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Original Paper

Navigating New Horizons: The Future of International Student Mobility in the Post-Pandemic World

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Abstract

The global higher education landscape has undergone significant change in the wake of COVID-19. There's been a notable surge in students opting for more affordable programs, alongside a considerable rise in those pursuing overseas education for immigration purposes. Countries like Canada and Australia have responded by easing visa constraints to lure international students. Meanwhile, India and China, as two key players in sending students abroad, are experiencing divergent trajectories. While China is fostering its domestic education sector and implementing policies to draw in international students, its population is expected to decline. Conversely, the rapidly growing youth population in India offers a favorable opportunity for overseas students. For nations reliant on the overseas education sector, striking a balance between the economic benefits and local employment impacts is crucial, while also addressing market share challenges posed by China and India. Exploring alternative markets is imperative. Nigeria, Kenya, and other nations show high growth potential, while the rising middle class in Latin America offers another potential source market. Kazakhstan emerges as a notable contender, with its pre-pandemic economic expansion and government initiatives promoting international student mobility and ambitious targets. The declining cost of studying abroad reflects not only the economic challenges facing the global education sector but also a democratization of access to international education, no longer confined to affluent families. A noticeable rise of international students from Asian countries—such as China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea—indicates a slow shift in the market share away from popular study locations. This shift underscores a broader trend of diversification in the global higher education landscape.

Keywords

International student mobility, Overseas education and immigration, Global higher education landscape, Study abroad, International student mobility, Post-COVID-19 higher education, Global *education policies, Student recruitment strategies, Canada and Australia education policy, Chinese and Indian students abroad, Educational diversification markets, Economic impacts of international students, Cultural implications of student mobility, Higher education sustainability*

1. Introduction

1.1 Strong Industry Recovery in Mainstream International Student Destination Countries or Just an Illusion

The Canadian government set a cap on new international student permit applications for a period of two years. For 2024, this cap is expected to limit the number of approved study permits to approximately 360,000, which is a decrease of 35% from 2023. Meanwhile, open work permits will now only be available to spouses of international students enrolled in master's and doctoral programs. Spouses of students in other levels of study, such as undergraduate and college programs, will no longer be eligible for open work permits. Furthermore, foreign students who begin a program that is a part of a curriculum licensing arrangement will no longer be eligible for PGWPs as of September 1, 2024. On the other hand, in Australia, the age requirement to apply for a Graduate visa has been lowered from 50 to 35 years old, and there will be no more opportunities to extend post-study employment rights outside of individuals who have finished their studies in a rural area. This is in sharp contrast to the policy on Duration of Subclass 485 Temporary Graduate Visa promulgated in July 2023. Why have these two nations' perspectives shifted so dramatically? Using Canada as an example, the Trudeau administration claims that this initiative is a component of their efforts to control the number of foreign students studying there and to relieve pressure on housing and healthcare systems brought on by a rapid increase in the number of international students. But is this the full story? In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a drop with 528,190 study permits issued. In 2022, however, a record-breaking number of 807,750 study permits were issued, indicating a strong industry recovery in the international education in Canada. By this, it implies that the recovery of the study-abroad economy has far exceeded the initial predictions of the two governments, and they are already "full".

This is obviously an illusion, or what I refer to as "a day of clothing and food for the nomads." Winning a battle, however, is the only way for nomadic people to obtain resources. This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of policy documents and literature review with quantitative data analysis of international student enrollment figures obtained from national education departments and international education bodies. This dual approach makes it possible to comprehend policy changes' effects on student mobility patterns and the strategic reactions of important destination nations in a more nuanced manner. In the post-COVID-19 era, this paper offers a thorough overview of the changing landscape of global higher education by looking at both macro-level trends and micro-level policy implications.

1.2 An Increasing Number of Chinese Students Who Are Turning to Asian Destinations

New Oriental, a well-known Chinese educational institution with a vast range of services and programs offered to millions of students globally, asserts that it is at the forefront of fostering innovation and excellence in education. As of 2020, Chinese students comprised a significant portion of the foreign student population in major study destinations worldwide. Their representation ranged from roughly a quarter of all international students in Canada to nearly 40% of the foreign enrollment base in both the

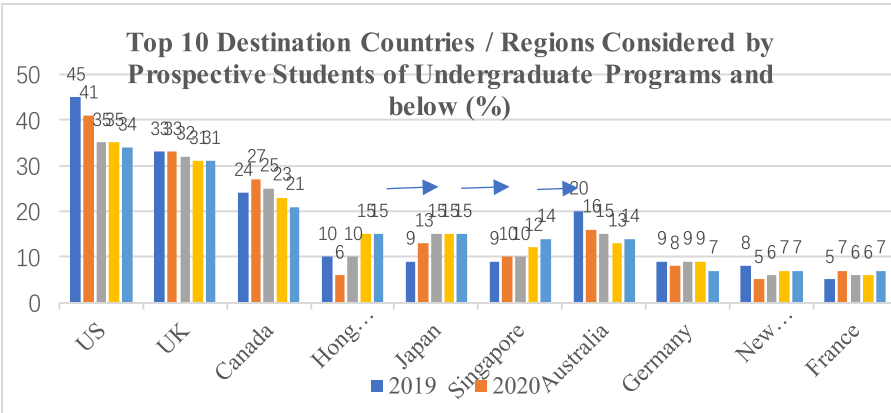

Figure 1. Destination Considered by High-School and Undergraduate Chinese Students, 2019-2023

Source: New Oriental.

United States and Australia. According to a 2023 report by New Oriental Vision Overseas Consulting Company, even though the US and UK remain the most popular study destinations for Chinese students, Asian countries are growing more and more popular and are being considered alongside Australia, Canada, and Europe. Furthermore, the US seems to be losing ground to Asian nations in the Chinese student market as a whole. The consideration set of Chinese high school and undergraduate students when deciding where to study is shown in the following chart. Although the US, UK, and Canada continue to be the top three countries that students are thinking about, the number of mentions of the US decreased from 45% in 2019 to 34% in 2023 (He, 2024). During the same period, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore gained appeal, while Australia lost part of its.

Regarding graduate and postgraduate admissions, the UK maintains its leading position in 2023 with respect to the number of applicants. Although the US continues to rank second, its share of consideration dropped from 45% in 2019 to 30% in 2023. Singapore also gained popularity, as did Hong Kong (#3). In 2023, there will be more people considering Singapore (15%) than Canada (11%). Japan (12%) has a slight advantage over Canada in 2023 (New Oriental, 2023).

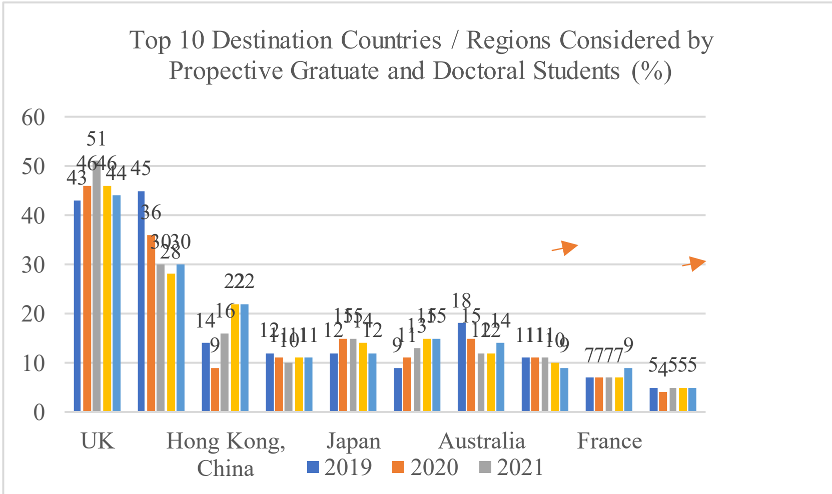

Figure 2. Destination Considered by Graduate/Postgraduate-Level Chinese Students, 2019-2023

Source: New Oriental.

Most students already know which country they would prefer to study abroad, even though it's normal to consider a few options. With 41% of undergraduate students stating that it is their first choice in 2023, the US is far ahead of other countries in this regard at the undergraduate level. Second place goes to the UK at 15%. In 2023, Hong Kong and Japan will have surpassed Australia, Singapore, and Canada in regard to undergraduate level (New Oriental, 2023).

