

Politics of internationalisation and the migration-higher education nexus

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ABSTRACT

Taking the migration-higher education nexus as an analytical entry point, we address the question: How can we account for different internationalisation outcomes? We focus on three actors involved in the global race to internationalise higher education activities: higher education institutions (HEIs), states, and migrants. We argue that the migration-higher education nexus enables us to begin describing and explaining differences in internationalisation outcomes (i.e. greater, limited, or none) by focussing our empirical attention on the interaction between HEI internationalisation strategies, state policies, and migrant agency to move/stay. We delineate various configurations of these interactions and how they determine internationalisation outcomes.

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Introduction

Migration politics is salient in higher education today. Given the centrality of cross-border interactions in internationalisation activities, how can we begin to unpack the relationship between migration and higher education to understand its impact on internationalisation outcomes? In this article, we present the nexus between migration and higher education as an analytical entry point to empirically account for internationalisation outcomes. We conceive of the nexus between migration and higher education to refer to developments in migration politics and policies that have implications for higher education (e.g. internationalisation outcomes, questions and debates concerning access), and developments in the higher education sector that affect migration (e.g. aspirations, strategies, politics, policies). To do so, we focus on three actors involved in the global race to internationalise higher education activities: higher education institutions (HEIs), states, and migrants. Our decision to examine these three actors is motivated by their central roles in the migration-higher education nexus, but it should not be construed to mean that they are the only actors in these developments (see excellent work by Komljenovic and Robertson 2016; Komljenovic 2019; Beech 2015). At the same time, states are the actors who make migration policies, migrants are the ones who migrate, and HEIs are the frontline institutions assessed for their internationalisation outcomes. We argue that the migration-higher education nexus enables us to begin describing and explaining the differences in internationalisation outcomes (i.e. greater, limited, or none) by focussing our empirical attention on the interaction between HEI internationalisation strategies, state policies, and migrant agency to move/stay. While these interactions, in their various configurations,

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determine internationalisation outcomes, concentrating on the migration-higher education nexus allows us to analytically examine the tensions and contradictions in competing policy sectors within a national context.

Our study makes conceptual and empirical contributions to multiple research fields. First, for higher education studies, it offers a migration lens to examining the effects of higher education reforms. Specifically, our migration-higher education nexus provides a foundation to answering the question: Does internationalisation policy tools affect outcomes? Second, for migration studies, it introduces the nexus between migration and higher education as another entry point to address a question at the heart of the field: What is the role of the state vs. agents vs. migrants in migration regulation? Whose decisions and actions are most significant in migration outcomes? Third, for administrative and policy sciences, it highlights the utility of conceptualising horizontal coordination (Peters 2018) very broadly to include cross-sectoral coordination (i.e. between distinct policy sectors such as higher education, migration, and labour market), as well as coordination between state and higher education institutions in attracting (future) skilled labour migrants. How different policy actors collaborate or compete affects how current and future migrants determine their migration strategies (cf. Jacobs 2022).

The article is structured as follows. We begin by exploring what higher education studies and migration studies have to say about the migration-higher education nexus. Our brief review shows that several themes are visible in these two sets of literature revolving around three distinct migrant groups: *international students* as agents in the global competition for university income and future skilled labour, *foreign faculties* as mobile ‘talents’ in debates about ‘brain-drain/gain/circulation’ today, and *forced migrants* (refugees, asylum-seekers) as ‘super-disadvantaged’ students seeking access to higher education (in Europe). Next, inspired by the migration-*development* nexus agenda, we elaborate how these insights can be brought together to investigate higher education internationalisation outcomes. To do so, we use examples of HEI strategies to attract international academic talents and students, migration policies from around the world, as well as published studies on how academic migrants respond to policies and institutional strategies designed to attract them. We conclude by reflecting on potential next steps for those interested in a research agenda revolving around the migration-higher education nexus.

