



An international solution to a national crisis: Trends in student mobility to the United States post 2008



Ashley Macrander

Washington University in St. Louis, One Brookings Drive, Campus Box 1186, St. Louis, MO, 63130, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 July 2016

Received in revised form 21 December 2016

Accepted 28 December 2016

Available online xxx

Keywords:

International student mobility

United States

2008 financial crisis

Tertiary education

World-systems theory

ABSTRACT

Since the 2008 financial crisis, news outlets have discussed the importance of recruiting international students to augment funding. This article explores trends in international student mobility (ISM) to the United States post-2008 through a secondary data analysis of educational appropriations, international students, tuition revenue, and the economic benefit derived from ISM. The intent is to build an empirical bridge between popular news coverage and available data. Findings indicate that there is a significant, inverse relationship between declining educational appropriations and the growing influx of international students to the U.S. Notably, the majority of the growth in ISM following the financial crisis has been from the developing world, a reflection of the world-systems perspective of core-periphery inequality.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

“The influx of foreign nationals has been a boon for cash-strapped public universities. Nearly all of these schools have seen their funding slashed over the years, and looking abroad is one way to find young, bright minds willing to pay sticker price for their education” (Bellware, 2014, para.5)

The United States has been a preeminent destination for international student mobility (ISM) since the 1960s (Hazen & Alberts, 2006). However, the political economy surrounding ISM to the U.S. has shifted significantly in recent years. The 2008 financial crisis resulted in a \$14 trillion loss for the U.S. economy overall and led to the devaluation of university endowments and sizeable reductions in state and local funding (Grofum, 2013; Siegmund, 2009). For example, Harvard University saw an \$8 billion decline in its endowment following the economic downturn and the University of California and California State systems both experienced a 20% cut in expected state funding (Geiger, 2010; Wolinsky, 2009). As a result, news outlets and education scholars across the country have been underscoring the growing importance of recruiting international students not only to diversify institutional environments, but also to augment financial resources since international students pay higher tuition fees (e.g. Bellware, 2014; Choudaha & de Wit, 2014; Choudaha, 2011; Hawthorne, 2012; Lu & Hunt, 2015; Marklein, 2011; Ortiz, Chang, & Fang, 2015).

Though ISM to the United States has been explored in the literature, the widely-reported surge in ISM following the 2008 financial crisis has primarily been the purview of national media under headlines such as “Forget a Perfect SAT – What Colleges Really Want Are International Students” and “International Students Stream into U.S. Colleges” (Bellware, 2014; Jordan, 2015). This study explores trends in ISM to the United States post-2008 through a secondary data analysis of

E-mail address: ashleymacrander@wustl.edu (A. Macrander).

educational appropriations, internationally mobile students, tuition revenue and the economic benefit derived from ISM. The intent is to build an empirical bridge between popular news coverage of this growing phenomenon and available data in order to critically interrogate widely reported outcomes touted in the media. The objectives of this paper are to: (1) identify whether there is an inverse relationship between the growth in the number of international students following the 2008 financial crisis and a decline in state and local funding for public tertiary education, (2) determine if public tertiary institutions received a greater proportion of their revenue from student tuition post-2008 since the media posits that international students can supplement waning tertiary education funding through higher tuition fees, and (3) illustrate if the economic benefit to the states from ISM has grown following the 2008 financial crisis. This analysis allows for greater understanding of whether growth in ISM to the United States may be tied to state economic need, and whether there is an appreciable gain in states' economic benefit from international students as state funding declines. Additionally investigated, is whether there is a shift in the economic development classification of the source countries for ISM to the United States following the 2008 financial crisis in order to uncover whether there is a process of brain and economic drain at work from the developing to the developed world that has been exacerbated by the increased demand for international students.