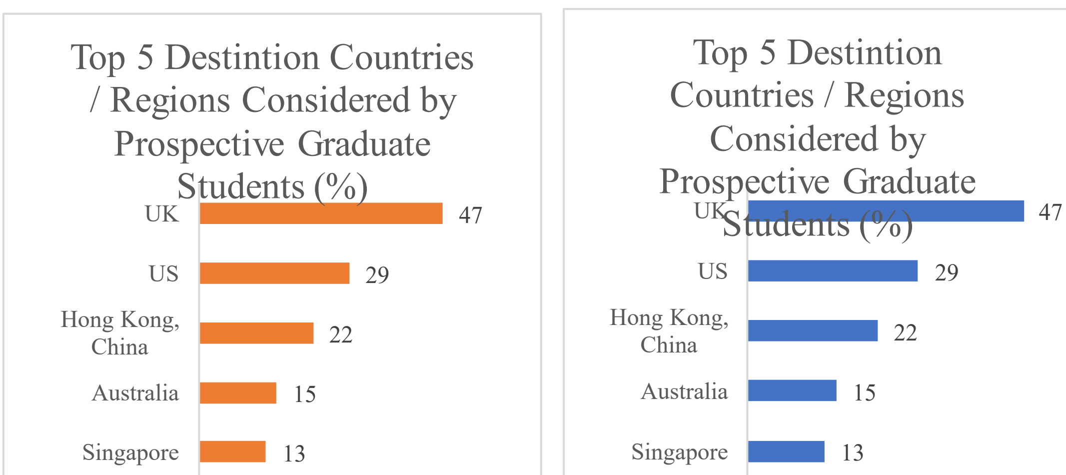

Figure 3. Top 5 Destinations for Prospective Chinese Graduate and Doctoral Students

Source: New Oriental.

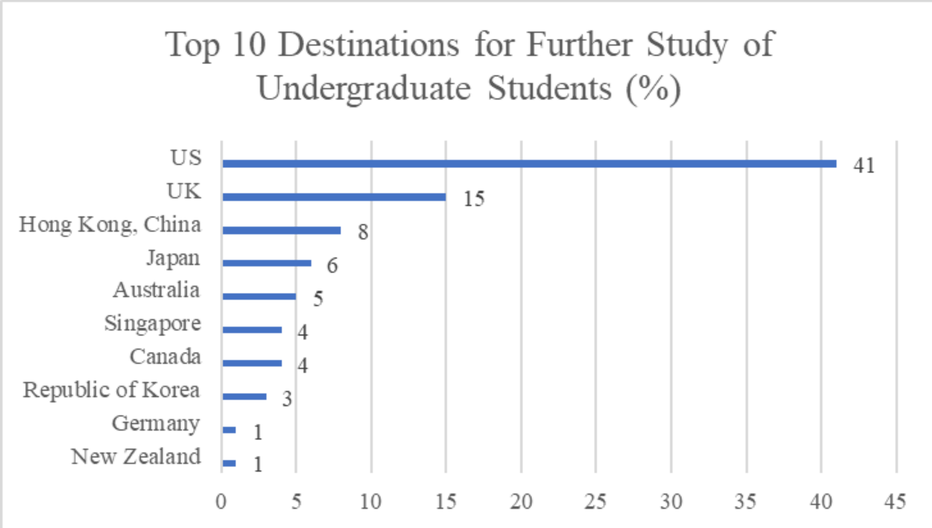

Figure 4. First-choice destinations for Chinese Undergraduate Students

Source: New Oriental.

At the graduate level, the UK takes first place and the US comes in second. Singapore comes next, then Hong Kong, Australia, and finally Hong Kong. At this level, Canada is not included in the top five. In postgraduate (doctoral) enrollment, the US leads the world, with the UK following closely behind. Hong Kong comes in third, followed by France and Japan. Notably, neither Australia nor Canada are at this stage of development (New Oriental, 2023).

Why has Asia become more popular for Chinese students?

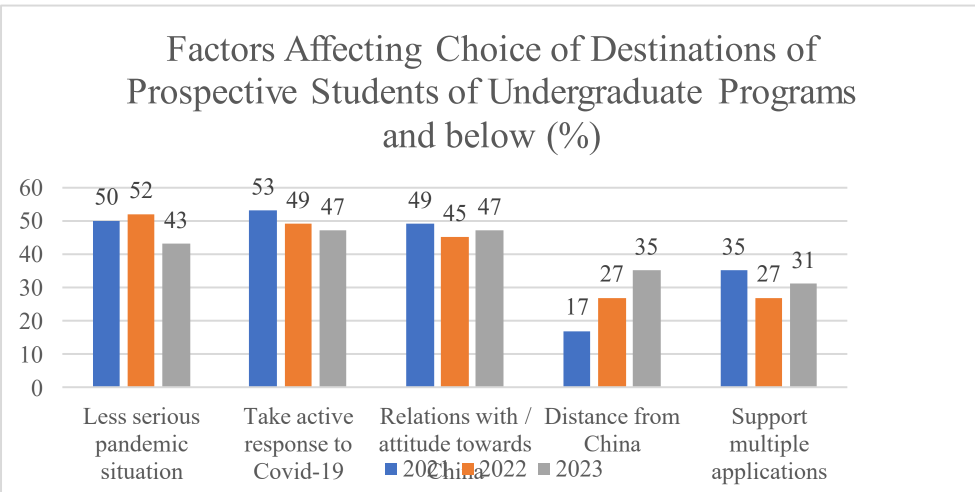

Figure 5. Of all Factors, "Distance from China" (i.e., the Distance not being far) Rose the most as a Priority between 2021 and 2023 for Prospective Undergraduate Students

Source: New Oriental.

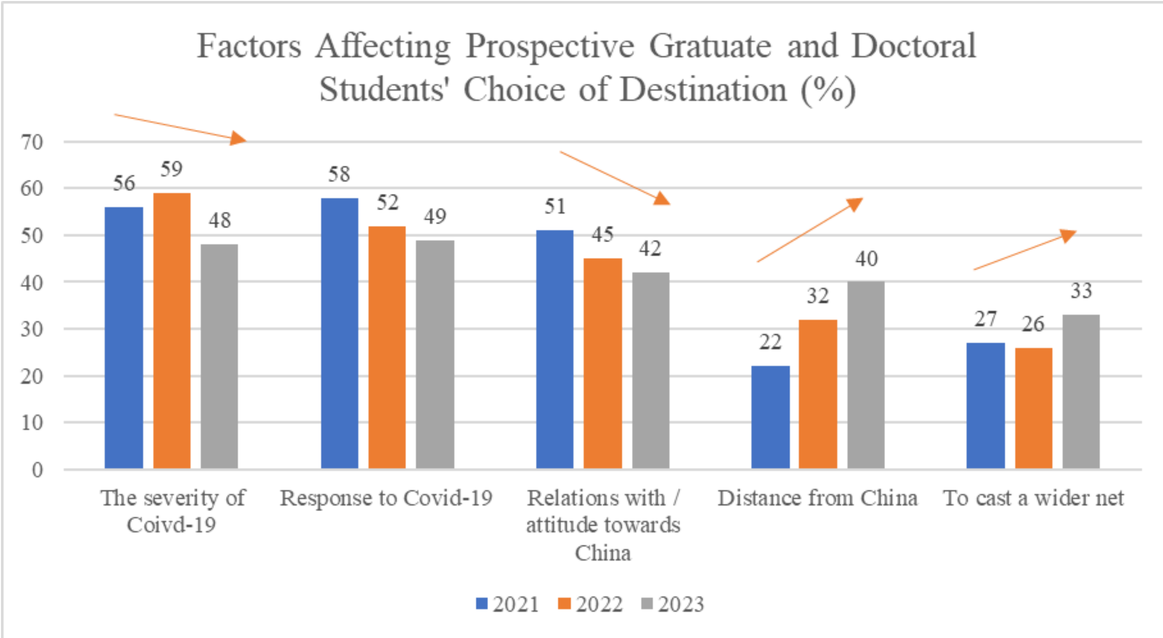

Figure 6. Four in Ten Graduate/Postgraduate Students Are Influenced by "Distance from China" in 2023, Compared with under a Quarter who Were in 2021

Source: New Oriental.

Safety and Cultural Proximity: Asian travel destinations are thought to be safer and offer a closer cultural connection, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions. This belief has led individuals to favor closer travel destinations, along with China's stringent steps to contain the virus. When selecting study abroad programs, undergraduate and graduate students now place a greater value on being close to China.

Political and Safety Considerations: The increasing concerns about anti-Asian discrimination in Western countries, particularly the US, have affected the decision-making process. Chinese families are looking for places where they feel more comfortable and welcomed. Meanwhile, the Chinese official media extensively highlighted anti-Asian prejudice in the US throughout the pandemic, leaving many families with the impression that the US was no longer a secure destination. According to Gary Bowerman, director of Check-in Asia, a strategic marketing and tourism intelligence firm, Chinese tourists are extremely risk averse and don't want to be near anything that puts their personal security in danger, as Time Magazine reported in February 2023 (New Oriental, 2023).