Research on the migration-higher education nexus

Scholarly interest in the relationship between migration and higher education, and their impact on internationalisation outcomes, is not new. Indeed, there is a huge literature on student/academic mobility, and higher education internationalisation, focussing on regional/national/institutional strategies, as well as their effects (e.g. Brooks and Waters 2011; Collins 2006, 2008; Geddie 2013, 2015; Robertson 2011, 2013; Robertson and Runganaikaloo 2014; Yang 2022). Yet, like Komljenovic and Robertson (2016, 623) in their studies of higher education markets, we have become disenchanted with the existing literature; when we try to analytically unpack the relationship between migration and higher education politics and policies and their impact on internationalisation outcomes, we find much of the literature wanting. Oftentimes, the literature examines individual migrant groups, with international students being the primary focus, as Bauder (2015) and Chou (2021) have also pointed out in their studies of foreign faculty and academic mobility. The general preference in academic studies to treat migrant groups as separate, and involving distinct policy-making dynamics, has less traction in real world debates and policy practice. To give one example, in the UK, international students were for many years conflated with migrants and included in migration statistics. This created considerable tensions between the state (wanting to decrease total number of migrants) and universities (wanting to increase total number of international students). Looking at European Union (EU) policies concerning non-EU students and researchers, we also find that these two migrant groups are now addressed by a single directive and not two. Much conceptual work is still needed to unravel the relationship between migration and higher education

politics and policies, and their impact on internationalisation outcomes, and our work is an attempt in this direction.

To begin unpacking the relationship between migration and higher education, and to examine how this relationship impacts internationalisation outcomes, we adopted a three-step method for this initial literature review. First, we carried out a SCOPUS search to see coverage on the migration-higher education nexus (total: 178 social science publications). Second, noting that most publications are from higher education and migration studies, we focussed and searched the archives of seven mainstream journals in these two fields. Our keywords limited the range of journals we reviewed. For higher education studies, we used the keywords ‘immigration’, ‘immigrants’, and ‘international students’ to identify relevant publications in *Higher Education*, *Studies in Higher Education*, and *Journal of Studies in International Education*. For migration studies, we used the keywords ‘higher education’, ‘university’, ‘students’, ‘academics’, and ‘faculty’ to search for relevant articles in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *International Migration*, *International Migration Review*, and *Migration Studies*. Our keyword selection reflects our assumption that the nexus between higher education and migration is implicitly or explicitly embedded in the research design when the respective topics are investigated. Third, our review mainly includes post-2000 publications (total: 73 articles).

There are clear limitations to our literature review given the narrow scope of journal search and focus on post-2000 publications. Furthermore, we explicitly excluded the keywords ‘mobility’ and ‘mobilities’ in our search because mobility studies tend to conflate short-term visits (‘sojourn’) with longer-term stays (‘migration’), which are regulated and perceived differently in public policy (mobility is generally seen as positive, and migration as negative). ‘Mobility’ is also frequently examined by other disciplines that are rarely explicit about politics. Our goal in this section is to explore some themes that migration and higher education studies have identified when it comes to the politics and policies on the migration-higher education nexus as an initial step towards conceptual work. What emerges below is a rich literature that highlights the salience of the migration-higher education nexus in grasping contemporary developments in the higher education sector.

International students: agents in the global competition for university income and future skilled labour

As a research theme, international students dominate both migration studies and higher education studies for research on the migration-higher education nexus. King (2010, 1357) argues this is because, for migration scholars, students ‘exemplify the tension between ... the “opening-up” tendencies of globalisation and the free movement of the best brains in the knowledge-based market economy of the developed world; and ... the countervailing trend of closure towards foreigners’. This tension plays out in different ways in both literatures, starting with the visible interest in the many *factors pushing and pulling* international students towards particular academic destinations. The ‘push’ and ‘pull’ concepts have since been criticised by migration scholars, but its prominence in the literature, which we summarise, is clear. For instance, organising these factors into ‘demand’ and ‘supply’, Findlay (2011) highlights the allure of social and cultural capital driving middle-class families to send their children to the ‘best’ western institutions and the universities’ financial interests motivating the supply of ‘elite’ higher education opportunities to a world market.

How *demand-and-supply* works varies according to academic destinations. For instance, Chen (2007) finds that universities’ reputation and bureaucratic efficiency, the overall ‘Canadian environment’, ‘Economics of Canadian education’, and immigration pathways to be significant factors in drawing international graduate students from East Asia to Canada. Looking at the US, Baker and Finn (2003) and Alberts and Hazen (2005) show that funding availability and the overall quality of US graduate programmes to be important. For Australia, Min and Falvey (2018) identify migration network effects, student income, degree cost competitiveness, and multiple educational pathways for entry as key factors. Exploring why Norway is receiving more international students

than ever before, Wiers-Jensen (2019) attributes the growing numbers of courses in English and collaboration with institutions abroad as responsible, but also improving career opportunities while studying in a safe environment. What these studies highlight is that ultimately international students, and the families that support them, do exercise agency concerning where to go and, as we discuss below, whether to stay after graduation.

