feelings of collegiality and reducing tensions and points of conflict. In order to cultivate an interest in Asia in the vast majority of the younger generation in Japan, in addition to promoting study abroad within Asia, 'Internationalization at Home' is significant; it will be important to create opportunities for exchange with Asian students in Japan and promote widely accessible exchanges in online virtual environments. And with luck, the dissemination of academic work such as ours can have some small contribution to fostering peaceful relations in the region.

Notes

1 The focus on Japan in both of these doctoral studies can be attributed to a combination of interest, experience, and access on the part of the authors, both of whom worked in Japan during the period of their fieldwork.
2 Mamiya's doctoral research was conducted at Waseda University's Graduate School for Asia-Pacific Studies, where the PhD-level research project is called a 'dissertation'. Hammond completed his doctoral research project at the University of Oxford where the term 'thesis' is used. These terms are applied accordingly in this chapter.

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9

THE DEVELOPMENTAL AND STATE-DRIVEN LOGICS IN INTRA-ASIA STUDENT MOBILITIES

Insights from Singapore's 'Foreign Talent' Scholarship Schemes and China's English-Medium Medical Programs

Peidong Yang

Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalization and economic growth, the global higher education (HE) landscape has become increasingly interconnected over the past three decades (Knight & de Wit, 2018; Rumbley et al., 2012). Reflecting this development, the term 'internationalization' emerged in Anglophone scholarly discourse in the 1990s (Knight & de Wit, 2018), following which a fast-expanding—and by now rather extensive—body of literature has crystalized around this notion (see Bedenlier et al., 2017; Kehm & Teichler, 2007 for overviews of this literature). Defined simply, 'internationalization in higher education is about cross-border flows – of students, staff and knowledge – and international cooperation' (Tight, 2021, p. 54). However, as veteran HE scholars Jane Knight and Hans de Wit (2018) observed, over time '[i]nternationalization has become a very broad and varied concept, including many new rationales, approaches, and strategies in different and constantly changing contexts' (p. xix). Scholars (e.g. Engwall, 2016; Haigh, 2014; Hudzik, 2015; Knight, 2004) have attempted to define, delineate, and identify various dimensions or aspects of 'HE internationalization', both as a concept and as an empirical phenomenon. While it goes beyond the scope of this chapter to address HE internationalization comprehensively, it is pertinent to note that *mobility*, particularly the mobility of students and their mobility-related experiences, has emerged as a central focus for much of the HE internationalization literature. As Tight (2021) observes,

> by far the most common focus taken in research on these topics has been to examine, usually at a departmental, institutional or national level, the

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> experience of international students; that is, students studying outside of their home countries [...], particularly in the major western receiving countries.
>
> *(pp. 58–59)*

This chapter thus focuses on international student mobility (ISM) as an appropriate lens for critically analyzing HE internationalization. Over the past several decades, the total number of internationally mobile students in HE worldwide has increased from 1.3 million in 1993 (OECD, 2013) to 5.6 million by 2020 (Institute of International Education, 2020). This figure had previously been projected to grow further to 8 million by 2025 (Institute of International Education, 2015). However, in the last few years, there were signs of a slowing down of ISM growth, where the number of internationally mobile students appeared to be plateauing in the 5 million range (ICEF Monitor, 2017). Indeed, in 2018, Altbach and de Wit (2018) went as far as to predict that '"the era of higher education internationalization" over the past 25 years (1990–2015) that has characterized university thinking and action might either be finished or, at least, be on life support' (n.p.).

What may be causing the flagging growth in ISM? Why do scholars seem pessimistic about the sustainability of HE internationalization through ISM? Of late, a number of scholars have drawn attention to the economic-driven nature of HE internationalization in the Anglophone West, manifested in the commercialization and commodification of education (Rizvi, 2020; Tran, 2020a). The COVID-19 global pandemic has only served to further expose the vulnerability of this neoliberal commercial model (Green et al., 2020; Rizvi, 2020). This behooves us to reflect on and re-examine the fundamental logics and rationales underpinning contemporary HE internationalization.

