Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

0408

Mon 06 Dec 2021

10:35 - 10:55

Internationalization of Higher Education and Student Mobility: Access, Widening Participation and (Mis)recognition

Samson M. M[1], Muhammad Azeem Ashraf[2]

[1]*Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, United Kingdom* [2]*Hunan University, Changsha, China*

Research Domain: International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract: Through the lens of critical theory and informed by document analysis and semi-structured interviews from China and the UK, this paper explores the factors that affect access, widening participation and (mis)recognition of international students. We argue that access to and widening participation in higher education are issues of social justice. However, these issues have been given limited attention when it comes to international student mobility. Our data show that international students face various barriers to gain access to foreign universities due to economic, academic and visa issues. Furthermore, the struggle of international students continues even after they are admitted to foreign universities due to socio-cultural and pedagogical reasons. This sense of struggle is more severe in students from developing countries and less privileged societies, as they are more likely to face inequality, exclusion and misrecognition compared with international students from more privileged backgrounds.

Paper: 1. Introduction

Internationalization of higher education (HE) has become one of the most essential elements in the development of higher education institutions (HEIs) across the world. For the purpose of this paper, it is understood as the process of integrating international or intercultural dimensions in teaching, research, and service functions of HEIs (Ball, 2012; Harman, 2005; Healey, 2008). One major feature of internationalization is the remodelling and restructuring of HEIs to attract international students and make HE systems globally competitive. Thus, many countries and their HEIs have developed policies encouraging student and faculty mobilities, with a view to integrate international perspectives and at the same time gain a competitive edge (Knight, 2004).

A significant body of work explores the issues of access and (mis) recognition from various dimensions (Ball, 2012; Burke, 2012; Burke & Crozier, 2014). Burke (2012) stated that access to and widening participation in higher education are issues of social justice. However, these issues have been given less attention when it comes to international student mobility. Therefore, this paper aims to interrogate these and other features of internationalization of higher education to understand the

challenges and/or privileges of international students. Through the lens of critical theory and informed by document analysis and 26 semi-structured interviews, the paper investigates the research questions: What are the factors that affect access, widening participation and (mis)recognition of international students.

2. Methods and Data source

The study is qualitative in nature and adopts a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about "how things work" in a particular context, and at the same time is capable of producing very well-founded "cross-contextual generalities" (Mason, 2002:1). The study draws on phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of the participants from their perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

Moreover, we employed interview and document analysis for data collection, and thematic approach for data analysis. We conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 international masters and PhD students from China and the UK, i.e., 13 participants from each country. We used narrative interviews in order to allow the participants to express their experiences in their own way and from their own perspective (Marhsall & Rossman, 2006). Appropriate ethical principles were followed throughout the research.

3. Main Findings

The data collected for this paper show that economic factors, immigration regulations, pedagogical practices as well as race and culture affect access, widening participation and (mis)recognition of international students. By 2012, the number of international students studying abroad surpassed 4.5 million (OECD, 2015), and it is expected to reach 8 million by 2025 (Altbach, 2004). Yet, this paper shows that many international students, particularly those from developing countries, face economic problems and barriers related to recognition of academic qualifications and language requirements to gain access to foreign HEIs. Scholarships are scarce and highly competitive. The distribution of international students across the world shows that more than 90% of international students have been enrolled in institutions belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Besides, the Global North in general and the US, the UK, Germany, France and Australia, in particular, have been the main destination countries recruiting over 70% of the students in the past two decades (Brooks, 2018; OECD, 2011; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). Most of the Universities in these countries have international programmes taught in English. They have English language requirements in which students are required to take IELTS, TOEFL or other similar tests. This paper shows that these examinations are expensive for many international students.

Furthermore, this paper indicates that the emergence of China and other developing counties provide opportunities for many students to study abroad. In 2018, China hosted 492,185 international students, becoming the third most popular destination country after the USA and UK (Ministry of Education, 2018). Nevertheless, the struggle of international students continues even after they are admitted to foreign HEIs. Pedagogical practices, race and culture play a significant role in the (mis)recognition of the students in HEIs. Overall, the findings imply that there is a need for

a more inclusive understanding of widening participation which considers international students, particularly those from developing countries, as they are experiencing the higher levels of struggle.

4. Significance of the study

This paper interrogates social justice issues that have been given relatively little attention by researchers. In particular, it analyses the stories of the international students regarding access, widening participation and (mis)recognition to understand their perspectives. Therefore, it contributes to a better understanding of the case under study, particularly the redefinition of widening participation which includes international students, especially those from developing countries.

References: Ball, S. J. (2012). *Global Education Inc.: New Policy Networks and the Neoliberal Imaginary*. New York: Routledge.

Brooks, R. (2018). Higher education mobilities: A cross-national European comparison. *Geoforum*, *93*, 87-96.

Burke, P. J. (2012). *The right to higher education: Beyond widening participation*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Burke, P. J., & Crozier, G. (2014). Higher education pedagogies: Gendered formations, mis/recognition and emotion. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, *4*(2), 52-67.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five* approaches (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Harman, G. (2005). Internationalization of Australian higher education : A critical review of literature and research. In P. Ninnes and M. Hellstén (eds.), *Internationalizing Higher Education* (pp.119-140). Netherlands: Springer.

Healey, N. (2008). Is higher Education in really 'Internationalising'? *Higher Education, 55*(3), 333-355.

Knight, J. (2005). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 8* (1), 5-31*.*

Marshall, C., &Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). London: SAGE.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). Sage.Ministry of Education. (2018). Statistical report on international students in China for 2018. Retrieved from http://en.moe.gov.cn/documents/reports/201904/t20190418_378692.html

OECD. (2011). *Education at a Glance.* Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/48631079.pdf

OECD (2015). Education at a glance 2015: OECD indicators. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Verbik, L., & Lasanowski, V. (2007). International student mobility: Patterns and trends. *World Education News and Reviews, 20*(10), 1-16.