Aware of international students' agency, how policymakers sought to exploit the migration-development nexus through policy design has drawn considerable attention from migration scholars (Vertovec 2002). In these studies, the research focus has been placed on how international students are cast as *future skilled labour migrants*. For Yang (2003), Kuptsch (2006), and Findlay (2011), student migration is a form of global skilled labour recruitment embedded in the context of higher education globalisation. Tremblay (2005) shows how OECD countries encouraged international student enrolment as part of their broader strategy to recruit qualified labour migrants; She and Wotherspoon (2013) examine Canada, the UK, and the US in the same light. In Australia, many international students are dubbed 'designer immigrants' (Simmons 1999), recruited to study but making the transition to permanent resident status in a process termed two-step migration (Hawthorne 2014). Turning to Denmark, Mosneaga (2013) reveals how multi-sector collaboration between the state, universities, and businesses shaped the unfolding of policies managing international students' status transition in a national context where talent attraction is framed by migration management.

Factors contributing to the *retention of international students* and their *propensity to return home* have thus also fascinated scholars engaged with the migration-higher education nexus. In their research, Alberts and Hazen (2005), Lee and Rice (2007), Li et al. (2015), Sabharwal and Varma (2016), and McGill (2018) point to three sets of factors that are significant in this decisional process: professional (reasons concerning wages, working conditions and facilities, advancement opportunities); societal (how students feel in the local social, political, and cultural environments); and personal (individual circumstances, including family status, friendship networks, and religious belonging). Studies that look more closely at the US support these observations (Kim, Bankart, and Isdell 2011). Focussing on mainland Chinese students in prestigious US universities, Cheung and Xu (2015) indicate that the most significant predictor in whether they return is the availability of job opportunities in China.

Scholarly interest in the push-and-pull factors and post-study pathways have led to studies that focus more on the *role and impact of migration policies* on international students' migration intentions. For instance, looking at Australia, Canada, England, and the US, Sá and Sabzalieva (2018) show that the growth in international students is decoupled from actual political and policy changes. They argue this is due to the ways in which public policy concerning international students is organised across multiple sectors, involving different policymakers. While this decoupling obscures any direct roles that migration policies promoting internationalisation have on the actual outcomes, the direct coupling of migration policies to prevent and control entry of certain migrant groups has the opposite effect (cf., Urias and Yeakey 2009; Johnson 2018). Looking at the 2017 US Travel Ban, Todoran and Peterson (2020) report the direct effects on PhDs from the banned countries, and the indirect impact on those from elsewhere. What the policy perspective highlights is that the relationship between policies to attract international students and internationalisation is inconclusive while migration policies restricting their admissions are far more likely to lead to the intended effects.

Recent studies have turned to *academic destinations outside of the 'West'* as part of investigating the *reconfiguration of the global higher education landscape*. For instance, Ziguras and Gribble (2015) detail efforts by Asian governments and universities to stem student emigration and attracting those abroad to return as part of strengthening their R&D capacity. Looking at China, Lu et al. (2017) find that education quality and Chinese specialisation are what attract international students. Gao and Liu (2020) identify a shift in China's higher education internationalisation: there is a visible priority among some prestigious universities that now aim for student 'quality' while keeping

international student enrolment at 10%. In the next sub-section, we explore whether these above trends also drive the research on *foreign faculties*.

Foreign faculties: mobile ‘talents’ in the contemporary ‘brain movement’ debates

In migration studies and higher education studies, ‘international/foreign faculties’ is the second most prominent theme in research on the migration-higher education nexus. Bauder (2015) points out that, however, academic migration is a comparatively under-examined phenomenon in migration studies (cf., Bilecen and Van Mol 2017). Several research foci are visible in this literature. To start, the *push and pull factors* have also interested migration and higher education scholars who examine what steers foreign faculties towards particular academic destinations, and away from others. Examining the US, Diaz-Briquets and Cheney (2003) single out professional factors such as compensation, the nature of the work, career prospects, and family factors including spouse’s support to be key in foreign biomedical scientists’ decisions to join the National Institutes of Health. In Kazakhstan’s case, Kuzhabekova and Lee (2018) found good salaries to be significant pull factors and shortages in the international job market to be push factors. Kim (2017, 984) observes in her study that ‘pure economic incentives’ rarely direct transnational academic migration. Indeed, exploring whether Chinese-Canadian academics would engage in brain circulation between Canada and China, Blachford and Zhang (2014) identify the following factors rooting these academics in Canada: positions in China have age limits, family conditions better in Canada, and uneven allocation of education and research resources in Chinese institutions.