Findings indicate that there is a significant, inverse relationship, beginning primarily in 2008, between declining educational appropriations and the growing influx of international students to the U.S. Notably, the majority of the growth in ISM following the financial crisis has been from the developing world, a reflection of the world-systems perspective of core-periphery inequality. This study demonstrates that at a national level funneling students from the developing to the developed world has led to an economic and academic boon for the destination country, the U.S., while draining resources from source nations and indicates a need for further critical research and reflection on the role and purpose of ISM to the United States. Following, is an overview of recent trends in international student mobility to the U.S. and the impact of the 2008 financial crisis on the country's tertiary education system pulled from the headlines as well as recent research. Then a discussion of the results of the analysis, which contribute to the conversation on the role of ISM to the United States post-2008.

2. Overview of recent trends in international student mobility to the United States

The United States has long been a favored destination for internationally mobile students, a fact that is further evidenced by recent growth in ISM to the U.S. (Altbach, 1998; Fischer, 2009; Gürüz, 2008; García & de Lourdes Villarreal, 2014; She & Wotherspoon, 2013). The country hosted nearly 672,000 international students during the 2008–2009 academic year and this number grew to 974,926 students by 2014–2015—a 45% increase mostly attributable to the influx of students from China and India following a rise in economic prosperity in both nations (Green & Koch, 2010; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; IIE, 2015a; Jordan, 2015; Mervis, 2014). Currently, international students account for 4% of all undergraduate enrollments in the United States, but in full-time graduate programs 40–70% of students in STEM fields such as chemistry, engineering, physics, and computer science are international (Anderson, 2013; IIE, 2015a; Redden, 2013). Internationally mobile students, primarily from the developing world, are drawn to complete their degree overseas through a series of “push-pull factors” that pull them into the destination country and push them to leave their country of origin. Pull factors to the United States include the sizeable number of schools and programs, the perceived quality of the tertiary education system and research infrastructure, scholarship opportunities, the ability to study in English, and the availability of student support services (IIE, 2015b; Macready & Tucker, 2011). Push factors compelling internationally mobile students to leave their country of origin may include the inability to access tertiary education because demand exceeds supply, discrimination, restrictive career or academic structures, or family expectations (Altbach, 1998; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). The majority of internationally mobile students to the United States since 2008 have been self-funded though many countries offer a limited number of government scholarships to support overseas study, including China, Mexico, and Japan (IIE, 2015a; Macready & Tucker, 2011). Only 20% of internationally mobile students to the country are supported by a U.S. college or university and fewer than 1% are funded by a private sponsor in the United States or the U.S. government (IIE, 2015a). As a result, the impact of increased ISM on the nation's economy has been sizeable. In 2008, ISM contributed \$17.8 billion to the U. S. economy, which represented 40–45% of the global market in education services and this number grew to \$27 billion by the 2013–2014 school year (Ortiz et al., 2015; Siegmund, 2009). In addition to their economic benefit, international students aid in the process of discovery within the institutional environment and expose domestic students to varying perspectives and approaches to scholarship (Alberts, 2007).

Upon completion of their schooling international students see an advantage from studying in the United States because their degree, experiences, and proficiency in English are often highly regarded in both the public and private employment sectors in their country of origin (García & de Lourdes Villarreal, 2014). However, 45% of all international student graduates choose to temporarily extend their visas to stay and work in the United States through the Optional Practical Training program and, more broadly, estimates project that one in ten tertiary-educated adults from the developing world and 30–50% of those who are STEM-educated reside in a developed nation (Lowell, Findlay, & Stewart, 2004; Ruiz, 2014). Major U. S. employers such as Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates recognize the growing importance of ISM and have called for major immigration reform that would allow for additional visas for STEM workers (Adelson, Buffet, & Gates, 2014; Lipton & Sengupta, 2013). This would directly impact long-term employment opportunities in the U.S. for internationally mobile students who primarily major in STEM fields such as engineering, computer science, the physical sciences, and economics (Bidwell, 2014; Ruiz, 2014; Ung, 2015). It's clear that the United States sees considerable academic, economic, and

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4938634>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4938634>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)