This chapter takes on this task by offering an Asian perspective, drawing on the author's own research into two cases of intra-Asia ISM (where both sending and receiving countries are in Asia) in which different logics seem to be at play. In what follows, the next section discusses further the economic-driven model of HE internationalization prevailing in Anglophone West, before briefly touching on how the COVID-19 pandemic has confronted this model with unprecedented challenges. Then, based on the author's own research (Yang, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2018a, 2018c), the following section presents empirical insights from the two cases, highlighting the ways in which both cases are driven more by the ***developmental*** and ***non-commercial*** interests or objectives of the student-recruiting/receiving states. The chapter concludes, however, with a note of caution against essentializing or idealizing these Asian experiences; instead, similarities and parallels with certain aspects of HE internationalization experiences in the West, as well as certain problems and challenges found in both Asian cases, are also discussed.

Beyond the Economic-Driven Model of HE Internationalization: COVID as Catalyst

That HE internationalization in the developed Anglophone world largely follows an economic-driven model, which is a well-established fact (see discussion around neoliberalism in Yang, 2019, p. 521). With neoliberal ideologies serving to justify shrinking public funding, HE institutions (HEIs) in countries, such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and Australia, have become enterprising actors in a not only lucrative but also competitive global market of commodified education (Altbach, 2015; Komljenovic & Robertson, 2017; Sidhu, 2006). International students have thus come to be viewed primarily as a source of tuition fee income, or 'cash cow' as some critical scholars have put it (e.g. Baas, 2006; Cantwell, 2015; Robertson, 2011; Stein & Andreotti, 2016).

For the most part, and for a sustained period, this model seems to have worked, thanks to the strong demand for international education (IE) from fast-growing developing countries such as China and India (Choudaha, 2017; Yang, 2020). To illustrate, in 2020, just four English-speaking countries—the US (20%), the UK (10%), Australia (9%), and Canada (9%)—collectively hosted close to half of the world's stock of internationally mobile students (Institute of International Education, 2020), the majority of whom hail from Asia and the developing world. For these major destination countries, the economic benefits of inbound student mobility are immense. For instance, according to the US Department of Commerce, in 2016, international students contributed USD 39.4 billion to the American economy (iie.org, 2018). In the UK, it was estimated that in 2015–16, 'first-year international students brought to the UK economy a total of £22.6 billion', of which non-EU students generated £17.5 billion (Studying-in-UK.org, 2018). In 2017, 'foreign students generated a record AU$32 billion (US$24.7 billion) for the Australian economy', a 22% increase from merely a year before (Maslen, 2018). In Canada, although the income from international students was comparatively modest at CND 2.75 billion in 2015–2016, it had been growing rapidly (Usher, 2018).

While the economic rewards are significant, however, becoming dependent on international student fees for income makes institutions in these HE systems vulnerable to fluctuations in enrolment that may result from 'turbulences in politics, culture, economics, natural disasters, and public health' (Tran, 2020b, p. xii). For instance, lately, observing Western HEIs' heavy reliance on Chinese students, Altbach (2019) warned of an impending 'China crisis' as intensifying geopolitical rivalry and ideological tension led to a palpable deterioration of China-West relations over recent years.

Before there was time for Altbach's above prognosis to be verified empirically, however, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. The pandemic's

disruption to ISM was acute, severe, and widespread—student mobility virtually ground to a halt due to the travel restrictions, lockdowns, and campus closures imposed by countries all over the world. One incident at the beginning of the pandemic serves well to illustrate the vulnerability of Western HEIs to international student inflow disruptions. When Australia imposed a ban on direct travel from China in February 2020 as China was then the pandemic epicenter, several Australian HEIs resorted to offering financial subsidies to incentivize Chinese students to transit via third countries in order to circumvent the travel ban and enter Australia to begin or resume studies (Haugen & Lehmann, 2020).

Assessing the overall situation, veteran HE scholar Simon Marginson opined that ISM flows to the West would suffer a 'massive hit', and that recovery could take up to five years (Bothwell, 2020). Moreover, as the pandemic exacerbated existing issues of xenophobia/racism faced by international students (Laws & Ammigan, 2020) as well as the political, economic, and cultural tensions between student-sending and receiving countries, some commentators have speculated that there would be a post-pandemic redistribution of ISM flows (Ross, 2020), leading possibly to long-lasting structural changes. Taken together, it seems clear that the uncertainties catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed and heightened the vulnerabilities of the economic-driven model of HE internationalization prevalent in the Anglophone world, thus calling into question the long-term sustainability of this model.

