International Students in Non-Anglophone Countries: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract
In studies about international student recruitment and mobility, the emphasis is primarily on South–North mobility to the Anglophone world. But the reality is more diverse. What are the challenges and opportunities of non-Anglophone countries, in particular in the Global South, shifting from mainly being sending countries toward striving to receive international students?

In studies about international student recruitment and mobility, the emphasis is primarily on South–North mobility to the Anglophone world (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada) as well as to a few non-Anglophone countries such as France and Germany. But the reality is more diverse, illustrated recently by the substantial presence in Ukraine of students from post-Soviet countries, Africa, India, Turkey, China, and other countries, trying to leave the country during the Russian attack.

What are the challenges and opportunities of non-Anglophone countries, in particular in the Global South, shifting from mainly being sending countries toward striving to receive international students? In a book on international student recruitment and mobility in non-Anglophone countries, experts from these countries looked at this rising phenomenon in Europe, Asia, and other parts of the world. In order to carve a place in the market for themselves, these non-Anglophone countries must devise mechanisms to overcome multiple challenges, including language barriers, lack of internationalization in the study environment, less competitive job markets, etc. International student recruitment models in high-income Anglophone and high-income non-Anglophone countries are only partially applicable to other players.

Non-Anglophone countries are developing ways to overcome the recruitment barriers with which they are confronted. Many of them have established national policies and practices, used competitive tuition fee policies, adjusted their immigration regulations, leveraged opportunities for regional collaboration, designed competitive and diversified education programs, and even offered programs in languages other than their national language, in particular in English. In addition, many countries make use of their specific advantages, such as their position in their region, regional partnerships, low domestic tuition fees, etc.

However, challenges are still considerable and take a long time to overcome. At the national level, they mostly relate to a lack of marketing strategies for specific markets, lack of funding, and lack of alignment with the higher education sector and its institutions, and between different ministries. At the institutional level, the most common

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challenges are a low level of comprehensive internationalization and limited dedicated services on campus. While the strengths of these countries are relatively similar, the threats and opportunities are more specific to each country, which points out the importance of tailoring internationalization and student recruitment strategies to the specific circumstances of each country.

Pull Factors
If a policy does not present a clear overview of what makes a country and its higher education attractive for international students in terms of pull factors, that strategy will fail. In the case of India's current recruitment policy, "Study in India," such an analysis resulted in a focused strategy on soft power and a geographic focus on specific target regions: the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. Non-Anglophone countries have to be realistic in their geographic focus. Moving from focusing on neighboring countries to a more global approach requires a comprehensive set of actions. These countries and their institutions should define their key rationales for wanting to engage in international student recruitment.

Language of Instruction
Non-Anglophone countries have been using English as a medium of instruction to increase their competitiveness. This certainly applies to the Netherlands, but also to France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and South Korea. Romania is an interesting, more diverse case, as it offers programs in English, French, and German, as well as in Hungarian for its Hungarian minority, which is the consequence of historical, linguistic, and regional factors. Due to shifting international influences, Turkey has successively offered courses in French, then German, and is currently teaching in English and Arabic to its refugee student population.

But countries and institutions that predominantly base their recruitment strategy on offering courses taught (mainly) in English take high risks with respect to the quality of education and services for both international and local students, the level of integration between international and local students, and allegations of loss of national and cultural identity. The Dutch case is the clearest example of a policy to widen the use of English as a medium of instruction that went too far.

Governments and institutions must develop a language policy based on why, for whom (local/international students), and for which programs it is relevant to prioritize the local language, English, and/or other languages as mediums of instruction. Promoting one's national language in potential sending countries can be a clever investment.

Affordability and Services Are Key
Providing scholarships and a less costly educational offer (including online programs), as well as pathways to the job market after graduation, are strategic instruments to attract and keep talent. Dedicated facilities and services before and upon students' arrival and during their studies are crucial to guarantee retention. Integrating international students with their local peers is pivotal and also benefits the local student community.

Niche Markets
Governments and institutions should not ignore the potential of niche markets, such as prospective immigrants, refugees, specific (ethnic) groups with whom they relate, or the diaspora. Turkey's focus on refugees from Syria, and Romania offering medical education to international students are examples of countries intentionally targeting niche markets.

Governments and institutions must also complement their traditional student mobility activities with innovations in program offerings and delivery methods, including transnational education, institutional partnerships, and online learning.

Ethical Consequences
We must be aware that international student mobility contributes to increased global inequality between sending and receiving countries and institutions, as well as between students who have access to these opportunities and students who do not. An international student recruitment policy also needs to address its severe ethical and social consequences. In conditions of constantly tightening global competition, countries

with education export ambitions must take a systematic and comprehensive approach to recruitment. Such an approach must not be primarily driven by rationales of revenue generation, soft power, and rising in the rankings. Being driven primarily by these three rationales is unrealistic for most non-Anglophone countries, particularly low- and middle-income countries, and will contribute to further global inequality and exclusion of systems, institutions, and individuals.

Ethical considerations are even more relevant in the current context of Russia and Ukraine, as we stated in our article in *University World News* of April 9th. For Russian higher education, the prospect of expanding and diversifying its international student presence has become very bleak as a consequence of the war, Western sanctions, and the isolation policy of the regime. As for Ukraine, sadly, military invasion, life-threatening bombings, massive brain drain of talented refugees, and disruption of the higher education sector have become major impediments to pursuing any form of international student recruitment. The country will need considerable support to rebuild the sector and its international presence—which the current war may have permanently jeopardized.

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