

## A REVIEW ON THE LATEST TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** *Globalization and regionalization have caused worldwide students' mobility to accelerate at an unprecedented rate. The said increasing students' movement upshots to the growth in the number of international students globally. As a consequence, most host countries and their respective higher education institutions (HEIs) are vying for international students' recruitment and enrolment. While most host countries are working towards maintaining their statuses as the current hub for international education, well-liked host of branch campuses, and popular study destination, the Philippines, despite the initiatives and sound marketing strategies of most of its HEIs, cannot attract and recruit a good number of international students. This article aims to explore the latest trends in international higher education. To better understand the current international higher education landscape and to contribute to solving the problem mentioned above, the study reviews the extant literature for recent developments in the field of international higher education. This assessment of international higher education industry is significant for proper strategies fitting. The examinations revealed that the present international higher education has been experiencing significant transformations that critically affect the behaviors of many host countries and HEIs, globally. The study explicates the findings and deliberately offers some essential implications to host countries, higher education institutions, and future researches.*

**Keywords:** *International Students, Higher Education, Trends, Philippines*

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### **Introduction**

Globalization, which is defined as “the process of increasing connectedness between society such that events in one part of the world more and more have effects on peoples and societies far away” by Baylis and Smith (1997) as cited in Cheung and Chan (2009, p.525), has made the world ‘borderless’ (Cheung & Chan, 2009; Gul, Gul, Kaya, & Alican, 2010). It has turned the marketplace which was formerly exclusive to neighboring countries into something open,

free, and accessible to all nations around the globe. The uplifted barriers have also caused goods and services to flow freely amongst nations which has brought competition to accelerate to a level much higher. As competition becomes more intense, some regions formed alliances to protect themselves, survive, and grow amidst pressure and negative impacts of globalization.

Due to globalization, the regional dimension is now becoming more evident even in international education. Aside from the European Union, other regions like East Asian countries are also internationalizing their higher education. This regionalization, which is “*the process of building closer collaboration and alignment among higher education actors and systems within a defined area or framework called a region*” (Knight, 2013, p.113), has brought higher education institutions (HEIs) in the region to a greater height of collaboration. This movement contributes to the further increase in the demand for international higher education (see, Agrey & Lampadan, 2014; Bhati, Lee, & Kairon, 2013; Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014; Butt & ur Rehman, 2010; Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008; Gong & Huybers, 2015; Lee & Ciftci, 2013; Manzuma-Ndaaba, Harada, Romle, & Shamsudin, 2016; McCarthy, Sen, & Garrity, 2012; Nedelcu & Ulrich, 2014; Rienties & Nolan, 2013; Rudd, Djafavora, & Waring, 2012; Ruhanen & McLennan, 2010; Sharma, 2014; Tumuheki, Zeelen, & Openjuru, 2016; Zheng, 2012). The need for international education has increased day by day (Wang & Tseng, 2011).

The recent regionalization in Asia contributes to the acceleration of student mobility. This movement was seen as part of the “*21<sup>st</sup> global phenomenon*” (Madge, Rahhram, & Noxolo, 2014, as cited in Paulino, 2019, p.131). Internationalization in higher education, which steadily rising since 1970’s (see, Beine, Noel, & Ragot, 2014) and a major trend since the late 1980’s (see, Bennel & Pierce, 2002), makes the study abroad more accessible due to the reduced transportation costs, development in communications technology, and improvement on foreign students’ recruitment policies in numerous host countries (see, McCarthy et al. 2012; Kumar, 2015). Students across different countries can now easily travel abroad for their international education. As a result, the number of international students worldwide increased considerably (see, Bilecen & Faist, 2014; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2010; Kritz, 2013; Menzies, Baron, & Zutshi, 2015; Nedelcu & Ulrich, 2014; Pan, 2013; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; Prazeres, 2013; Qing, 2015; Rienties, Luchoomun, & Tempelaar, 2013; Ruhanen & McLennan, 2010; Wang, Andre, & Greenwood, 2014; Wei, 2013; Wells, 2014; Wilkins & Huisman, 2011; Zheng, 2012).

Just recently, higher education is directing towards becoming more homogenized due to the widespread influence of globalization (Collins, 2014; Tan & Goh, 2014). This occurrence gives HEIs around the world both the challenges and the opportunities (Wang & Tseng, 2011). The occasion also intensifies the level of competition among countries (home and host), and their respective universities. Most HEIs, worldwide, are increasingly implementing business strategies and behaving like business entities (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). In the Philippines, despite the initiatives and sound marketing strategies of most HEIs, they cannot be able to attract and recruit a good number of international students (see, Dotong & Laguador, 2015).