Economic considerations: The cost of a study abroad destination has become a significant determining factor. Before the pandemic, the majority of students using the Apply Board Platform, which is a leading online resource that is changing how students all around the world can access higher education opportunities and modernizing the process of recruiting international students, to look for study abroad programs chose to browse programs with tuition fees as high as $100,000. However, during the first ten months of 2021, over half of all students chose to view only courses that charged an annual tuition of $30,000 or even less (Trends Report, 2021). While not all of the data comes from Chinese students, it is evident from the pattern that many overseas students are either unwilling or unable to pay expensive tuition and are more inclined to look into programs and universities that they may not have previously explored before the pandemic. However, as compared to Western countries, certain Asian destinations, including Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore, provide more affordable educational options. This will be especially appealing to families in China's smaller cities and rural areas who are increasingly considering studying abroad. High-quality education in Asian regions have been major motivators. The Chinese government is actively working to develop their post-secondary education systems and institutions, transitioning China from a top source market to a destination market of its own.

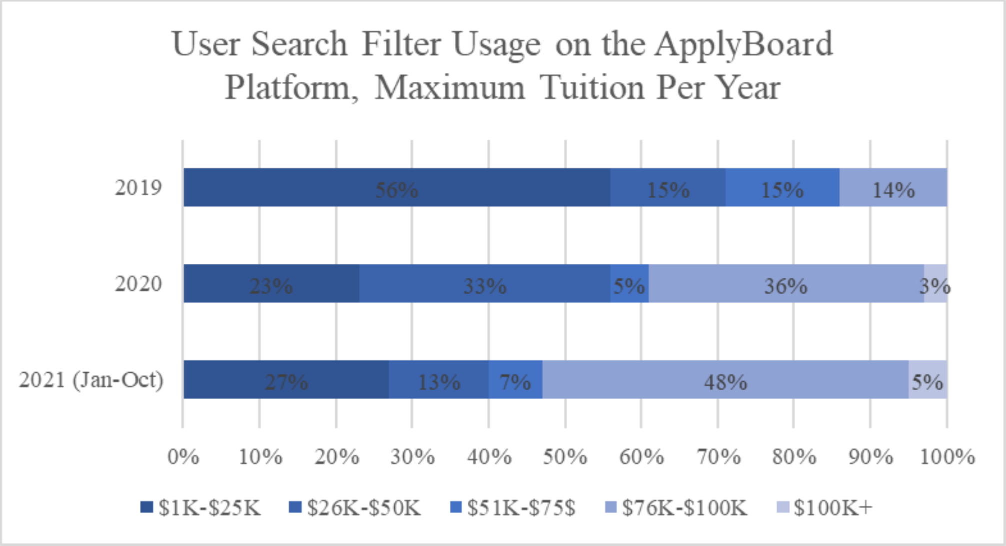

Figure 7.

Source: Apply Board Platform Data.

The Improvement of Education in China: One of the primary motivators in Asian regions has been access to high-quality education. The Chinese government is actively working to develop their post-secondary education systems and institutions, transitioning China from a top source market to a destination market of its own. In addition, higher education in China has grown and improved, for example, Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, University of Science and Technology of China in mainland China, and the University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, City University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hong Kong, were selected into the Qs100 of 2023. Therefore, foreign degrees are no longer necessary for many people to advance in their careers.

Table 1. Chinese Universities QS World Rankings 2023

QS RANKING	UNIVERSITY
12	Peking University
14	Tsinghua University
34	Fudan University
42	Zhejiang University
46	Shanghai Jiao Tong University
94	University of Science and Technology of China

Source: QS World University Rankings 2023: Top Global Universities.

Career and Migration as motivation: Although fewer students cited motivations to gain overseas work experience, and most did not see international education as a pathway to immigration, this finding is not in line with previous studies which found that students' intentions to migrate to Australia after graduation were one of the key factors that influenced their decision to study abroad (Harper, 2023). Though consistent with the earlier findings, a different set of data yielded a different conclusion. International Student Survey (2021) reported that over 50% of students look to stay and work in the country, at least temporarily, after graduation in all four major English-language destination markets. In fact, in study abroad destination countries such as Australia and Canada, job opportunities are accompanied by immigration opportunities, including Australia's 482 and 186 visas. On the other hand, Canada's Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP) makes a perfect case study. From 2016 to 2020, the number of PGWPs issued increased by 124%, rising from just over 50,000 in 2016 to nearly 125,000 in 2020, indicating that interest in the PGWP is wide-ranging. At least 100 graduates from 57 different source markets were issued PGWPs in 2020 (Trends Report, 2021). Although these data are not exclusively for Chinese students, due to the high proportion of Chinese students among international students in these countries, these data can also serve as a valuable reference (He, n.d.). However, take Australia as example, the specific allocation for each state and territory under the Skilled Nominated (subclass 190) and Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) (subclass 491) visa categories saw a sharp decrease compared to the annual year of 2022 to 2023. For instance, in Victoria, from 14,900 in 2022–2023 to 3,300 in 2023–2024, fewer state-nominated visas (subclass 190 and 491) were granted. In a similar vein, the number of the same visas in New South Wales dropped from 15,275 to 4,310.

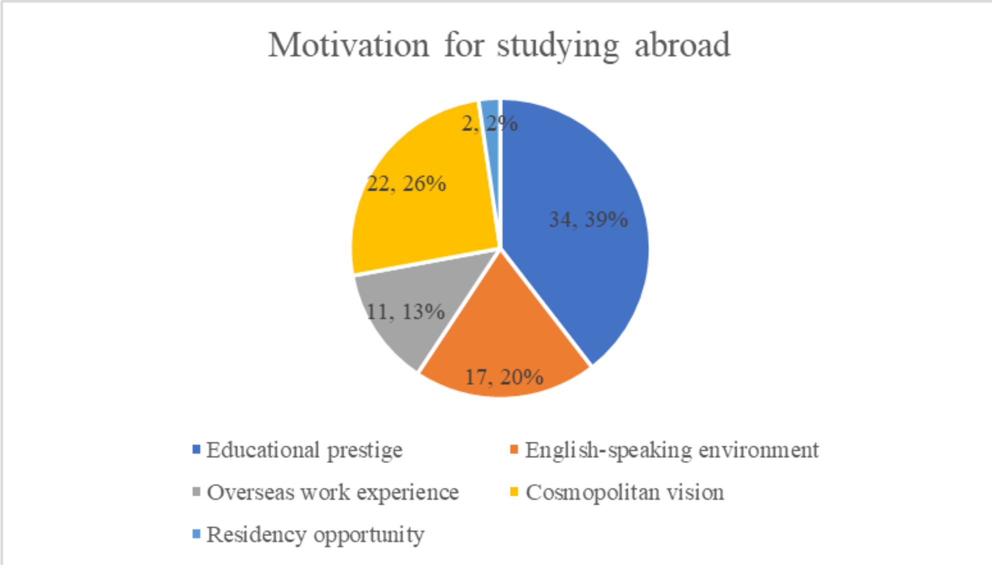

Figure 8. A Changing Scene for Student Mobility in India in 2023

In 2023, the proportion of Indian students choosing to study abroad rose dramatically, outnumbering the quantity of Chinese students in some important locations. In the first three months of 2022, 133,135 students left India for academic pursuits, an increase from 2020 when 259,655 students studied abroad. The number of Indians in 2021 was 4,44,553, a 41% rise in just one year. India's growing geopolitical significance and the recognition of its growth potential by various governments and institutions are contributing factors, making it the second most sought-after market globally, behind China. Furthermore, India will have the largest population of young people worldwide in 2020 with around 150 million living there. Over the next thirty years, India's young adult population is expected to fall slightly, but by 2030, the country is still predicted to overtake all other middle-class consumer markets worldwide (World Reimagined: The Rise of the Global Middle Class, 2021). Moreover, a $255.5 million loan from The World Bank has been approved for India to improve technical education, which will benefit 350,000 Indian students annually. International academic cooperation is promoted by allowing Indian students to study in South Korea through Korean scholarships. These trends demonstrate how rapidly India's global education sector has expanded during its 2023 G20 leadership.

However, Indian students choosing to study abroad consider several key factors that influence their decision-making process:

The quality of education and work opportunities: India has a considerable young adult population that presents a massive potential student base for overseas education. However, a driving factor for students seeking education overseas is the far limited number of top-quality educational institutions in India compared to the opportunities available in China (4 Key Factors Why India Is Seeing Rise in Studying Abroad, n.d.).

