anglophone (pg. 27-28). Given this background, it's imperative to understand the trends and themes of international student recruitment and mobility in these countries that are often overlooked in comparison to their English-speaking competitors.

In *International Student Recruitment and Mobility in Non-Anglophone Countries,* de Wit, Minaeva, Wang, and country-specific authors offer a comprehensive analysis of trends, policies, obstacles, strengths, weaknesses, recommendations, and more, for the methods non-Anglophone countries use to recruit and mobilize international students. The book is divided into four parts, beginning with themes and trends in Part 1, then moving to an analysis of key non-Anglophone countries, regionally, for Parts 2-4. The country analyses are multi-faceted, aiming to provide a nuanced perspective, and bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives and practical applications.

The first part of the book consists of three chapters depicting themes. The definition for international students is explored throughout tables using definitions from prominent organizations in international education like UNESCO, Project Atlas, and more. The international student population is not a uniform group, but heterogeneous by nature (Bista, 2018, & Jones, 2017). Some students are visa holders, some are refugees, some hold dual citizenship, and so on. Some students are classified as non-degree-seeking, some are enrolled in certificate courses, some are doing a semester abroad in a student exchange program, and so on. New and more common classifications now exist to

differentiate between these students, which does not solve this problem of defining international students, but helps provide insight into who is, and who isn't, an international student (Chapter 1).

Recommendations for institutions working in non-Anglophone countries promoting recruitment are to eliminate the information barrier, promote national education systems, provide scholarships, support university cooperation, analyze data, and form a student community (Chapter 2). Yet there still exists barriers and obstacles for these agencies to perform efficiently. Cooperation, diversification, and overcoming political turbulence are challenges that agencies must overcome to be able to seamlessly recruit and mobilize these international students (Chapter 2). The context of the institution is very important when it comes to understanding recruitment. A standout quote in this section from Lizhou Wang showcases how critical it is to understand context in recruitment and mobility:

> "...historic and colonial ties; demographic, linguistic, and cultural proximity; having a diaspora to tap into; or a niche market are the most attractive assets (pg. 36)."

This quote ultimately synthesizes the major point of Part 1 of the book.

My favorite aspect of Part 1 prevails throughout the rest of the chapters; debates surrounding English Medium Instruction (EMI). The literature suggests that utilizing EMI in HEI's could possibly be an equity problem. Tannock (2009) offers that international education acts as a global meritocracy, which creates a naturally competitive nature when recruiting international students. This, coupled with education leaders predominantly coming from Western, English-speaking backgrounds, creates a blind nationalism that permeates borders. The book contrasts this sentiment and finds that EMI is vastly different on a country-by-country basis, and that it will remain greatly variable between systems. Thus, it is more important to pursue contextualization in these systems rather than generalize EMI (Chapter 3). Overall, the book emphasizes how critical it is for countries to utilize English, as this gives them a serious competitive edge when recruiting international students.

PARTS 2-4: REGIONAL CASE STUDIES

These parts start with Europe (Part 2), then Asia (Part 3), and finish with Latin-America, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa as one section (Part 4). Countries with their own chapters have an extensive analysis of the facets pertaining to recruitment and mobility, including language and EMI. In Part 2, the differences between the Netherlands and Russia are extremely interesting. Van Donselaar, Geurts, and Hobbes, find that the Dutch HE system puts an emphasis on retaining international students upon graduation through the "Make it in the Netherlands!" program, where students are encouraged to seek jobs in the Netherlands, learn about culture and life, find permanent residence, and learn the language. This program also offers students a start-up permit, pushing them to create innovative business plans applicable to Dutch society (pg. 108-109). The Netherlands have a huge advantage when it comes to language policy in their HE system. Policy is very friendly to instruction being provided in either English or

German. The latest data finds that 14% of master's programs at research universities were offered in Dutch, compared to 76% in English (pg. 111-112). Native English speakers can transition to Dutch society relatively easily because there is no need to immediately learn the language. This chapter finds that the Netherlands have advantages when it comes to recruitment and the retention of international students due to work-friendly policy for international students, a specialized program for international students, and a relative ease overcoming the language barrier.