This study is a portion of a more intensive study whose purpose is to answer the problem mentioned above. As part of the larger study’s reviews, this present study aims to explore the latest trends in international higher education. To better understand the current international higher education landscape, the study reviews the extant literature for recent developments in the field of international higher education. To this paper’s viewpoint, it is relevant in the assessment of the current international education landscape. The understanding of the latest

trends in international higher education is significant for proper strategies fitting. In the following, the paper expounds the remarkable and most recent advancements in the area of international higher education as found in the review of the extant literature. It also discusses some important study's implications to host countries, higher education institutions, and future researches.

### **Method**

This article stems from the issue: Why the Philippines despite the intensive marketing efforts cannot attract a significant number of international students? Through its access to reputable electronic databases, the study conducted a systematic and intensive review of the literature to explore the trends in international higher education nowadays. From the ScienceDirect, Emerald Insights, Taylor and Francis, Google Scholar, and other databases which publish scholarly journals in the field of social sciences and humanities, the research begins its search by utilizing keywords such as study abroad, overseas education, international student mobility, international higher education, trends in international education, and recent developments in international higher education. The exploration was confined to review and research articles and excluded from the book series, book, chapter in book, and conference proceeding. To avoid confusion and difficulty in translating texts, the searching efforts disqualified the non-English publications and focused only on articles published in English. Concerning the timeline, the study selected only those papers published in the database from 2002 to 2018.

### **Results and Discussion**

The international higher education landscape has been evolving rapidly (Gul et al., 2010). Just recently, the trend in student mobility has changed (Wei, 2013). This paper uncovers some notable developments in the worldwide higher education. These advancements are briefly discussed below.

#### ***Two-way Flow***

From the old pattern which is described as one-way flow (i.e., developing countries to developed countries most dominant), the new emerging trend is characterized by a two-way flow. This new trend is described as the motion of international students in all directions: north to north, south to south, north to south, and south to north (Wei, 2013). Seemingly, developed countries which previously dominate the international student market are now losing some of their shares. The previously source countries of international students are now becoming the destination countries (see, Wei, 2013). Developing countries such as China, Malaysia, and Singapore are exemplifying this movement (Wei, 2013). The survey conducted by the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) has disclosed that international students are now envisaging a more full range of study destinations (Coryton, 2014). As a result, new popular destinations emerged like China, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand (Pan, 2013). The rise of China as one of the newest and most popular country destination for international students has become a trendy topic worldwide and has been conveyed in mass media, both domestic and international (Pan, 2013).

Above-trend implies that internationalization in higher education is now a way of life. Forced by global competition, more people decide to pursue international studies to augment their competitiveness further (see, McCarthy, 2012; Rienties et al., 2013; Wang & Tseng, 2011; Zheng, 2012). The hopes of better educational and professional opportunities have also pushed students to seek studies outside their home countries (see, Nedelcu & Ulrich, 2014; Perkins & Neumayer, 2013; Rujiprak, 2016; Zheng, 2012). International education, from the perspective

of some students, is hope for expunging their local outlooks (McCarthy et al., 2012). However, it is still the ‘international recognition’ that persuades international students to study abroad (see, Coryton, 2014). These various perceptions of the benefits brought by study abroad have changed the ways students perceived international education. Nowadays, education through international instructions is more preferred as it provides competitive advantage (Bhati & Anderson, 2012; Dotong & Laguardor, 2015; Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; Rienties et al., 2013) and a point of differentiation (Perkins & Neumayer, 2013; Ruhanen & McLennan, 2010). International education provides a magnitude of benefits by making individuals more equipped with a good understanding of the educational, social, cultural, and linguistic diversities that characterized this modern world (Phakiti, Hirsh, & Woodrow, 2013; Rujiprak, 2016). As a result, today’s educational market is becoming more dynamic. Due to increased awareness of the benefits that international education could bring into their lives, more and more students envisaged themselves of studying overseas. The market for international education is now more dispersed since international students have seen the international education programs offered by many host countries’ HEIs as ‘*windows*’ and ‘*mirrors*’ (Nedelcu & Ulrich, 2014). Most of them consider international higher education as an opportunity.

### ***Students Stay Within the Region***

Globalization removed the borders among and between nations (Cheung & Chan, 2009; Gul et al., 2010). This resulted in an increased in the number of international students worldwide (see, Gul et al., 2010; Pan, 2013; Wei, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). However, recently, more and more students are choosing their parental homes for higher education (see, Pan, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). An increasing number of Asian students choose to stay within the region for their higher education (Pan, 2013; Wei, 2013). Many Asian students decide to stay in the East and no longer travel to the West for their higher education (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). Out of the whole population of Asian international mobile students, 42% remained in the region (Pan, 2013). Asians enrolled at world-class universities in Hong Kong and Singapore (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011).

