Globalization and cross-border education:
Challenges for the development of higher education in Commonwealth countries

N.V. Varghese
Globalization and cross-border education:
Challenges for the development of higher education in Commonwealth countries
Globalization and cross-border education: Challenges for the development of higher education in Commonwealth countries

N.V. Varghese
The views and opinions expressed in this booklet are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of UNESCO or IIEP. The designations employed and the presentation of material do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO or IIEP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

The publication costs of this study have been covered through a grant-in-aid offered by UNESCO and by voluntary contributions made by several Member States of UNESCO, a list of which will be found at the end of the volume.

This document is a revised version of the paper presented at the seventeenth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers Vice-Chancellors’ Forum held by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the Ministry of Education Malaysia at the Kuala Lumpur International Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15–19 June 2009.
Contents

List of abbreviations 6
List of tables 6
Abstract 7
1. Introduction 8
2. The knowledge economy and the need for an expanded higher education sector 9
3. Expansion of higher education in Commonwealth countries 11
4. Globalization of higher education and cross-border mobility in Commonwealth countries 14
   4.1 Modes of cross-border mobility 14
   4.2 Student mobility 15
   4.3 Institutional and programme mobility 18
5. Demand for quality-assurance mechanisms 20
6. Challenges facing higher education development in Commonwealth countries 22
References 25
List of abbreviations

ACU Association of Commonwealth Universities
CEC Council for Education in the Commonwealth
CHEA Council for Higher Education Accreditation
EQA external quality assurance
GATS General Agreement on Trade in Services
GER gross enrolment rate
IIE Institute of International Education
ILO International Labour Organization/International Labour Office
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
R&D research and development
UIS UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USP University of the South Pacific

List of tables

Table 3.1 GER in higher education in Commonwealth countries 12
Table 4.1 Major host countries in the Commonwealth 16
Table 4.2 Students sent abroad from Commonwealth countries 17
Abstract

Commonwealth countries vary widely in terms of their size and level of development. A few of them are developed countries with massified systems of higher education, whereas the majority of them are developing countries – some have a small but expanding higher education sector, some share the facilities of a university located in another country, and some do not have a university of their own and rely on cross-border provisions of higher education. This paper argues that the emergence of the knowledge economy and the resultant demand for skills have necessitated an expansion of higher education in all countries, encouraged skill migration from developing to developed countries, and promoted cross-border education (i.e. the mobility of students, institutions, and programmes). These changes also saw an end to an era when national public institutions alone provided higher education. The private sector and cross-border institutions are expanding fast and increasing their share in enrolment in higher education. In the process, the burden of financing higher education has shifted from the public to the household domain. The proliferation of institutions and programmes has given rise to problems related to the quality of higher education. Although governments have created national accreditation agencies, quality remains a serious issue in many countries. The major challenge lies in developing strategies to expand higher education while devising measures to ensure equity and quality. The role of the state remains important in developing policies to promote equity, guaranteeing quality, and regulating the operation of multiple agencies that offer higher education. This regulatory role of the state continues to increase even when its role in financing higher education may be on the decline.
Commonwealth countries vary widely in terms of their size and level of development. Among the 52 member states, national populations vary from 10,000 in Tuvalu to 1.1 billion in India. While some are developed countries, most are developing countries. The developed countries have massified systems of higher education, whereas many of the developing countries have a small but expanding higher education sector. Some of the small states do not have universities of their own and therefore share the facilities of a university, either within or outside their region, for their higher education provision.

Despite this level of diversity, two factors seem to be common among Commonwealth countries: the dominant role of public institutions in higher education development, and English being the language of instruction. The fiscal capacity of the state to fund and expand higher education through public institutions has become uncertain in recent years. The use of and reliance on English as the language for academic interactions continues to be encouraged. The latter factor has become even more relevant in the context of globalization, in which the English language enjoys a premium. In the initial years at the end of colonization, the state and public institutions played an important role in economic and educational development. Higher education was publicly funded, and graduates were employed in the public sector. Nowadays, the private sector has become an important player in economic development, in employment generation and in the provision of higher education. The liberalization policies adopted by many governments in the Commonwealth in the context of globalization promoted the role of the market and facilitated the cross-border flow of goods, services, and factors of production.