For Russia, language is a lot more complex. Compared to the Netherlands, Russia has a major national interest in preserving Russian language, culture, education systems, Russian history, public diplomacy, and support for Russians abroad. One agency, the Rossotrudnichestvo, oversees all of these topics, meaning it more broadly focuses on international relations rather than international education. There is no separate entity in Russia that deals solely with international education. This appears to be in stark contrast to the Dutch model of the "Make it in The Netherlands!" program. Interestingly, this does not stop Russia from having six universities in the *Times Higher Education* ranking of the most international universities in 2020 (pg. 139). This is because most international students studying in Russia are from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): countries that speak Russian and practice similar culture. For CIS students the transition to Russian HEI's is relatively easy as there is no language barrier and minimal culture shock. For non-CIS students, the process is much more difficult. Russian university programs are overwhelmingly taught in Russian, which is why prospective students are usually required to take intensive Russian language courses pre-arrival. Minaeva and Prostakov argue that this is a disadvantage for domestic students as well because they see English language acquisition as a prerequisite for becoming competitive in the global market. On most Russian campuses, social activities appear divided among domestic/CIS international students and international non-CIS students. This sounds similar to cases in the U.S., where international students lack meaningful interactions with domestic students, and domestic students typically lack motivation to interact with international peers (Gaulee 2018). In the newly founded "Development of Education Export Potential in Russia" initiative from 2017, it's found that the language barrier, the lack of English knowledge by staff in Russian HEI's, and lack of retention of international students, is not discussed at all. The differences between Russia and the Netherlands just further highlights the need for contextualization in the analysis of specific country case studies in international student recruitment and mobility.

Part 3 looks at strategies and realities of Asian countries. The standout chapter in this book is covering China (Chapter 10). China is an interesting country that stands somewhere between the Netherlands and Russia when it comes to language and EMI. Wen and Wang explain that China offers an incredibly unique perspective on international student recruitment and mobility due to it being a large non-Anglophone country with a strong economy. Currently the growing economy and reputable HEI's are leading to a rapidly increasing number of inbound students. EMI in China falls somewhere between policy

provided by the Netherlands and by Russia. China has utilized EMI as a major pull factor to attract international students, while also focusing on preserving the Chinese language, mostly offering instruction in Mandarin. Policy reflects this dilemma, as HEI's usually have a proficiency threshold for Chinese language to be accepted into university. In 2015, a grant was used to promote EMI in Chinese universities, which resulted in EMI being used in 381 undergraduate programs and 1,050 master's programs (pg. 176). This sounds like the Dutch situation when it comes to language and EMI, but simply offering programs in English does not necessarily mean the programs are adequate. Like Russia, Chinese faculty and staff are not very well-versed in English. International students' satisfaction rates for all-English courses in China is less than 50% (pg. 176). Lately, Chinese HEI's and the state have pushed for Mandarin as the only language of instruction, mirroring sentiment we see from Russia. China, unlike both the Netherlands and Russia, has a significant advantage in recruiting international students when it comes to its booming and stable economy. Similar to the Netherlands, China actually seems to be relatively pro-EMI in its HEI's. Similar to Russia, it also wants to preserve its language and culture, and has not figured out how to efficiently train its HEI faculty in EMI.

Part 4 of the book broadly overviews all other regions. The book states that the reason for not focusing on specific countries in Part 4 is because these regions do not have a large percentage of inbound international students. Chapter 16 explains that Latin-American inbound student numbers are increasing, but not close to reflecting those of other regions in the world, as most inbound students are from the same region. The chapter moves on to the Middle East, claiming that the UAE and Qatar actually house a fair number of international students, mostly from the MENA region, with 17% from Sub-Saharan Africa (pg. 268-269). In Sub-Saharan Africa, students are usually outbound, and study in countries that speak the same languages. Overall, the book does not offer the same great deal of depth about these regions due to the prevalence of students from these regions to be outbound and lacking national strategy to recruit inbound international students.

Chapter 17 offers broad recommendations for non-Anglophone international student recruitment and mobility strategies. Although information and in-depth analysis of countries from Latin-America and the Caribbean, MENA countries, and Sub-Saharan Africa are lacking, the book gives recommendations that could help these countries begin a national strategy for international student recruitment and mobility.

CONCLUSION

International Student Recruitment and Mobility in Non-Anglophone Countries offers an intensive, impressive, and analytical deep dive into how different countries, regions, and systems recruit and mobilize students from around the world. For practitioners, contextualization and a deep understanding of the history, goals, policy, strategies, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through the lens of international students, countries can better compete globally

and serve international students. The book suggests that practitioners in non-Anglophone countries have promising opportunities to recruit international students to strengthen their HEI's and, in turn, stimulate the country's economy. In addition to offering very insightful recommendations for countries, the book calls for more research and study to be done in regions lacking information on this subject. After reading this book, I feel like I have a much better grasp on the factors at-play when thinking about international student recruitment and mobility from a country-specific perspective, and a much greater extent of knowledge about countries and regions that are so often overlooked in the field of international education.

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