Cast as today’s knowledge workers, the *contributions that foreign faculties make* to host institutions and countries, as well as *their productivity*, have been an area of research interests for those looking into the migration-higher education nexus. For example, Mamiseishvili (2010) found that foreign-born female faculties in US universities generated more scholarly outputs compared to their US-born female colleagues, while being less involved in teaching and service. Similarly, looking at research performance in Italy, Abramo, D’Angelo, and Di Costa (2019) show that foreign-born professors at the rank of associate professors, or in the biomedical field, outperform their Italian colleagues. While Lin, Pearce, and Wang (2009) highlight that ‘imported talents’ play important roles in American higher education, economy, and sustainable growth, Abramo, D’Angelo, and Di Costa (2019) note that the overall numbers of foreign-born professors in Italian universities are too low to generate the intended competitive systemic edge. Looking at Slovakia, Luczaj and Bahna (2020, 717) caution that the presence of foreign-born faculties should not be construed as a ‘sign of academic excellence’ since the majority are from neighbouring countries who commute there to fill the shortages of qualified workforce in the university sector. What these studies tell us is that the types of contributions that foreign faculties make, and their productivity vis-à-vis their local colleagues, must be contextualised according to the institutional environment and needs.

Another theme in these studies is how *foreign faculties experience their work environments*. In a detailed study, Skachkova (2007) presents how 34 immigrant female professors in a US research university experience their traditional academic activities. This study reveals many challenges, of which we are now familiar, that confront academics who possess an immigrant background and are female: not being taken seriously in teaching (teaching credibility); invisible and exploitable in their departments; and the prioritising of family needs over their academic careers. Examining 42 first-generation immigrant female faculties from China and Taiwan working in US universities, Li (2020) uncovers similar findings. Looking at 26 foreign faculties working at different Beijing universities, Larbi and Ashraf (2019) report that many experience autonomy when it comes to teaching and research, but they face linguistic barriers (most do not speak Chinese), are excluded from leadership appointment considerations, and have diminished funding opportunities (age cap, applications written in Chinese). These qualitative, small *N* studies shed light on what we consider the ‘foreign talents paradox’: how academic migrants, often considered a privileged group by

citizens (who see them as ‘expats’) and other labour migrants (who see them as being given more benefits), face common workplace discrimination that minorities and migrants regularly confront.

Running through all research on foreign faculties is the notion and practice of *mobility*, whether unidirectional (‘brain drain/gain’) or multidirectional. For example, Kuzhabekova and Lee (2018) found that most foreign faculties decide to remain only for a short period of time in Kazakhstan, but perceive this mobility as being positive in their overall career trajectory. This is because, Bauder (2015) argues, academic work operates in a separate labour market in which experiences of international mobility differ from experiences workers have in other occupations. This separate labour market has its own institutional infrastructure and professional practices that often place a premium on international experience and mobility (Bauder, Hannan, and Lujan 2017). At the same time, Morley et al. (2018, 538) assert that academic migration entails a ‘complex coagulation of opportunities and constraints’ whereby the non-romantic aspects are less discussed, even though they are common knowledge among academics. This is now changing (see Chou 2021; Pustelnikovaite 2021). In the next sub-section, we turn to an emergent research theme that has deep roots in studies on the migration-higher education nexus: *forced migrants*.

Forced migrants: ‘super-disadvantaged’ students seeking higher education access

Scientific institutions have historically played a unique role in offering professional refuge to those fleeing persecution. In turn, these institutions and hosting countries have benefited tremendously from their inclusion: the scientific impact and breakthroughs the ‘Hitler émigrés’ made remain legend. Indeed, our contemporary debates about ‘brain-drain/gain’ and global talent competition have been shaped by these very developments. The more recent literature about forced migrants in higher education is, however, different. Situated primarily in higher education studies, this literature explores how universities in some European countries have sought to integrate *refugee students* after 2015, when Europe received 1.3 million asylum applications. For instance, Bacher et al. (2020) examined the implementation of the MORE initiative, designed to integrate refugee students into 22 public universities in Austria. They found that refugee student integration largely depended on ‘the characteristics of the refugee group, the general societal and political climate, and on the specific attitudes towards the group in question’ (Bacher et al. 2020, 944).