Asian Perspectives: Insights from Two Cases of Intra-Asia Student Mobility

In the Asian HE space, internationalization has also taken root and made significant advances over the past two decades (Mok, 2007; Mok & Han, 2017), but it does not and *cannot* quite follow the same model. As Ota (2018) pointed out, for non-English-speaking countries 'it is difficult to generate revenue through a trade and business-oriented approach to internationalization such as the one used in English-speaking countries' (p. 95). This is because, as argued by Bolsmann and Miller (2008), the Anglophone West's success in commodifying HE boils down to 'a continuation of former imperial and political connections that have evolved into financially beneficial markets and sources of income for western universities' (p. 80).

If HE internationalization in Asia rests on different logics as compared to those in the Anglophone West, what are these logics? Around this question, a dynamic albeit fragmented literature seems already emerging. In what follows, empirical insights from the author's research into two cases of intra-Asia student mobility will be presented first. Then, in discussing these insights, connections will be made with certain themes in the burgeoning literature about HE internationalization in Asia. To note, the two cases presented below draw,

respectively, on the author's doctoral research and postdoctoral research. Both studies were carried out following a broadly speaking qualitative-ethnographic methodological approach; data collection for the former occurred mainly between 2010 and 2012, whereas for the latter, between 2014 and 2016.

Case 1: Singapore's 'Foreign Talent' Scholarship Schemes

Since the mid-1990s, Singapore—an economically advanced city-state in Southeast Asia with a multi-ethnic population formed around an ethnic Chinese majority—had established official agreements with the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to recruit Chinese students. Through three schemes known as the 'SM1', 'SM2', and 'SM3', students aged between 15 and 18 from all over China were selected by Singaporean authorities based on academic merit and subsequently offered placement and full financial support to further their education in Singaporean secondary schools (SM1) and universities (SM2 and SM3). It is worth noting that while similar scholarship schemes also existed for students from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and India, the schemes targeting PRC students were the most extensive and long-standing. The author has estimated that, at the peak period (around 2005–2008), possibly up to a thousand 'PRC scholars' per year were recruited via the three schemes. Over more than two decades, cumulatively 15,000–20,000 Chinese youth could have been channeled into the Singapore education system as a result—not a trivial number considering Singapore's small size. As a condition of accepting the scholarships, students under the tertiary schemes (i.e. SM2 and SM3) must commit to majoring in engineering or science courses at university and would be legally obliged to work for six years in Singapore (the 'bond' period) upon obtaining a bachelor's degree.

Two key characteristics of this China-to-Singapore student mobility case stand out in contradistinction to student mobilities typically observed in the context of Anglophone West. First, the role played by the sending and receiving states is central: the Singapore Ministry of Education is involved in every aspect and step of the recruitment process, and close cooperation from the Chinese government is also indispensable. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that this case of mobility is entirely *state-driven* and *state-sponsored*. Second, short-term economic benefit in the form of tuition fee income is obviously not the objective pursued by the Singaporean state. The government as well as universities in Singapore invest substantial resources into recruiting, hosting, and educating these scholars, for objectives that are much more long-term. Indeed, these scholarship schemes stem from the Singapore state's broader strategy of attracting 'foreign talent' from Asia to augment the country's human capital base, in order to stay competitive in a knowledge-driven global economy increasingly centered upon science and technology. More fundamentally,

as Singapore currently grapples with population aging and declining birth rates (especially among the Chinese-Singaporean population), bringing in young students from China with high likelihood of permanent settlement also helps the government address these worrying demographic trends that threaten the city-state's long-term socioeconomic viability and development.