Following the pandemic, Australia saw a resurgence as a study destination for Indian students. Between January and August of 2023, there were 34% more Indian students in Australia than there were during the same period in 2022.With 17% of all overseas students registered in Australian universities, India comes in second, behind China (21%). Educationally speaking, Australia's outstanding academic status on the international scene is highlighted by the fact that 14 Australian universities were placed among the top 200 worldwide in the QS World University Rankings 2023. A number of universities, including RMIT University, the University of Newcastle, Macquarie University, the University of Melbourne, Monash University, the University of Western Australia, and the University of Wollongong, have had increases in their ranks since 2022.From the perspective of job opportunities, the announcement made in September 2023 by Australia's Minister of Education, Jason Clare, that "International students who complete their degrees from Australian universities in fields of verified skills shortage will be granted an additional two-year extension of their post-study work (PSW) rights in the country" is one of the reasons Australia is becoming a more alluring destination for Indian students. According to the PSW regulations, Australians with bachelor's degrees are currently permitted to stay in the nation for two years, master's students for three, and doctorate holders for four years following the completion of their degrees. "Students find it very appealing because it allows them to study and obtain work experience while also increasing return on investment", Singh, CEO of the Association of Australian Education in India (AAERI), said, "The majority of universities are offering scholarships, and the Australian dollars are very affordable compared to the US dollar."

Additionally, the Oxford International Digital Institute report states that the top reason Indian students choose to study abroad is the desire for attractive salary packages (attractive salary packages: 44%; high quality of education: 33%; pursue niche courses: 17%; gain international exposure: 6%) (Thomas, 2020). As of January 2021, 1.09 million Indian students were studying in 85 countries. Most of them favor anglophone countries, which absolutely includes the four most popular and traditional study abroad locations: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. These decisions are undoubtedly influenced by the high salaries that these nations can provide (International, 2022).

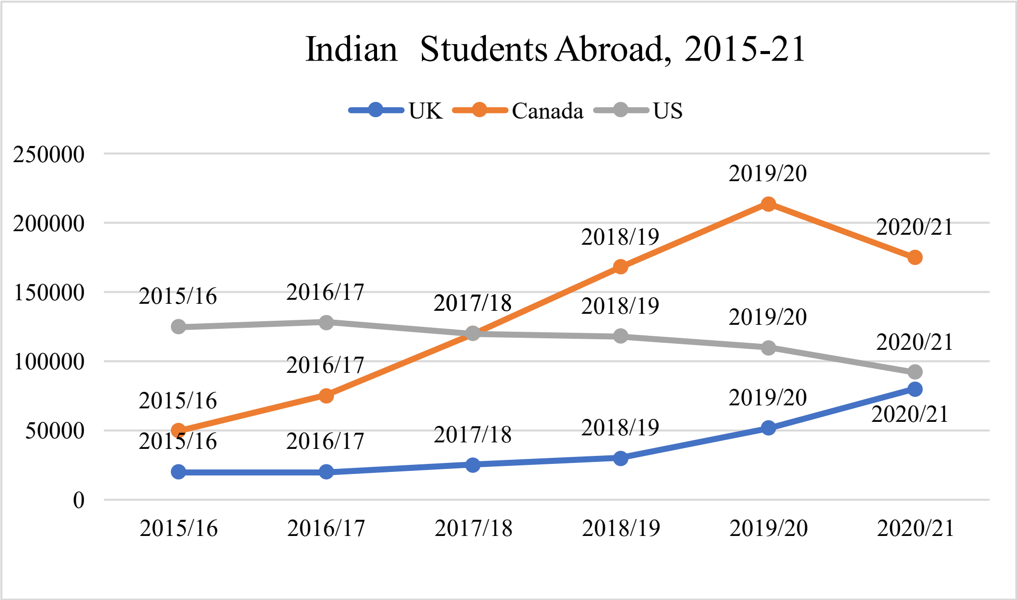

Figure 9.

Source: IRCC (CA), IIE/Open Doors (US), HESA (UK).

Table 2. What Are the Most Popular Countries for International Students from India?

Destination	Number of Indian students
Canada	198750
United States	193124
Australia	90918
UK	27915
China	23198
New Zealand	13015

Source: OI Digital Institute.

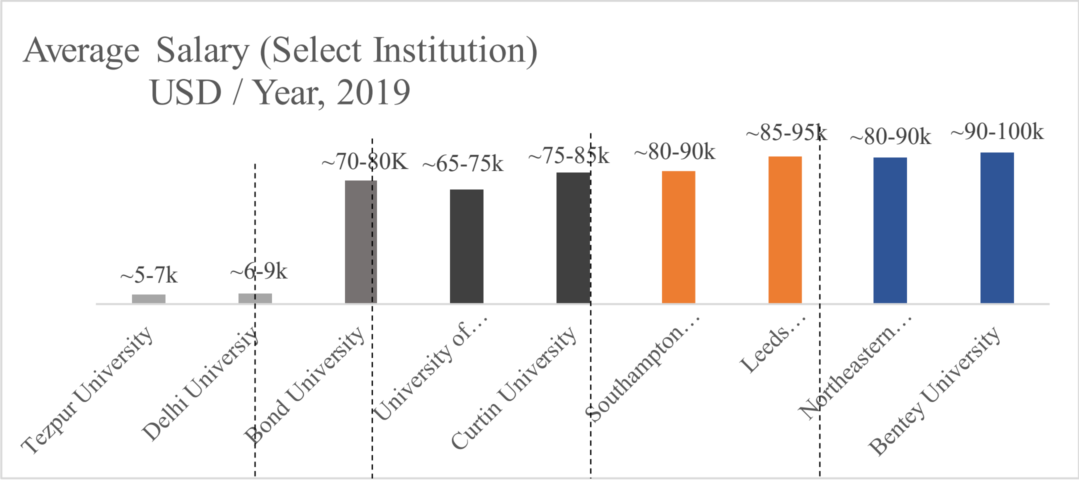

Figure 10.

Source: HBS Recruitment Stats. Top Universities websites. Rothman Employment % Salary Report. QS Rankings. PGP Placement Report. RedSeer Analysis.

Political Factors: Indian students continue to choose the United States as their top study abroad destination, and the political ties between the two nations are crucial. Eric Garcetti, the US ambassador to India, states that "the US-India relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world." In order to allow as many Indian candidates as possible to visit the US and personally witness the relationship that exists between the two countries, we will keep pushing for as many visas as we can in the following months. The number of Indians living abroad is expected to rise as a result of US colleges placing a greater emphasis on India as a recruiting destination, according to research conducted in spring 2023 by International Educational Exchange (IIE). The US government has a national strategy in place. By 2023, over one million Indian visas were expected to be processed. The U.S. Mission to India declared in September of last year that it had surpassed that target by almost 20 percent when compared to 2019. India was the most popular choice for 57% of undergraduate programs and 77% of graduate programs, respectively.

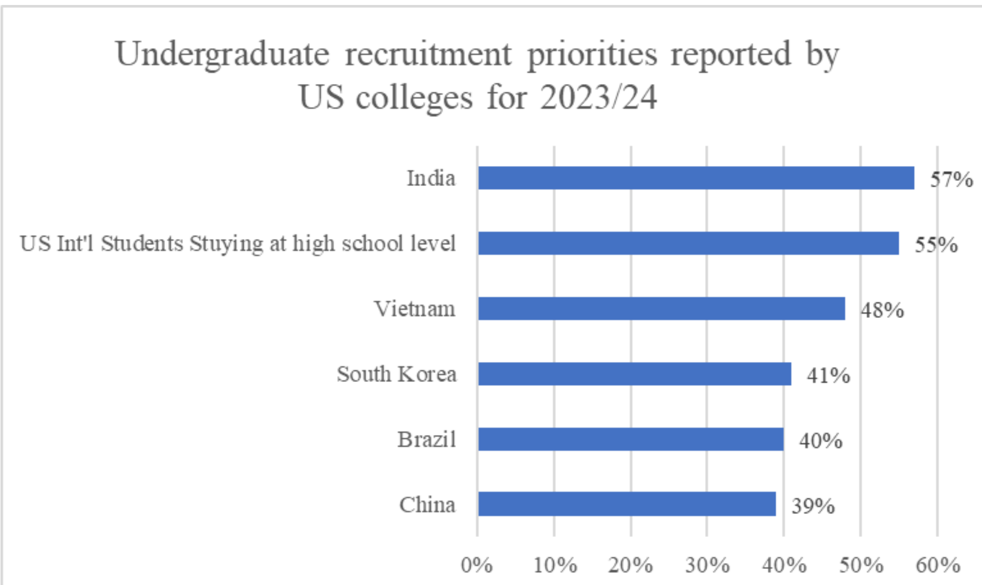

Figure 11.

