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TEACHING AND LEARNING ON THE MOVE: ISRAELI AND GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES AND TRENDS

The twenty-first century has so far been marked by growing international alliances in academic teaching and learning. This trend toward internationalization is manifest in most higher education systems in the western world in a variety of ways. In this article we address several aspects of undergraduate students' mobility, or more specifically, mobility of students unrelated to research contexts. There is a massive flow of undergraduate students who study outside their home countries in a broad range of international study programs, and large numbers of academic faculty who teach overseas. Academic mobility has reached unprecedented levels, growing from close to 50,000 individuals worldwide in the 1950s to 5 million in the 2000s. The internationalization and convergence of knowledge affect universities and their staff everywhere. In this article we review current trends and policies that enable and promote such mobility. Finally we discuss the challenges and risks.

Research literature shows that mobility is the “next hot thing” in the world of higher education. As countries transformed into global and international societies, higher education systems around the world were inevitably affected. Ever since the middle Ages, the international component of education has been an integral part of the world of research in higher education, but with the rising dominance of the global and technological world, this component has also trickled down to general and professional higher education including non-research programs. This is expected to continue to grow, and we can imagine that an international component will someday become a requirement for undergraduate degrees. Several trends stand out: The current patterns point to inequality between destination countries (the major share of the foreign student market is controlled by a small number of countries) and in terms of the composition of foreign students. There are strong institutions that attract

students, and there are students with the resources and/or talent that allow them to study overseas. Second, mobility policies vary around the world. In Europe, for example, mobility policy was originally an initiative of policymakers, while in the United States, local initiatives emerged in response to market demands.

In Israel, there is a limited awareness of the critical role of mobility in undergraduate studies. It is accurate to state that the initiatives of higher education institutions anticipate actions in this field by decision makers and policy makers, but a review of the available programs and their dissemination indicates that mobility opportunities are typically presented by institutions as a type of “bonus” offered to outstanding students, rather than an integral part of the training. Ultimately, the differences in the assimilation and promotion of mobility policies arguably stem from the extent to which governments or educational institutions consider global education to be an essential and integral part of training in a global world. Moreover, this is an inevitable process and it can only be expected that institutions and countries that fail to adjust to the changing world will be left behind.

Literature

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