There is clear evidence of the Singaporean state's intention to appropriate the PRC scholars as the city-state's human capital and future citizens. Not only does the significant six-year 'bond' serve to 'root down' these scholars locally, in fact, for a period around year 2008, the Singapore authorities went as far as to proactively issue official invitations to scholars to apply for Permanent Residence (PR). Reportedly, naturalization is also made relatively smooth and straightforward for this category of 'foreign talent' students. In sum, one could say that in this unique case of China-to-Singapore student mobility, short-term commercial interest plays very little role; instead, being explicitly state-driven and state-sponsored, the case reflects the recruiting state's long-term developmental objectives in terms of human capital accumulation and population reproduction.

Case 2: China's English-medium MBBS Programs and Indian Students' Experiences

While China has usually been studied as an ISM source country in existing research (as is also with Case 1 above), in Case 2, China plays *host* to a peculiar and somewhat 'unlikely' (Yang, 2018a) group of subjects: academically and socioeconomically non-elite youth from India reading clinical medicine in English-medium programs at second-/third-tier Chinese universities.

A key background to this India-to-China medical student mobility is the fact that in India, admission to public and subsidized medical education is highly competitive, whereas private provisions are prohibitively expensive. As a result, Indian students with modest economic means and limited academic competitiveness who nevertheless wish to pursue medicine (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, or MBBS) have traditionally looked to affordable overseas alternatives in countries such as Russia and Ukraine. Since early 2000s, China emerged as a player in this niche market, and by 2012 the country had in fact become the most popular destination for Indian students reading medicine overseas. In the peak year of 2013, a total of 6,020 places in English-medium MBBS programs catering exclusively to international students were offered across 52 Chinese universities. Although in subsequent years admission scale declined, the 2020–2021 admission year still saw 3,058 places offered by 45 Chinese HEIs (moe.gov.cn, 2020). Most seats in these programs have been and continue to be filled by students from India, whose sole aim is to obtain a medical degree affordably and return to India to qualify as doctors.

To understand the logics underlying this little-known case of intra-Asia student mobility, it is crucial to consider the powerful policy role of the Chinese state and, specifically, the state-directed nature of HE internationalization in China. In a grand strategic plan on education released in 2010, the Chinese Ministry of Education (2010) set out an ambitious goal of hosting 500,000 international students by year 2020—a target that available data seems to confirm as having been met (barring any revisions due to the impact of COVID-19). What are the motivation and objective(s) behind China's push to host such significant numbers of foreign students? The author's field research suggests that the answer is unlikely to be tuition fee income. In an international MBBS program the author investigated ethnographically (Yang, 2018a), the Chinese university (a second-tier, provincial institution) charged rather inexpensive fees: an annual tuition fee of RMB 24,000 (USD 3,485) and an annual accommodation fee of RMB 4,600 (USD 668) (figures dated as of 2014). In fact, low cost of study was the primary factor that attracted the Indian students, who otherwise had little knowledge about or interest in China. Despite the low fees, however, the Chinese university administrator shared that about a third of the Indian students still had difficulty paying fee installments on time, leading the administrator to lament that the program made little financial/economic sense to them. Hence, although for the Indian students coming to study MBBS in China was a crude economic-driven decision, for the student-recruiting institution(s) and the receiving country, this is not the case.

On the other hand, objectives or motivations beyond economic calculations seemed to underpin the Chinese university's endeavor to run such a program. In the first instance, under China's statist HE governance system, HEIs are obliged to carry out dutifully the initiatives, strategies, and developmental objectives set by the state—in this case, the push to host more foreign students. At the same time, the university and its administrators appeared to have genuinely aligned with and assimilated the state's attitude and rhetoric about internationalization as something intrinsically—even *unthinkingly*—desirable. To borrow Ota's (2018) expressions, a 'veneer of internationalization' and an 'outward-facing international image' (p. 95) were worth having for their own sake, since certain prestige seems to flow automatically from such appearances. Lastly, in the fieldwork, the author observed the Chinese university's insistence on international MBBS students to acquire a certain level of Chinese language proficiency despite the lack of interest from students themselves, who did not regard Chinese language learning as relevant to their studies or future career. Indeed, this small observation hints strongly at the relevance of 'soft power' and cultural diplomacy as underlying rationales of Chinese HEIs' internationalization endeavor.