Source: IIE.

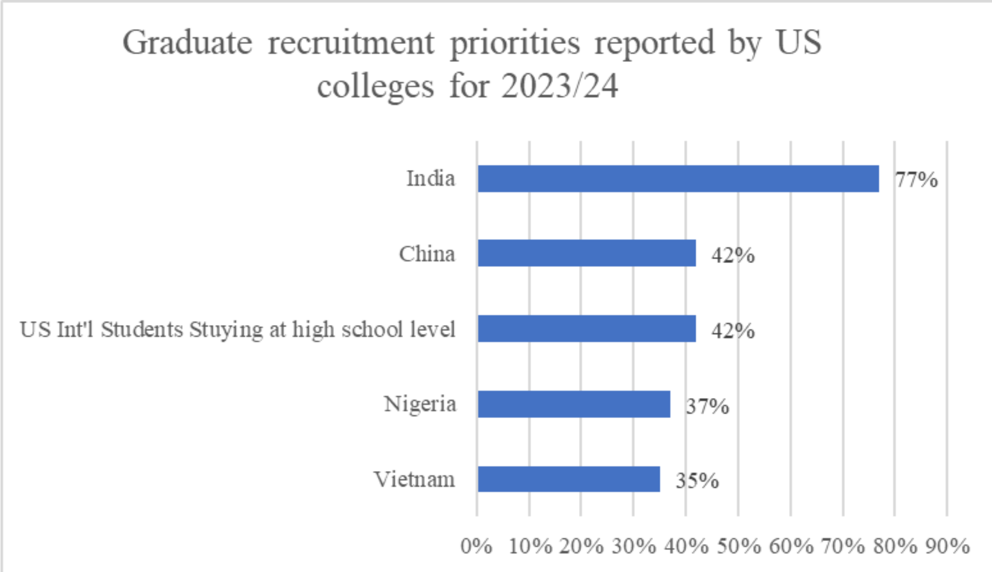

Figure 12.

Source: IIE.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese signed a new agreement in May 2023 aimed at boosting Indian student and business travel to Australia. This agreement is part of efforts to strengthen ties between the two countries, particularly in education and business sectors. It's anticipated to enhance the mobility of students, graduates, academic researchers, and business people from India to Australia, reflecting the growing importance of the Indian diaspora in Australia. This move may result in a higher immigration cap for Indian citizens intending to visit Australia for business and educational purposes (DW, 05/24/2023).

The immigration liberal for Indian undergraduate and graduate students have been liberalized by the UK government. It launched a new graduate visa on January 1, 2021, enabling them to work for 2 years in the UK after completing their studies (3 years for Ph.D. students). A job offer is not required to apply for the permit. As of March 2020, 50,000 Indian students were approved to study in the UK. This is a far cry from 2019, when only 37,500 students received the UK study permits. This figure stood at 20,000 in the year 2018.

Table 3. Which Are the Top Study Destinations in the UK?

Region	University	World ranking	Indian student volume	Acceptance rate
Oxford	University of Oxford	2	381	17.5%
Cambridge	University of Cambridge	3	1901	21%

London	Imperical College	7	250	14.3%
Manchester	The University of Manchester	27	570	70.4%
Coventry	The University of Warwick	61	741	14%

Source: OI Digital Institute.

Nearly four out of every ten international students in Canada as of the end of 2022 were Indian students, making up a sizeable share of the student population. This marked a substantial presence, with around 320,000 Indian students holding active study permits, a 47% increase from the previous year. However, the current political unrest in India and Canada may affect Indian students' ability to obtain visas and may even delay the start of the spring semester in January 2024. At the October 2023 CIMM meeting, Immigration Minister Marc Miller revealed that, at the moment, only five immigration staff members are handling applications for Indian visas, compared to 27 prior to the commencement of the diplomatic crisis (New Oriental, 2023).

Tuition And Living Costs and The Strict Entrance Examinations: The industry association ASSOCHAM (2008) estimates that 450,000 Indian students spend more than USD 13 billion a year on overseas higher education. The monthly cost of tuition for students wishing to study in the US, UK, Singapore, Australia, or Canada might reach $5,000 through the statistics of OI Digital Institute. More than 90% of applicants to the entrance exams for the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) are turned down, and as a result, they choose (and pay for) to pursue their education overseas. However, according to a Western Union analysis, budget is a big factor for Indian students who wish to study abroad. Because of the expensive tuition costs for students abroad, 47% of them favor short-term courses like diplomas. Chinese students choose to study overseas for the same reasons. In China, applicants must pass challenging entrance tests in order to be admitted to graduate schools. The difference is that Chinese students will choose Asian regions where tuition is less expensive than in Western countries, whereas Indian students will choose short-term courses in English-speaking countries.

The Impact Of Monopoly Market Position On The Economy And Politics Of Study Abroad Destination Countries

Since the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) began tracking data on global student mobility in 1998, China has been the country of origin for the majority of international students globally. 2020 saw almost 1.1 million Chinese students study abroad for a university degree, more than twice as many as students from India, the next-largest source. Chinese students accounted for one in every six (17.1%) internationally mobile degree seekers that year, when joined with the number of Indian international students, giving the two countries a dominant position in the global student market (Makie et al., 2023).

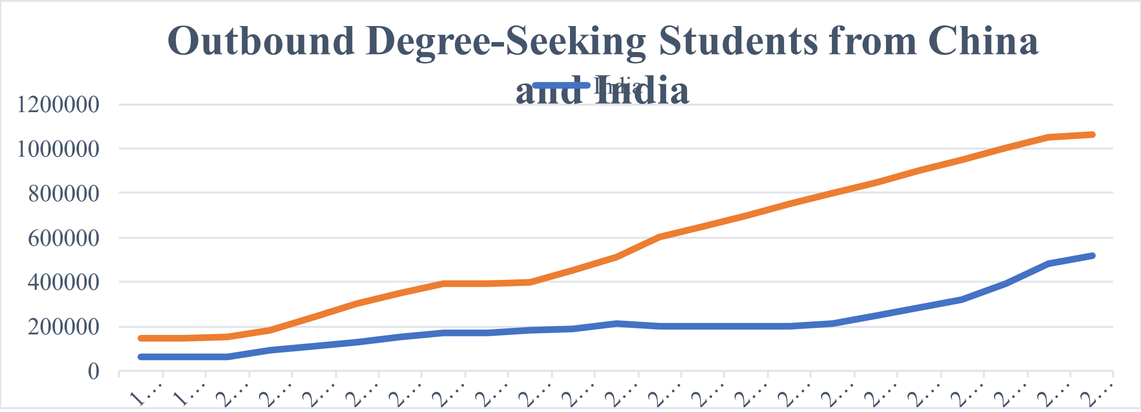

Figure 13.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Although there was a decline in Chinese students in 2022 in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia, Indian student enrollments surged, particularly in the US. For instance, in the US, more than 84,000 student visas were issued to Indian students over the summer, representing a significant increase compared to previous years. In the UK, the proportion of Indian students within the total international student population rose from 10% to 19% in just one year. In Canada, Indian students comprised 35% of the total international student population (New Oriental, 2022). In other words, Indian students made up for the declining number of Chinese students. The leadership positions of these two nations in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom are unaffected, in spite of a little shift in the mobility of foreign students.

However, to what extent does the monopolistic position of China and India in the overseas higher education market affect the politics and economy of these four countries? That is, assuming that China develops a better higher education market and provides a safer social environment, and at the same time attracts local students with more reasonable course fees to avoid exodus, and also lures a large wave of Indian students, will the politics and economics of these four countries are facing a devastating impact? And then be required to implement certain "compromise policies"? The answer can be found from four perspectives: economics and employment, talent market and labor force, culture diversity, and even political stability and votes.

Economics and Employment: According to the data conducted by U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the 2021-2022 academic year, international students in the U.S. contributed $33.8 billion to the economy. While it is still below pre-pandemic levels (over a million international students supported over 450,000 jobs and generated $40.5 billion in 2018–2019), this economic contribution supported over 335,000 jobs, nearly equivalent to the mining industry, which accounts for one of the most important industries in America with 559,900 jobs (Nafsa, 2019).