Above results imply that international students around the globe now weigh up the pros and cons of undertaking higher education. Most of the international students nowadays consider universities with world-class standards, regardless of location. Since these kinds of universities are now available in the region, they chose to stay instead of traveling to other regions. Therefore, it becomes imperative, especially in the highly competitive education industry, that services offered by educational institutions are delivered with due care, diligence, and skills to address their clients’ needs (Dora, Wan Ibrahim, Kasim, & Saad, 2009). The quality of service rendered is highly regarded as a measure of HEIs competitiveness (Wilkins & Huisman, 2014).

### ***More Advanced Higher Levels Education Mobility***

The significance of higher education is incontestable (Vrontis, Thrassou, & Melanthiou, 2007). Gul et al. (2010) mentioned that higher education’s societal and economic roles had increased significantly. Proof to this is the newest trend in higher education mobility, i.e., higher levels of education mobility are significantly more advanced than lower levels of education (Wei, 2013). This ‘high participation systems’ or HPS, which is measured in terms of Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate (GTAR) as recommended by UNESCO (Marginson, 2016), has developed to be one of the prevailing trends in the international education milieu. International higher education is now closer to becoming all-universal. Nowadays, many host countries have improved GTAR, mostly exceeds 50%. According to Marginson (2016), the regional GTERs in Europe and North America in 2013 was more than 70%. UNESCO (2015) as cited in

Marginson (2016) revealed that in the early 1970s, South Korea's GTAR was a little more than 7%, but it had become almost 100% in 2013.

The findings above suggest that nowadays, education is considered vital in terms of career, knowledge, and higher status in an organization or society in general (Wang & Hannes, 2013). The notion that increased education could lead to increased salaries, working lives, and quality of life is widely accepted (Vrontis et al., 2007). Higher education, as a form of career preparation, could have been one of the main reasons why the students' mobility in higher education grows more rapidly and more advanced than the students' mobility in the lower levels education (see, Vrontis et al., 2007).

### ***Tech-Savvy Students***

Another noted trend in today's higher education is the influx of tech-savvy students (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Consequently, this phenomenon brought technology-enhanced education in international higher education. This paved the way of network-based information delivery, distance learning or e-learning, webinars, and other virtual styles of coaching and mentoring (Gul et al., 2010). Technological advancement in international higher education has changed the styles and methods of research and education: from the traditional classroom setting to a new form of education empowered by information communication technologies (ICTs) like the Internet and social media (Gul et al., 2010).

Of all levels of education, the most internationalized according to Shen, Wang, and Jin (2016) is the doctoral education. At present, China is the largest source of international students taking up doctoral programs (Shen et al., 2016). The advancement in technology and globalization have greatly influenced students across the globe. As a result, the choices of higher education among students have extended beyond their country's boundaries. The present-day university candidates, as customers, are highly regarded as 'digital natives', who are well-informed and very logical in their selections of universities (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016).

### ***Asia as an Emerging Study Destination***

Internationalization has made higher education an international service (Gul et al., 2010); thus, cross-border education and mobility become pervasive (Gul et al., 2010). However, the Asian region is the only destination that has increased its global share on internationally mobile students (Pan, 2013). Attesting to that is the increasing number of Asian students participating in the educational market globally; they represent 52% of the international student population in the world (Wang & Hannes, 2013). While the international students' enrolment in the traditional host countries declined (Coryton, 2014); the rise of Asia as a 'study-abroad locale' is observed and perceived to be the victory of neo-liberalism (Pan, 2013). Neo-liberalism has been known as a powerful global economic ideology that explains the bedrocks of cross-border transactions and the changes in the international education landscape (from aid to trade) (Pan, 2013).

China has been held as a sprouting destination for international students (Botha, 2016; Pan, 2013). From being an insignificant player, the country had become a niche market and turned out to be a major destination for international students worldwide (Ding, 2016; Pan, 2013). The country had become one of the most attractive host countries, magnetizing lots of students from Asia and beyond (Pan, 2013; Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014). It housed around 260,000 international students, of which two-thirds were Asians, and aiming to attract around 500,000 international students by 2020 (Botha, 2016; Pan, 2013). In Malaysia, another country in Asia,

only 5% of all tertiary enrolments were international students (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011). However, the country, as an emerging study destination (Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016), most preferred country around the world in terms of educational purposes or intentions (Dahari & Abduh, 2011), speedily becoming a center of academic excellence (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011), and dominant in the South East Asia market (Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016), had occupied the 2% of the global market of international education (Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016). From its approximately more than ninety thousand (90,000) international students (Alavi & Shafeq Mansor, 2011; Dahari & Abduh, 2011), the country had set not fewer than 200,000 international students target recruits by the year 2020 (Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016). If this target is met, Malaysia will be ahead of other Asian countries like Singapore, China, Thailand, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and other countries in the region including the Philippines (Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016).