The higher education sector not only supported globalization, but also became globalized in the process. The cross-border mobility of institutions, programmes, students, and teachers helped in globalizing higher education. The private sector, cross-border providers, and technology-based modes of delivery changed the landscape of higher education and made it a marketable service across countries. The multiplicity of providers and the proliferation of programmes have brought issues related to the quality of provision, teaching/learning processes and products to the forefront.

This paper discusses the changes taking place in the higher education sector in Commonwealth countries and the challenges they face in their efforts to shape their higher education systems for the future. It will first discuss the increasing demand for skills in knowledge economies and the need for an expanded higher education sector, before going on (in Section 3) to examine trends in the expansion of higher education in Commonwealth countries. It will then analyse the globalization of higher education in Commonwealth countries, focusing on the cross-border mobility of students, institutions, and programmes, in Section 4. Section 5 will deal with issues related to quality assurance in higher education; and the final section will discuss the challenges facing higher education development in Commonwealth countries.
Globalization, technological changes, the rise of the knowledge economy, and changing skill requirements in the labour market seem to influence changes in the landscape of higher education, not just in Commonwealth countries but worldwide. Since the emergence of these phenomena, knowledge-based sectors have become the primary drivers of growth, and the demand for skills and higher education qualifications is on the rise. The move towards a knowledge economy has been characterized by a change in the pattern of deployment of the labour force and an increase in the knowledge content of products. Knowledge economies have experienced a migration of workers from manufacturing activities to service sector activities, making the latter a dominant sector both in terms of level of employment and income generated. The share of the labour force engaged in service sector occupations doubled or trebled in knowledge economies in the 1990s (World Bank, 1999).

The quantity of knowledge embedded in the goods produced and exported has increased considerably (World Bank, 1999). While the knowledge content has increased, the goods have become, as it were, lighter in weight – in fact, ‘weightless’ – facilitating their exportation. Knowledge economies engage in knowledge production (R&D) and in the production of knowledge-based goods. Investment in knowledge production is financially rewarding to firms, increases national income, and helps maintain the potential for growth and national competitiveness for the future (Chen and Dahlman, 2004). While returns to investments in knowledge-based production may be achieved in the short term, those from investments in research and development (R&D) activities may only be realized in the long term.

Knowledge economies require people with theoretical knowledge to promote research activities, with professional skills to develop production, and with technical skills to produce and support production. These skills correspond to a level of education imparted in universities and institutions of higher education. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2004) estimated that, in some knowledge economies, nearly 70 per cent of all new jobs require a post-secondary level of education. While the more advanced countries have universalized school education and massified, if not universalized, higher education, most of the Commonwealth countries are far from reaching this target. Further, it has become essential that the developing countries expand their higher education sector if they are to catch up with the technological advances of other countries and accelerate their economic growth (World Bank, 2009). In other words, for developing countries, higher education expansion is becoming a prerequisite for progress towards a knowledge economy.

The quantity of skills required has outstripped the capacity of the existing higher education institutions to produce them, even in countries that have the largest networks of higher education institutions. The choice for these countries was either to expand the capacity of their higher education systems to produce these skills domestically, or to import skills from the global market. While the former may be a desirable option in the long run, it would require heavy investment and take some time to build the necessary infrastructure. Thus
Globalization and cross-border education:
Challenges for the development of higher education in Commonwealth countries

these countries have preferred a more immediate, ready-made solution and encouraged skill migration, especially from developing countries, leading to a ‘global hunt’ for talent (Kapur and McHale, 2005).

Many developed countries have thus made it easier for highly skilled workers to obtain a visa, with the aim of boosting skill migration. For example, the introduction of the H1B visa in the United States (USA) helped to attract skilled workers, especially from Asia. Nearly 1 million highly skilled workers entered the USA under the H1B visa between 2000 and 2003 (Kapur and McHale, 2005). The European Union is introducing the Blue Card visa to attract skilled workers from developing countries. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (UK) have introduced point-based migration policies that give preferential treatment to candidates with higher-level qualifications.

Even so, it seems that the level of migration has not been sufficient to meet global demands. Further, the quality of the skills possessed by migrants has not always been at the level demanded by the production sectors. This called for a greater output of skilled workers, either domestically or abroad, from institutions with established credibility to assure quality. Attention, therefore, turned to cross-border education, to alternatives such as institutions of higher education in developed countries (student mobility), certified institutions/branch campuses in developing countries (institutional mobility), or distance modes of education (programme mobility), which proved to be reliable in ensuring quality.