Jungblut, Vukasovic, and Steinhardt (2020) focussed on universities in Germany and Flanders, and found that the institutions were reactive and solution-driven, involving non-state actors in their organisational responses towards refugee students’ access to higher education. Berg, Gottburgsen, and Kleimann (2021) looked at how German higher education institutions organised the support structures for refugees by introducing and formalising ‘first contact’ positions within the institutions. The other studies argued for why barriers should be reduced. For example, Streitwieser et al. (2019) suggested widening refugee participation in higher education on academic, economic, socio-cultural, political, as well as ‘humanism’ grounds. For Lambrechts (2020), the reason is simple: refugee students are ‘super-disadvantaged’ because the multiple barriers they face accumulate, are inter-related, and ultimately exacerbate the overall effect.

In the next section, we continue to bring discussions about the migration-higher education nexus together by elaborating how it can be a useful entry point to examining higher education internationalisation.

Examining internationalisation through the migration-higher education nexus: a heuristic framework

The vast research on the migration-development nexus focusses on the roles that three sets of actors have in affecting development outcomes: sending states, receiving states, and migrants. This literature clarifies that each actor, while wielding significant power in how development unfolds, is unable to maximise intended effects without cooperation from the other actors. Inspired by

these insights, we organise our discussion around three main actors involved in higher education internationalisation: HEIs, states, and migrants. We first discuss why these three actors may be keen or reluctant to participate in higher education internationalisation. This mapping exercise provides an overview of each actor's perspective concerning their internationalisation ambition, which then enables us to identify how each actor's position may advance, weaken, or have no effect on internationalisation outcomes. Internationalisation outcomes can be measured by many indicators and it is not our intention to identify all. Our focus is on how these actors' interactions affect outcomes in terms of tendencies to motivate relocation and retention. We present our heuristic framework below, using published HEI internationalisation strategies, migration policies designed to attract international students and foreign faculties, and studies on academic migrants.

Why are HEIs, states, and migrants keen or reluctant internationalisers?

Continuous increased globalisation pressures and devolution have resulted in two fundamental roles changes driving *higher education institutions* to internationalise. The first change is familiar: the spread of business culture in their daily operations contributed to HEIs increasingly behaving as businesses. HEIs, previously involved in research, teaching, and community-building are now competing globally to recruit international students and foreign faculty – for prestige, income, diversity, and manpower needs. Second, in the migration context, HEIs joined the long list of non-state actors such as interest groups, courts, unions, and private actors now active in migration regulation (Lahav and Guiraudon 2006). Specifically, HEIs assume the role of sponsors, responsible for ensuring that qualified, legitimate students and academic staff are issued visas (Cerna and Chou 2014).

HEIs can be reluctant internationalisers if their mission does not support or prioritise internationalisation, or if they lack capacity and resources to undertake internationalisation activities. The latter is especially relevant if there are other mechanisms to generate income other than through international student fees. Most HEIs are autonomous institutions and may resent and resist efforts perceived to be encroaching on their autonomy (e.g. ministry suggestions and recommendations to offer programmes in English rather than in local languages, to participate in international study fairs, to establish a professional international office, or to sign and implement memoranda of understanding or MOUs with external partners – all at own expense with existing manpower). Finally, as the pandemic has shown, public health concerns constitute a widely shared argument against internationalisation in its more traditional forms.

Like HEIs, *states* have been navigating the growing internationalisation space and it is useful to differentiate between receiving and sending states when it comes to identifying why they may be keen to internationalise. It is important to clarify that our use of the term 'states' refers to different configurations of higher education systems, from centralised ('national') to decentralised systems such as those in Canada, Australia, and Spain. For *receiving states* keen to internationalise, demographic arguments due to ageing populations, economic growth, labour and skills shortages on the labour market, and improving higher education quality are all significant reasons. Receiving states have applied an importing strategy, visible in the favourable immigration policies (study and post-study arrangements) and scholarship support designed to attract more (highly-qualified) international students and new graduates. A surplus of domestic manpower, on the other hand, drives *sending states* to internationalise their professional studies. Here, a recognised qualification means that the nationals of sending states are welcome as 'job-ready' in receiving countries. Applying an exporting strategy, sending states place considerable efforts on ensuring quality assurance and degree recognition through, for instance, bilateral MOUs with receiving countries and institutions.