### ***Branch Campus***

Lately, international branch campuses emerged as a new option for international students, especially for Asian students (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). The numbers of international branch campuses have increased considerably and now reached more than 162 worldwide (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). The United Arab Emirates, China, Qatar, and Singapore are the largest host countries for these international branch campuses (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). In Asia, numerous universities, most especially, those coming from Australia, Britain, and the United States, have signed a collaborative agreement with education providers in the region and/or set up their branch campuses (Sharma, 2014).

### ***Education Hubs***

Another newest development in higher education's internationalization is the advent of education hubs (Pan, 2013). Higher education has moved towards becoming a commodity which is traded internationally. This has made international schools acted as social transformation agents especially in developing countries. In Asia, countries like China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan, and South Korea are battling over educational hub seats (Pan, 2013; Sharma, 2014). Asia has remained to be the main market for international education (Rudd et al., 2012); and, China (Pan, 2013; Rudd et al., 2012) and India (Rudd et al., 2012) are among the top sources or 'exporters' of international students. China has also emerged as a choice destination for international students, particularly postgraduate students, chiefly because of the efforts of the government to enhance its country's international academic and political relations (Pan, 2013).

### ***Higher Education Institutions as Entrepreneurs***

The internationalization of higher education has undergone significant transformations over the past decades (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; Wadhwa, 2016). This caused the higher education world to suffer from abrupt changes and developments [4]. From the traditional international cooperation and profit-seeking activity, the new phase of internationalization in higher education is now characterized by maximizing profit for self-economic interest and expanding institutional reach outside the home country to capture student market (Wadhwa, 2016). Most universities transformed from being mere providers to the domestic market to export-oriented and become entrepreneurs (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Seemingly, HEIs have embraced the concept of marketing as well as the idea of the students as consumers.

## Conclusions

Higher education has several features and social facets; hence, deemed diverse and revolutionary. These deep-seated characteristics of higher education become more complex when combined with international students' characteristics. To address these complexities, just like any business undertakings, industry and market analyses are considered imperative. These undertakings will harness both the strengths and weaknesses of organizations, like educational institutions; and, will make them more competitive in their respective industries.

Education is a major product or service offering of any educational institution in which the mode of delivery is done through choice decisions (Benson, Bridge, & Wilson, 2014). However, internationalization has made the choice of education, specifically, the choice of higher education, more complex. Higher education, which is now described as a '*crowded global marketplace*', is not excepted from the changes brought about by globalization (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Internationalization exposed advanced education institutions to stiff competition (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). As a result, universities are forced to compete not only at national levels but at international levels as well (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). It is, therefore, necessary for host countries and HEIs to be well-informed of the latest happenings on their market environment. This is to keep themselves abreast with the current needs of their international student market.

The landscape of higher education, particularly, international higher education has changed (see, Gul et al., 2010). The United States, United Kingdom, and Australia are losing their monopoly over international students market. Likewise, the number of foreign students moving to developing countries is greater than the number of international students moving to developed countries. These trends resulted in emerging international higher education markets in Asia and the Pacific to turn into host countries from being merely traditionally source countries. This twist in the behaviors of student-consumers offers not just opportunities but challenges as well to home countries, host countries, and their respective HEIs.

The growing popularity of international student mobility phenomenon has brought expansion to the education sector all over the world. International Education is now a global export industry. This happening causes the number of people deciding to study overseas to climb. Alongside, the need for international education increases day by day. These phenomena undoubtedly challenged the HEIs' management's strengths in coping up these kinds of revolutions. These manifestations also intensify the already stiffened level of competitions among host countries and their respective educational institutions.

This paper ends with these conclusions. *First*, the internationalization of higher education has been evolving rapidly and unprecedentedly together with the trends in the worldwide higher education landscape. *Second*, the only way to keep the host countries and their respective HEIs on the right tracks (i.e., maintaining good numbers of international students, incessantly increasing international students' enrolments, and ceaselessly advancing recruitment and marketing strategies of international students) is to continuously monitor and analyze the latest trends and developments in the worldwide higher education. This insinuations, to this research's belief, will help host countries and educational institutions in their formulation of marketing and recruitment strategies for international students. It can also guide the host countries and their respective HEIs in their pursuits of becoming more tactical and strategic on their internationalization policies and programs toward international students.

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