Higher education and the Covid-19 pandemic – worldwide developments

[Simon Marginson, Oxford, for MEXT Symposium 30 November 2020]

1. **Student voice** – an increasingly important factor
2. **Technology** – great growth of online education, likely to have some permanent effects, including increase in global meetings
3. **International mobility** – negated, disrupted, will recover unevenly
4. **Finance** - destabilisation of institutions in market countries
5. **Graduate outcomes** – sharply worsened underemployment
6. **Collaboration** - in courses and facilities, in Covid-19 research
7. **Social differentiation** – disadvantaged social groups are further disadvantaged during the pandemic time, digital divide
8. **Global differentiation** – some countries handle the pandemic better and will recover better, in general and in higher education
The Covid-19 death toll varies greatly across the world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/region</th>
<th>Covid-19 dead (27.11.20)</th>
<th>Per 10,000 people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>4,739</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2,051</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15,586</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>38,558</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>15,568</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>263,455</td>
<td>8.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>171,460</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>57,031</td>
<td>8.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online education – a solution, the solution?

- Reassertion of sociability as the ‘glue’ in learning
- Logistical problems of hybrid model in teaching
- Problems of online education only – digital divide
- Potentials and limitations of MOOCs
- Lasting benefits of online evolution in 2020

**Proportion (%) of population with access to Internet, 2019 or nearest year**
Student mobility – before the pandemic

International/foreign students in tertiary education, worldwide number, 1998-2018 (millions), UNESCO data 2020
Student mobility – after the pandemic
International students in 2020 compared to UNESCO 2018 enrolment

- **United States**: 987,000 onshore enrolment up in 2020-21
- **United Kingdom**: 452,000 onshore enrolment down in 2020-21
- **Australia**: 445,000 onshore enrolment low in 2020-21
- **Germany**: 312,000
- **Russia**: 262,000
- **France**: 230,000
- **Canada**: 225,000
- **Japan**: 183,000
- **China**: 178,000
- **Turkey**: 125,000
- **Italy**: 107,000
- **Netherlands**: 105,000

DARK BLUE – onshore enrolment up in 2020-21
MEDIUM BLUE – onshore enrolment down in 2020-21
WHITE – onshore enrolment low in 2020-21
International student mobility has been affected by the pandemic differently from country to country

‘The crisis has affected the safety and legal status of international students in their host country, the continuity of learning and the delivery of course material, and student perception of the value of their degree, all of which could have dire consequences for international student mobility in the coming years’ - OECD, *Education at a Glance 2020*

- **USA** (987,000 in 2018), 43% drop in new enrolments in 2020-21
- Inward plane travel is partly or largely blocked into **Australia** (445,000 students in 2018), **Germany** (312,000), **Japan** (183,000), **Turkey** (125,000)
- **Germany** international applications down 20%, **Netherlands** down more
- International enrolment severely impaired in many other countries including **China**, **Canada**, **New Zealand**
- **UK** (452,000 students in 2018): has never closed the border though the pandemic is rife, this year 2020-21 accepting 7% more non-European international students, growth is in high prestige universities, but students have not been provided with promised ‘near normal’ higher education
Necessities of a market-driven approach?
Where will global student mobility recover best?

- **East Asia** (China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan) and some **European** countries (e.g. Finland, Denmark, Germany) have managed the pandemic best and will spring back in higher education. In these countries public universities have strong government support. All of these countries can gain ground early in their share of global student flows if they want to increase recruitment.

- Despite high Covid-19 death tolls **US and UK** will remain high demand nations (numbers are essentially supply driven, and that will not change); UK will gain short term from low mobility into US; US will spring back after the pandemic, Biden will support international education but question-mark about China.

- **Australia** has a lower Covid-19 death toll, but is blocking inward flights. Weaker demand than US/UK, slow recovery to pre-pandemic levels, political tension with China, research decline in future may impact global reputation.

- **Canada** looks like a long-term winner. It is offering support measures targeted at students affected by the virus, including additional work rights, and access to unemployment benefits.
The New Cold War may further disrupt academic mobility
Other emerging issues

• Research in most countries has been sustained well during the pandemic, but there have been reductions to junior science positions in some countries – danger of a ‘lost generation’ of doctoral graduates

• In the longer run, this may affect ‘World-Class University’ programs

• Total student/family demand for tertiary and higher education will increase (‘recession shelter’ effect)

• Graduate under-employment in recession conditions will be a major public issue in most countries and may lead some in government and the public to question the value of higher education . . .

• Especially given that one effect of the pandemic is to further disadvantage students from poorer families, rural areas and in some countries, under-represented minorities – so placing in more question higher education’s role in facilitating social mobility and equity
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Thank you for giving your attention to this presentation

"I have an attention span that's as long as it has to be" – attributed to Donald Trump