Australia's education system, recognized for its high standards and quality, attracts a significant number of international students, boosting the economy through direct spending on tuition fees, accommodation, and other services. International education contributed more than $29 billion to Australia's economy in 2022; of that amount, $25.5 billion came from foreign students enrolled in Australian universities and an additional $3.5 billion from students study remotely. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, international education was estimated to be value $40 billion annually. This amount exceeded the value produced by forestry, fishing, and agriculture in 2020 ($31.5 billion), and it was equal to the economic benefits created by food and accommodation services ($40 billion). It also accounted for one-fifth of the mining contribution ($218.6 billion), which was the main driver of the Australian economy, as shown by data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The UK economy and job development benefited greatly from the international education industry during the 2021–2022 academic year. The flood of overseas students during the 2021–2022 academic year contributed an astonishing £41.9 billion to the UK economy. This sum represents a 34% increase over the £31.3 billion from the 2018–19 academic year, which is a considerable increase. Even after deducting the cost of public services, international students are still beneficial to the UK economy, according to a report commissioned to investigate this effect. The average net economic contribution to each UK parliamentary seat was £58 million, or approximately £560 per resident. In addition, each non-EU student brings a net economic impact of £1 million to the UK economy (Universities UK, 2023).

Talent Market and Labor Force: Roughly one third of all foreign students who arrived in Canada in 2000 or later became permanent residents within ten years. Over half of international students who came to study for a master's or doctoral degree in the 2000s became landed immigrants within ten years, compared to one in three students pursuing a bachelor's degree. Having almost 75% of PGWP holders reporting yearly T4 profits, the labor market participation rate of PGWP holders remained reasonably consistent from 2008 to 2018. This was demonstrated by the percentage of PGWP holders having positive T4 earnings. Due to the increasing number of PGWP holders, the number of holders with T4 earnings rose from 10,300 in 2008 to 135,100 in 2018, a growth of more than 13 times. Between 2000 and 2019, the proportion of new economic major applicant immigrants with Canadian study experience increased from 6% to 38%. Compared to immigrants who did not study in Canada, those who did had higher educational backgrounds, were younger, spoke more official languages, and were much more likely to have pre-admission earnings in Canada. In the first two years after immigration, economic main applicants with Canadian study experience earned substantially more money than those without. Economic immigrants with at least a year of study experience in Canada made more money 10 to 11 years after immigration than those without such experience, regardless of whether they had previous Canadian employment experience prior to admission. These results imply that the study abroad sector not only boosts the economy during the study term in the areas of education, lodging, food, and services, but it also produces high-caliber labor for immigrant nations and keeps on contributing to the economy, with contributions being greater for immigrants who have never studied overseas (Government of Canada, 2022).

The United States is a popular destination for international students, many of whom make substantial contributions to the country's labor market, particularly in the skilled industries. Between 2000 and 2015, the number of international students earning bachelor's or master's degrees in the US varied from 500,000 to 1 million per year. Most of these graduates obtain employment in the United States after completing their education, usually in the state where they received their education.

The National Bureau of Economic Research reported that United States is a popular destination for international students, many of whom make substantial contributions to the country's labor market, particularly in the skilled industries. The annual number of foreign students obtaining bachelor's or master's degrees in the US ranged between 500,000 to 1 million between 2000 and 2015. After completing their education, most of these graduates find work in the United States, usually in the state where they studied. In the case of overseas students, following graduation, 12% of those with bachelor's degrees and 23% of those with master's degrees find employment in their native countries.This contribution is especially notable in sectors like STEM, which are recognized for emphasizing innovation, problem-solving, and technical expertise. In other words, while higher education in the United States provides services to international students, it also earns chips for the country's labor market, especially top innovative talents.

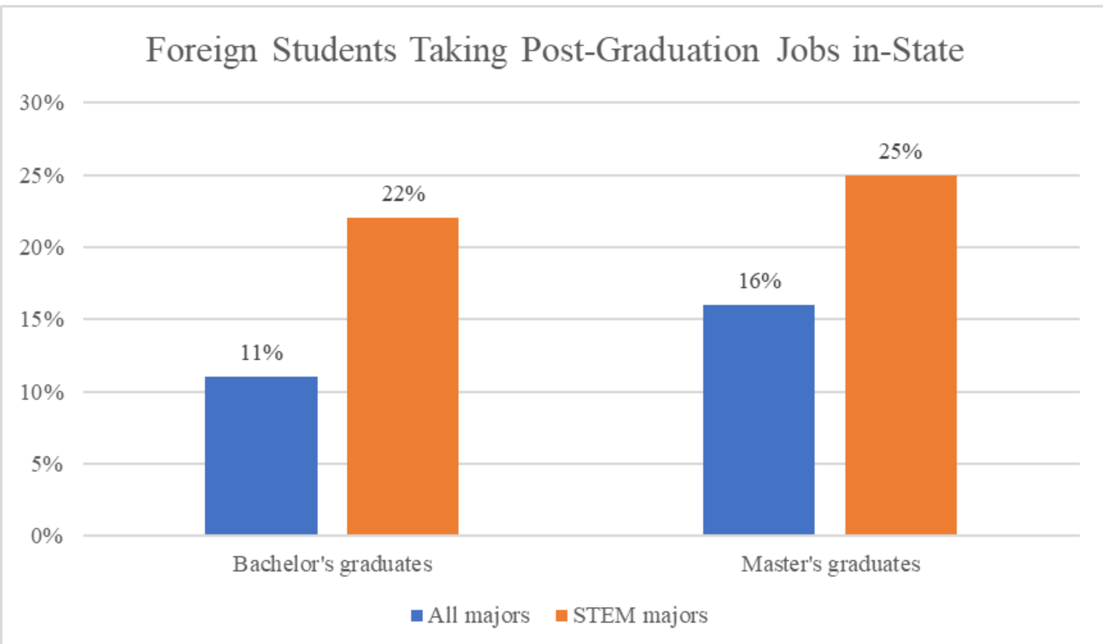

Figure 14.

Source: Researchers' calculations using data from IPEDS and other sources.

Australia's population was estimated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to be approximately 25.7 million as of the end of June 2021, despite the country's total land area being over 7.6 million square kilometers. The labor market of Australia heavily relies on migration. For instance, figures from

Jobs and Skills Australia indicate that there are plenty of job vacancies in the labor market in a variety of sectors, including 345,700 in the private sector and 43,100 in the public sector. To comprehensively address job vacancies, the government usually combines short-term solutions, like skilled migration, with long-term strategies, such as education and training. To facilitate skilled migration and ease this transition, the Australian government offers a variety of visa options. For instance, the Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189) is frequently selected by overseas students who have not received a nomination from their employers. As long as they fulfill specific point-based requirements, they are granted the right to remain, work, and reside in Australia for an extended period of time. Similarly, the Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190) offers another chance for skilled individuals who have been nominated to live and work permanently in Australia. Another pathway is the Employer Nomination Scheme visa (subclass 186), for which candidates must be nominated by an Australian employer and satisfy certain experience and skill requirements. Additionally, international students who have studied in Australia for a minimum of two years are eligible for the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485). After completing their education, individuals can use this visa to live and work temporarily in Australia. This can be a step toward obtaining permanent status. For the 2022–2023 program year, 179,017 Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visas were granted. A total of 179,017 Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visas were issued for the 2022–2023 program year. Put another way, these graduates will fill some of the 388,800 available jobs in Australia and the government always does its best to retain talent because today it’s the talent’s war.

Cultural diversity can contribute to a nation’s strength. The 2013 journal “Review of Economics and Statistics” article “Cultural Diversity, Geographical Isolation, and the Origin of the Wealth of Nations” by Quamrul Ashraf and Oded Galor in 2011 suggests that a moderate level of cultural diversity can stimulate economic growth by fostering entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. A Harvard Business Review paper titled “How Diversity Can Drive Innovation” (2013) reinforces this idea by emphasizing how different cultural viewpoints can provide a wider range of concepts and solutions. Cultural diversity boosts societies’ social resilience and adaptation, allowing for greater adaptability and resilience in communities and helping them to better respond to change and difficulties, according to the UNESCO 2009 World Report on Cultural Diversity. According to Joseph Nye’s notion of “soft power,” which he discusses in his book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics,” (2004), a nation’s soft power can be strengthened by having a diverse culture since it makes it more attractive and influential on the global stage. The McKinsey & Company report “Diversity Matters” in 2015 regarding workforce vitality found a significant correlation between diversity (including cultural diversity) and financial performance in companies, suggesting that having a diverse workforce can lead to stronger, more competitive, and more successful organizations.