What would make states reluctant internationalisers? For states anchored in strong national identities and national academic markets with no or less pressing demographic, labour market, or economic growth demands, the case for higher education internationalisation is weak(er). This is especially the case if incumbent governments have political incentives to avoid possible backlash from, or to court, voters who prefer policies and measures that are more inward-looking

and prioritise their placements in universities and job markets. In the COVID-19 context, public health and vocal demands from citizens have thus far made states more cautious towards further higher education internationalisation.

Migrants are key actors in higher education internationalisation: their decisions to move or stay directly affect internationalisation outcomes. As our literature review shows, migrants are not a homogenous group and their statuses may also change over time. For students, studying abroad is seen as a way to gain international credentials and experience, particular skill sets (including language), and to tap into new social networks. Funding availability or lower tuition costs can also be an important reason to internationalise. Students may also consider doing a degree abroad as a way to become labour migrants at a later stage (two-stage migration). Migrant faculty and researchers are attracted to similar opportunities abroad, but they are steered more by career- and family-specific opportunities: positions that offer the best compensation for their knowledge and skills, better sponsorship for research funding and expenditures, and a thriving environment for their families (Chou 2021).

Migrants may be reluctant to embark on or continue their internationalisation journeys for a variety of reasons. For instance, international credentials may not be seen as valuable in the domestic labour market, or even that foreign degrees (at a lesser known or obscure institution) are seen as less prestigious. They may also prefer domestic professional pathways or can benefit from many study or work opportunities in the home country. Inadequate language skills (in English or host country's language) can also be an important reason for reluctance to internationalise or prolonging the stay abroad. There may also be opportunities to internationalise at home through transnational degrees. They may also be reluctant for family or personal reasons that root them in the home country. The delays triggered by border closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to reconsideration on whether studying abroad or assuming an academic post elsewhere are desirable options.

To sum up, HEIs, states, and migrants have many reasons to embrace, be less than enthusiastic about, or even resist higher education internationalisation pressures (see Table 1). These reasons animate their strategies and policies, which determine higher education internationalisation

Table 1. Arguments for and against higher education internationalisation.

	For (Keen)	Against (Reluctant)
<i>Higher education institutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting and admitting best students • Globally competitive (prestige) • Students as income-generation • More diversity (intercultural)/internationalisation on campus ('at home')/collaborative online international learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different/distinct mission than internationalisation • Internationalisation is not a priority • Alternative income generating mechanisms exist (internationalisation not necessary) • Lack/limited capacity to internationalise
<i>States (receiving, sending)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic arguments (ageing population) • Economic growth • Labour market (labour and skills shortages; surplus of domestic manpower) • Improve quality of higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong national identity • No pressing need of demography, labour market, economic growth • Political reasons to avoid backlash from voters • Public health concerns
<i>Migrants</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International credentials • International research/professional pathway • International expertise • Limited study/work opportunities in home country • Interest in learning or developing foreign language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International credentials not/less valued in domestic labour market • Preference for domestic professional pathways (seen as more rewarding) • Many study/work opportunities in home country • Inadequate linguistic skills • Opportunities to internationalise at home • Delays due to pandemic contributing to possible paradigm shift

outcomes. In the next sub-section, we explore the possible scenarios when strategies, policies, and aspirations interact.

Migration-higher education nexus and internationalisation outcomes

In migration-development nexus studies, researchers and practitioners examine ways that actors could achieve the ‘triple win’ scenario. Specifically, one of the ‘win-win-win’ scenarios refers to unlocking ways in which migration policies could contribute to addressing host countries’ labour market needs while facilitating development in sending countries and migrant communities. While those researching the migration-higher education nexus have yet to translate what ‘triple-win’ could look like in the higher education sector, we can approach it from the perspective of synergy between the three main actors in terms of strategy and intended objectives. Put differently: the three actors need each other to maximise internationalisation effects, but they can independently undermine such efforts. We examine their relationships in turn to describe potential internationalisation outcomes, beginning with HEIs and states before proceeding with migrants.