In sum, in this case of India-to-China medical student mobility, the commercial logic also plays no more than a marginal role as far as the receiving

country/institutions are concerned; instead, more prominent are the receiving state's interests and developmental objectives defined in strategic and political terms.

Discussion and Conclusion

The foregoing empirical materials illustrate that, for Singapore and China, at least, HE internationalization does not necessarily prioritize short-term economic benefits but seems to be driven more by the state's interests and objectives in line with longer term developmental and strategic calculations. In fact, these findings echo how some existing literature has characterized HE internationalization in both countries. In the context of Singapore, for example, scholars have long noted how the state strategically positions the HE sector as an engine for innovation, talent development, and long-term economic competitiveness (Ng, 2013; Olds, 2007). For China, policies on IE and student mobility have always been closely tied to politics, diplomacy, and state formation processes (Zheng & Kapoor, 2021). Regarding the Chinese state's recent push for internationalization, various scholars have pointed out that the aim is not primarily financial gains, but more the enhancement of the country's global standing and prestige (Pan, 2013), 'soft power' (Yang, 2010), or what the author has elsewhere termed 'symbolic capital' (Yang, 2020). Taken together, then, it does seem that HE internationalization in Asia exhibits divergent logics and rationales vis-à-vis the economic-driven model dominant in the Anglophone West. At present, even though the world has largely emerged from the shadows of COVID-19, widespread political and economic volatilities continue to spell uncertainties for the global HE landscape. Under these circumstances, it is possible to see these Asia experiences as representing something of an alternative approach to HE internationalization that may be more sustainable and resilient than the commercialized model of the West, which has had its vulnerabilities and short-termism exposed by the pandemic.

Nevertheless, no matter how tempting it may be to speak of an 'Asian model' of HE internationalization, one needs to be cautioned against essentializing or idealizing the Asian experiences discussed in this chapter, and those that may be emerging elsewhere in Asia. For one thing, the two cases presented here cannot represent the diversity and complexity of HE internationalization experiences and practices in Asia, which includes a wide range of countries and institutions, situated in rather different circumstances. Thus, insights from this chapter should be taken first and foremost in a heuristic sense. Moreover, it is important to point out that being state-driven and developmentalist are by no means features exclusive to Asian countries but could in fact be observed in Anglophone countries too, both historically and at present. Programs such as the Colombo Plan (Byrne, 2016) and

Fulbright scholarships are well-known examples that require little further explanation. Even when it comes to the 'market-driven' IE model in countries such as Australia and the UK, the state has nonetheless played a key role in the shaping of the model, with rhetoric of 'soft power' also deployed (Lomer, 2017). At the same time, although for Singapore and China tuition fees from international students may not be a top priority at the moment, the commercial potential of IE is not completely irrelevant either (see Mok, 2000). Moving forward, there can be no foregone conclusion that HEIs in Asia will not adopt a more business-oriented approach to IE, especially in light of the tremendous opportunities catalyzed by the global pandemic. In other words, the contrast between HE internationalization in the Anglophone West and Asia is by no means black and white, and landscape remains fluid and fast-changing.

Lastly, although no doubt HE internationalization in the Anglophone West has certain shortcomings in terms of vulnerability and external dependency, it is far from clear that the Asian experiences can necessarily be considered superior. In fact, the author's two studies of intra-Asia student mobility have uncovered various challenges and problems. In the Singapore case, for example, the perceived privileges received by the 'PRC scholars' from the Singapore state have caused controversy in local society (Yang, 2014a, 2014c) and have fed into broader social dynamics of identity politics and anti-immigrant discourse (see Yang, 2018b). As regards those Indian medical students at a lower tier Chinese university, both the academic quality of the program and students' lived experiences were found to have highly problematic aspects (Yang, 2018a). In fact, the author found out during fieldwork that the international MBBS program at the field-site university was suspended by the Chinese Ministry of Education after an inspection took place. Such sobering findings go to show that while HEIs in Asia may be spared some of the typical problems confronting Western HEIs, internationalization in Asia will have to grapple with its own set of challenges and issues.

As such, presented with both uncertainties and opportunities, HE internationalization in Asia promises to be an exciting research field worthy of greater attention.

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