In the US, UK, Australia, and Canada, international students significantly contribute to the diversity of cultures. The Institute of International Education (IIE) conducted an annual report of Open Door Report that emphasizes how important international students are to fostering cross-cultural dialogue and understanding in the US. The IIE's Open Doors Report provides an annual statistical analysis of foreign students in the United States and their effects on cultural diversity. A thematic description of "Building a Nation of Innovators" (2021) also talks about how foreign students enrich Canada's academic and cultural landscape by bringing fresh viewpoints and ideas. Academically, the Australian Education International (AEI) report "The Impact of International Students on Domestic Students and Host Institutions" (Ward, 2015) offers data demonstrating the ways in which international students enhance the learning environment at host universities. It discusses the benefits of cultural diversity that come with studying overseas, like how it enhances home students' educational experiences and fosters intercultural understanding. Additionally, Rajika Bhandari and Peggy Blumenthal's book "International Students and Global Mobility in Higher Education: National Trends and New Directions" (2010) explores the impact of these students on host institutions, particularly in terms of bringing diverse perspectives that enrich the academic and cultural environment. What is more, the "Global Graduates into Global Leaders" (Diamond, 2011) report highlights how many international students maintain contact with their host countries even after returning home, as reported by CFE Research and Consulting, the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE), and the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR). These ties may result in business partnerships and professional cooperation, including cooperative research and cross-cultural exchange. The academic paper "International Student Mobility: Approaches, Challenges, and Suggestions for Further Research" (Wells, 2014) published in the Journal of Studies in International Education states that former international students frequently work with their alma mater and contribute to academic and cultural exchanges. Additionally, according to IIE, the Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills, UK Government, publication "The Impact of International Alumni Networks on Export Trade and Foreign Direct Investment" provides evidence that these networks can promote international trade and investment.

The contribution of international students to the Australian economy: Various data sets and analysis indicate that international students make a substantial economic contribution to Australia. Firstly, according to Australian Financial Review, GDP growth in Australia dropped to 1.5% annually in 2023. Notably, education exports, which include spending by international students residing in Australia, played a crucial role in this figure. Analysis by economists at NAB revealed that spending by international students contributed 0.8 percentage points to the annual GDP growth, representing over half of the overall rate. This highlights the substantial impact of international education on Australia's economic performance.

Furthermore, the Australian economy benefited financially from overseas schooling in 2022. Over $29 billion was invested in the sector, of which $25.5 billion came from foreign students studying on-site and an additional $3.5 billion from online students. This underscores the vital role of international education in Australia's economic landscape, positioning it as the largest services export and a significant contributor to essential services and overall living standards nationwide (Universities Australia, 2023).

Additionally, it is clear that a large portion of Australia's higher education system is dependent on foreign students. After commodities like coal and iron ore, Australia's "education exports" were worth AUD$37.6 billion in 2018–19, placing it as the nation's third-largest export earner. This emphasizes how heavily the industry depends on foreign students to generate income, underlining their critical role in maintaining the financial stability of Australia's higher education system (Lucas, 2023).

Political Stability And Votes: How much of an impact will it have on the destination nation's politics, assuming a significant change in the study abroad destination market? Stated differently, what is the extent to which China and India, the two countries that possess a monopoly on the source of international students, exert influence over variables like the economies of these destination countries? Australia's border closures during the pandemic provide us with a wealth of informative information.

It is believed that the issue in international education affects more than just universities, according to Peter Hurley's report Coronavirus and International Students in 2020. Of the $37.5 billion in yearly revenue related to international education, roughly 57%, or $21.4 billion, come from goods and services used in the general economy. Less foreign students did not, however, have the same average effect in every state or region. For instance, this graph shows that in 2020, the coronavirus reduced the number of international students living in New South Wales by almost 80,000. The Mitchell Institute estimates that this would result in roughly 72,000 fewer international students living in the Greater Sydney region. This implies that if the number of international students drops once more, Australia's major cities, Sydney and Melbourne, might experience catastrophic economic effects.

Most of the several economic-related demonstrations and protests in Australia have so far been caused by the education sector. For instant, a recent Times Higher Education report in 2019 claims that there is industrial discontent at Australian universities, particularly in Victoria and Queensland. Universities are home to unions that advocate for better wages, benefits, and job security. Unrest at several institutions has led to significant strikes in spite of demands for better working conditions and salary increases.

Supposing there is another sharp drop in foreign enrollment in Australia similar to what happened during the pandemic, is there enough support in the country right now to meet the demand for wage increases, such as in the education sector today? Unsettlingly, there is a long history of protesting for pay increases and working condition improvements in industries other than education, like transportation. To what degree will the ruling party's votes suffer if Australia's economic sustainability is called into question? How much political clout will the opposition party simultaneously give to nations that control student resources in order to attract more foreign students?

Looking for Projected Emerging Markets

These inquiries will arise not only in Australia but also in other destinations where the study abroad industry is important. International relations dynamics are ever-evolving. Proponents of realism, like John Mearsheimer, argue in "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics," (2021) that great powers are forced to compete in order to preserve their supremacy, which results in a state of perpetual instability and revolving coalitions. Alexander Wendt's "Social Theory of International Politics," (1999) which emphasizes how state acts are shaped by their identities and the meanings they create via social interactions, is a representation of constructivism. This means that no one can predict on which day and in which country the above-mentioned "change crisis" will occur. Therefore, finding and cultivating alternative markets has become one of the strategies.

Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, and Indonesia are high-growth potential markets that are ready to expand and are comparatively underutilized by institutions in each destination market, according to ApplyBoard internal modeling and industry data. Numerous students from these countries are aiming to continue their education overseas, which is a common trend among all of the markets, each of which has its own potential strengths and opportunities. Bringing recruitment and diversification efforts to these areas would not only help institutions develop and prosper, but it will also shield them from the unpredictability of both local and global politics. Between 2010 and 2020, there were 13,700 Nigerian post-secondary students studying in the US, a sharp increase from 7,100 (Basiri, 2021). Furthermore, over 10,000 Nigerian students have enrolled annually in UK higher education programs during the previous five years (Hesa, 2019).

Kenyan students have become more numerous worldwide since 2015. Over the same period, the number of Kenyan students attending UK higher education institutions increased by almost 9%, compared to a growth of over 20% in the US. Canada and the US have already been impacted by the boom in the Bangladeshi market.

As stated the rise in the Bangladeshi market has already had an effect on the US and Canada. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Bangladeshi nationals in Canada holding post-secondary study permits rose from less than 2,000 to over 7,000. Conversely, in 2020, there were 8,800 Bangladeshi students enrolled in US colleges and universities, a dramatic increase of 2,800 in 2010. In contrast, during the same period, roughly 3,200 Bangladeshi students were enrolled in UK universities.

While Australian universities used to benefit from Indonesian students' close proximity, Indonesian students are increasingly considering alternative destinations. Over the preceding ten years, there has been a 20% growth in the number of new Indonesian post-secondary students studying in the US. Over the last five years, the number of Indonesian students attending UK higher education institutions has increased by 20%, and Indonesia is a major target market for UK recruitment strategies going forward. The number of Indonesian post-secondary students studying in Canada has nearly doubled during the last ten years. But out of the four destination markets for Indonesian nationals, Canada continues to be the smallest.

The opportunities for these countries to be considered emerging markets and are expected to have a larger number of international students exporting in the future generally revolve around two key factors:

Lack Of Domestic Higher Education Resources And Bleak Employment Situation:

Bangladesh's domestic education system is not capable of accommodating this influx of post-secondary students. This would lead to strong outbound mobility because Bangladeshi students are keen to study abroad and could possibly apply for permanent residency after graduation (Trines. 2019). Another example is Pakistan. Pakistan is predicted to have more post-secondary students than the United States by 2025, but the country's educational system is unlikely to be able to keep up with the nation's quickly rising demand for educational possibilities. Furthermore, Pakistani students find studying and working overseas to be an appealing option due to the country's poor socioeconomic conditions (Hunter, 2020).

Some studies believe that significant increases in domestic university tuition fees has made studying abroad more attractive than ever, such as in Kenya reported by University World News. But in fact this does not necessarily become a key factor. After all, no matter how much the tuition fees in the home country rise, they are still far from the expensive study abroad destinations of the four countries, and international students also need to consider the cost of living such as accommodation, which is much higher than in the home country.