To reach their internationalisation ambitions, HEIs need states to support them through policy and resource provision, and states need HEIs to have strong internationalisation strategies that go hand-in-hand with states’ internationalisation policies. In this context, we observed that HEIs and states have used private or quasi-public agencies/brokers to achieve greater internationalisation. Migration entrepreneurs in the form of higher education agents are a major factor influencing student recruitment, and are widely present in the UK, Australia, US, and New Zealand (Beech 2018; Goralski and Tootoonchi 2015; Huang et al. 2020; Hulme et al. 2014; Nikula 2022). For instance, Conrad and Meyer-Ohle (2018) analyse the two-step migration model in Japan, which has pushed its universities to internationalise given the falling birth-rates, and in particular brokers’ role at facilitating students’ transition from educational institutions overseas into employment. Besides private recruitment agencies channelling the supply of students to HEIs, there are also quasi-state agencies (e.g. British Council, Campus France) that serve similar roles as intermediary organisations in steering students to destination countries (Findlay 2011). These agents advise and guide students in their decision-making and respond to their particular needs and demands (Collins 2012).

We propose four possible scenarios regarding HEI-state interactions for higher education internationalisation outcomes. First, if *keen HEIs interact with a keen state* then we would expect a positive synergy and *strong internationalisation outcomes*. In this scenario, we are likely to find the presence of welcoming migration policies (post-study pathways, fast-track administrative procedure for skilled academics), publicly visible internationalisation policy and strategy (national/university programmes, scholarships, active recruitment of international students and foreign faculty, well-staffed knowledgeable international office, and more), with the open intervention of quasi-public agencies/brokers. Some examples of this are Australia, the UK administration under Prime Minister Blair, and the US administrations under Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Biden. In these cases, states facilitated the admissions of international students and faculty, many institutions pursued strong internationalisation strategies, and migrants were keen to go to these destinations. Strong internationalisation was visible through increased numbers of international students and faculty.

Second, if *keen HEIs interact with a reluctant state* then we would expect *uneven internationalisation*. In this instance, we are likely to observe stronger institutionalisation outcomes for more prestigious universities, which often possess more resources to undertake internationalisation even in a less supportive political and policy environment. Some examples are the US Trump administration, France under the Sarkozy administration, and the UK administration under Prime Minister Cameron when the post-study route was cut off. In these cases, states were reluctant to admit or retain international students and faculty for electoral reasons. This led to uneven internationalisation: well-known universities (e.g. Ivy League, Sciences Po, Oxbridge) continued to

attract international students and faculty, while other migrants chose other academic destinations for study and work, particularly new destinations in East Asia.

Third, if a *keen state is working with reluctant HEIs* then we would anticipate seeing *limited internationalisation*. We expect limited results because the bulk of internationalisation activities are generally carried out at the institutional-level. Some examples are Japan and the Czech Republic throughout 2000s–2010s. In these cases, states have pursued clear internationalisation policies (including funding), but not all institutions have internationalisation strategies or wish to recruit international students and faculty. Hence the opportunities are limited for potential migrants who are keen to internationalise. This led to limited internationalisation in terms of the overall numbers of international student and faculty numbers in that country.

Fourth, if a *reluctant state is working with reluctant HEIs* then we are likely to observe *no internationalisation*. While this is a theoretical possibility, our knowledge of contemporary higher education internationalisation offers little empirical insights into this category. This is hardly surprising since, according to the Fifth Global Survey of International Association of Universities (Marinoni 2019, 66, 117), 91% of university respondents worldwide claim to have an institutional policy concerning internationalisation, with 56% having developed their internationalisation plans within the last five years. The only possibility then are those states – such as North Korea – that have generally closed off its HEIs to cross-border activities, but this is also seemingly changing (Atack 2017).

These four scenarios have yet to take into consideration migrant agency, which is significant, in internationalisation outcomes. Indeed, HEIs need students and faculty to ‘buy in’ to their offers, particularly the opportunities that go beyond the classroom (e.g. access to the labour market for post-study or for their family members). Similarly, states also need migrant students, researchers, and faculty to ‘buy in’ to their policy offers. Conversely, migrants need HEIs to give, *inter alia*, scholarships, attractive study and work opportunities to realise their internationalisation ambitions. Migrants also need states to facilitate their entry by providing student visa, work permit opportunities, or other facilitating conditions. From the migrants’ perspective, HEIs and states could thus serve as barriers to their internationalisation plans. For example, Ge and Ho (2018) examine international students who wish to stay in Singapore, but migration policies constrain their opportunities for permanent residency. What the migrant agency perspective reveals is that additional scenarios are needed to capture migrant and HEI-state interactions when discussing internationalisation outcomes.

Fifth, if migrants are keen to internationalise then we would expect to see strong internationalisation outcomes if HEIs and states are proactive in facilitating their access. For instance, analysing the unevenness of student flows and the post-2000 evolution of students’ origins and retention rates, Findlay (2011) finds that the UK government’s initiatives to increase its market share of international students and highly-skilled workers may be partly responsible. In this scenario, a less welcoming policy (in migration or higher education) or reluctant HEIs would result in weak or no internationalisation. This is especially relevant in the current refugee student context: a less integrative higher education policy effectively prevents internationalisation even when these students are already in the country. At the same time, it may not be sufficient to offer flexible student or work visas if migrants are not keen to come to particular countries. We know that many states have (re-)introduced post-graduate work visas (UK, Canada, Australia) and streamlined bureaucratic procedures for obtaining work and residence visas (European Union), but these policies may not promote greater internationalisation if migrants have no intentions of remaining in the country – an observation that leads us to our final scenario.

Sixth, if migrants are reluctant about internationalisation then we would anticipate limited or uneven internationalisation even if HEIs and states are keen to internationalise. In this instance, migrants’ reluctance could stem from genuine disinterest to internationalise (see Table 1) or for more strategic reasons that would pave the way for their eventual departure or subsequent move. The latter points to the importance of timing of policy and institutional efforts to internationalise. For instance, examining Indian researchers working mostly in natural sciences in the US and UK, Toma and Villares-Varela (2019) find that while migration policies do not seem to be

influential in the attraction of students and researchers, they play a role in the retention and subsequent moves of international talent (e.g. through a post-study visa, permanent residence, or access to citizenship). Having a better understanding of how open migration policies and generous higher education institutional practices could couple with specific migration stages to promote internationalisation is thus needed.

The migration-higher education nexus in the post-pandemic world

What does our heuristic framework based on the migration-higher education nexus offer to those interested in post-pandemic higher education developments? Our starting point is how much the pandemic has affected internationalisation (cf., Choudaha 2021). Eight months into 2020, many HEIs expected a significant decrease in international students for the upcoming academic year (QS 2020). For states, this decrease has considerable effects on those relying on international student tuition for its economy and university funding (Marginson 2020), and those needing international students as future labour migrants (OECD 2020). New major destinations are expected to emerge post-pandemic (Marginson 2020). From a global competition perspective, previously keen HEIs may pivot towards creative internationalisation to exploit hybrid models and practices that became ‘accepted’ during the pandemic (e.g. collaborative online international learning, micro-credentialing). In these instances, the states’ role may be less on developing a welcoming migration policy and more on higher education policies and practices that promote remote internationalisation.

Migrants (students, faculty, researchers) have been most affected by the pandemic and their study or work abroad plans disrupted (QS 2020). Bilecen (2020) described the different uncertainties that international students faced due to COVID-19, ranging from not being able to return to home countries, being deserted on campus, experiencing anxiety and healthcare concerns, facing educational and financial uncertainties to experiencing discrimination (especially in the case of Chinese or Asian students). For foreign faculty and researchers, travel restrictions and hiring freezes effectively limited their mobility. Travel restrictions and changing quarantine rules contribute to severe delays in taking up new positions even when migrants succeed in securing a job offer. The recognised digital divide may be further contributing to the refugee students’ status as ‘super-disadvantaged’.

How HEIs and states manage the pandemic and emerge post-pandemic would be key in how migrants respond to internationalisation opportunities. Migrant agency (scenarios 5 and 6) will remain crucial in internationalisation outcomes in the immediate post-pandemic world. We expect keen migrants heading towards countries that demonstrate successful vaccination campaigns and welcoming institutions with attractive degree programmes or working conditions. Many migrants are likely to be reluctant, especially if alternative and more certain (new) options are available domestically. In this scenario, we point out a development that has emerged during the pandemic and needs to be integrated in future studies of higher education internationalisation: the exodus of faculty from academia, either due to systemic institutional restructuring (e.g. Australia), or becoming disillusioned with the demands of contemporary academia. Certainly, the pandemic has disrupted higher education and academic migration around the world, but it also offers a fresh opportunity to examine the migration-higher education nexus.

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