An Increase In Population And Middle-Class:

The number of Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 23 is expected to climb by around 8.1 million over the course of the next ten years. As a result, Nigeria will have around 30 million young adults. Nigeria's GDP per person is expected to increase by 30% during this time. Undoubtedly, this will contribute to the growth of Nigeria's middle class, even though Nigerian students will probably continue to be extremely cost-conscious and choose areas with cheaper living and tuition costs. By 2030, over 65 million people are expected to live in Kenya, with over 8 million of them being between the ages of 18 and 23. Kenya's GDP per capita nearly doubled between 2010 and 2020, and further growth is anticipated (Basiri, 2021). However, Bangladesh is set to follow India's lead and emerge as a major hub for international students in the years to come. In Bangladesh, there will be 18 million individuals between the ages of 18 and 23 by 2025. The economy of the nation is also projected to grow, and by 2030, over 50 million additional Bangladeshis are predicted to join the middle class (Trines, 2019). Before the pandemic, Indonesia's GDP grew by 5.6% annually and the number of young people in the nation rose by almost 3 million (The World Bank, 2020). Indonesian students are more likely than ever to consider studying abroad, either to further their education and skills or to emigrate, as the pandemic has halted this remarkable growth. Beyond these emerging markets, Ghana's GDP per capita nearly doubled between 2010 and 2020, while the country's share of international students studying in the UK and Canada rose by 50% and 300%, respectively through the statistics of ApplyBoard in 2021. According to projections, Ethiopia will have the second-highest percentage of young adults in Africa by 2030. Ethiopia's GDP almost tripled in two decades, and the country may become a strong labor market by 2030 if it continues to invest heavily in education. Over the next ten years, Vietnam's young adult population will not increase significantly, but a strong middle class will motivate more Vietnamese students to seek higher education abroad (Basiri, 2021). Over the next five years, Vietnam presents the UK government with a significant growth opportunity.

Despite predictions that the demographic dividend of these emerging markets will surge and that the populations of China and India will decline over the next 30 years (United Nations, 2022), to use these emerging countries to alleviate the contribution value of Chinese and Indian students is a bit unrealistic for these four major destination countries (PwC, 2017). For example, even though the number of Chinese students studying in the United States in the 2022–2023 academic year was marginally less than in previous years, China remains the country of origin of the majority of international students studying in the country. This number indicates a decline from the peak enrollment of Chinese students in the 2019–2020 academic year, which was 372,532. However, this figure already exceeds the combined population of Bangladesh and Nigeria in 2020 (13,700 and 8,800, respectively), two highly sought-after emerging markets. (All population projections in this report are based on UN Population Prospects 2019 calculations and estimates of domestic populations aged 18 to 23. GDP projections in this section are sourced from PwC's The World in 2050 GDP projections for 2020 to 2030, except for Kenyan GDP projections, which are sourced from the EIU.)

Furthermore, these rising markets, including the African countries of Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt, could not always choose the four major markets of the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. According to Gao, throughout the previous ten years, there has been a notable rise in the number of African students studying in China. Less than 2,000 African students studied in China in 2003; by 2018, that number had significantly increased to 81,562 students. This raises an intriguing question, it seems: Will China eventually move up to become the fifth study abroad destination country?

The Fifth Study Abroad Destination Country

China, as the world's second largest economic system, has very high-quality genes that can attract international students. First of all, there are 9 universities in Top 100 of Qs100 Work University Rankings 2024 in China (Mainland and Hong Kong). The number of universities in the top 100 has surpassed Australia (7) and Canada (4), although it is still far below that of the United States (27).

China, including Hong Kong, is scored highly on the Safety Index as of 2023, suggesting a relatively safe environment in terms of public security. In particular, Hong Kong (China) receives a score of 78.5 on the safety index, compared to 73.7 for mainland China. Based on Numbeo's Safety Index, this ranks both regions as some of the safest places on Earth. In contrast to the US (51.0), UK (53.1), Australia (54.5), Canada (55.7), and Australia (55.1), China offers better comfort to overseas students about social security reported by Safety Index by Country 2023.

According to Study International (2020), China is known for being one of the most giving nations when it comes to offering scholarships to international students, for instance, the Chinese government promised in 2018 to provide African students with 50,000 scholarships between 2018 and 2021(Chiu, 2023). The available scholarships, which pay for living expenses, housing costs, and tuition, can be fully or partially funded. A substantial sum of money, up to $30,000 USD a month, is available for some of these scholarships.

When deciding on their destination country, international students also consider factors like income and job opportunities. Beijing topped mainland China's salary rankings in 2022, with average yearly salaries close to 200,000 yuan, or about $27,920. Shanghai closely followed this. The average annual wage in Shanghai's finance sector was 397,655 yuan, making it a fairly competitive field in terms of pay. Finance, at 305,100 yuan, software and information services, at 289,900 yuan, and intelligent and high-end manufacturing, at 289,200 yuan, were the top three industries in terms of the median salary of technical talent according to Global Times. However, there is still a significant difference when compared to developed nations. For instance, in 2022, the average salary in Canada is $59,050, while in Australia it is $59,408 per year (OECD, 2018). When the cost of living was taken into account, tech workers in San Francisco made significantly more money on average—$142,000 (£102,500)—than those in the UK, where the average salary was roughly £58,000. China's position is further weakened when viewed through the lens of immigration (Dougall, 2018). After all, China is not an immigration country, in contrast to nations like Australia and Canada. Nonetheless, the Chinese government is making a lot of effort to provide employment opportunities for foreign students. Uganda, for example, is a part of the Belt and Road initiative, spearheaded by China, which encompasses a number of massive infrastructure projects. As a result, at least 18,000 job opportunities have been created for African graduates, particularly those who are familiar with China and its work ethics and language.

The Cheese Might Be Touched In The Future

We view the nation as a business, and these organizations are involved in the national education sector. Any business that seeks to stand out or maintain its current position needs to have its own unique DNA. The United Kingdom's appeal as a study abroad destination for international students is largely due to its rich historical and cultural legacy. The foundation of this appeal is the UK's rich cultural heritage, which includes its distinguished past in science, literature, and education. Many of the most prestigious universities in the world, including the University of Oxford (established in the 12th century), the University of Cambridge (established in 1209), the University of St Andrews (formed in 1413), and the University of Glasgow (founded in 1451), are located in the United Kingdom. These colleges offer a deeply culturally and historically rich educational experience, embodying this heritage. On the other hand, numerous studies have demonstrated that the United States' robust economy, innovative technology, and welcoming environment for entrepreneurship and research all contribute to its appeal as a study abroad destination. The pieces emphasize how the US is at the forefront of technological advancement worldwide, how it approaches education in a dynamic and adaptable way, and how its culture encourages creativity and taking calculated risks. The elements that support an environment where students are exposed to cutting-edge research and a range of possibilities are hard to replace. Following, several of Canada's oldest universities, including University of King's College (founded in 1789), McGill University (founded in 1821), and University of Toronto (founded in 1827), are renowned for their lengthy histories and significant contributions to academia. However, its closeness to the US is by far its greatest benefit. For example, a nonstop flight from New York to Los Angeles can take up to six hours, whereas it only takes one and a half to two hours to get from Toronto to New

York.

How about Australia? Australia’s economic structure is quite straightforward. In 2023, the service sector will be by far the largest, accounting for 70.7% of the entire GDP. Manufacturing, agriculture, and industry comprised the other sectors (OOSGA, n.d.), accounting for 5.7%, 2.8%, and 26.4% of the total. New Zealand is its neighbor; in the first three months of 2023, 12,650 New Zealanders arrived in Australia intending to stay, a 42% increase from the same period the previous year (Moving to Australia, 2023). Despite the fact that some of Australia’s oldest universities, like University of Sydney (1850) and University of Melbourne (1853), are renowned for their long histories and academic heritage and have seen a rise in their QS rankings in 2023, Chinese students don’t seem to get it, particularly those pursuing doctorates. Among among the four main destination countries, Australia appears to be the one most vulnerable to losing market share in this instance. Chinese students, especially doctoral students, don’ t seem to buy it. In this case, Australia seems to be the country most vulnerable to having its market share eroded among the four major destination countries.

One strategy to compete in the current competitive international education industry is to offer a high number of immigration quotas. However, this immigration cap is not restricted to top talent, who will be given preference in the US, or to industries with a shortage of workers, like nursing, construction, and other blue-collar jobs that residents are unwilling to undertake. The majors that provide immigration routes also need to be more low-barrier, diverse, and straightforward. For instance, foreign students and new immigrants should be able to apply for immigration right before they graduate (they should be able to “create new economic value,” not just “fill vacancies”). This action will act as a nuclear bomb to draw in foreign students in addition to promoting the diversification of Australian industries and fostering innovation across all domains.

2. Conclusion

Based on market data, this article examines the state of the international higher education market, its prospects and challenges, as well as the substantial effects of the industry’s growth or relocation on the political and economic landscape of the nation. Universities, study abroad organizations, and the nation as a whole will benefit from this research by having a resource for assessing potential industry growth and developing pertinent policies.

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