The cross-border mobility of students was encouraged, especially since it was found that a majority of those who entered OECD countries as students would stay there after their studies. For example, it was found that nearly 90 per cent of Chinese and Indian doctorate students in the USA did not return home after their studies. It is clear from this that, in many developed countries, cross-border education has become fertile ground for recruiting future highly skilled workers (Tremblay, 2002). In addition, there were institutions and corporations willing to invest in cross-border institutions or programmes as profit-making ventures. The private sector and transnational institutions play an important role in this mode of cross-border skill development, which relies more on individual than on state funding. In other words, cross-border education has helped transfer the cost of skill development from the public to the individual domain, and was also a necessary condition for the expansion of market operations in this area.
Commonwealth member countries are so diverse that it is difficult to provide a general overall picture of higher education. The Commonwealth includes large and small countries, rich and poor, remote islands and mainland countries. The total population of the 52 countries constituting the Commonwealth amounts to nearly 2 billion – nearly one-third of the world’s population. Forty-four of the 52 Commonwealth states are developing countries, while the remainder are economically advanced. Thirty-two of them are small states and 23 have a population of less than 1 million. These factors, which contribute to diversity, greatly influence the shaping of higher education systems in the Commonwealth.

Some of the countries are too small to make a university a viable entity. For example, two universities – the University of the South Pacific (USP), Laucala, Fiji, and the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, Jamaica – serve more than half the countries of the Commonwealth. USP is jointly owned by the governments of 12 island countries of the Pacific region with branch campuses in all of the member countries. The University of the West Indies serves 15 countries in the English-speaking Caribbean region, also with branch campuses in all of its member countries. Many of the 27 countries that are served by these two universities do not dispose of a university on their own territory, although they may have non-university tertiary institutions. Many students from islands and small countries pursue their higher education abroad and are thus included in the enrolment figures of the universities abroad.

At the other end of the scale, the larger countries – such as India, with a population exceeding the billion mark; Pakistan, and Bangladesh, with over 150 million population each; and Nigeria with a population of around 130 million – have several universities. Furthermore, countries such as Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the UK, although smaller than the above-mentioned large countries, also have large numbers of universities. The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) consists of nearly 500 universities (Kubler and Tarrant, 2008), which is, even so, less than the total number of universities in the Commonwealth.

One of the features of higher education is that it is a sector that is expanding in all regions of the world. Between 1991 and 2006, the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions worldwide more than doubled, from 68 to 143.9 million students (UNESCO–UIS, 2008). The gross enrolment rate (GER) increased from 13.8 to 25 per cent during this period. However, this expansion of higher education was uneven between regions. For example, the fastest growing region was the East Asia and Pacific region, home to more than one-third of Commonwealth countries, where the GER more than tripled to 25 per cent. The lowest GER of 5 per cent is in the Africa region, which also constitutes a third of the Commonwealth countries.

This paper, which provides a detailed discussion on the expansion of higher education in the Commonwealth countries, is restricted to the 21 large states that have universities and higher education institutions and for which information is readily available. Table 3.1 shows the trends in the expansion of higher education over the past two decades in these 21 states.
Globalization and cross-border education: Challenges for the development of higher education in Commonwealth countries

Table 3.1 GER in higher education in Commonwealth countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>13.25*</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: – = not available; * = 1990

Trends show that the developed countries of the Commonwealth – such as Australia, Canada, the UK – were not only already more advanced in higher education enrolments, but also further expanded their higher education systems very rapidly between 1985 and 1995. A closer examination of this trend reveals that this expansion was most marked in the early 1990s when enrolment ratios almost doubled. After this rapid expansion in the first decade, enrolment ratios in these countries stabilized or declined in the second decade (1995–2006) and thereafter. The trend was somewhat the reverse in the developing countries of the Commonwealth, with a relative stagnation from 1985 to 1995, followed by an acceleration during the decade 1995–2006, although many of them still continue to have relatively low enrolment ratios. In some of the advanced countries and in South Africa, however, the GER declined during the same period.

On the basis of these trends in the expansion of the system, one can distinguish three categories of countries in the Commonwealth:

1. countries with an extensive higher education system and a stagnating or declining GER in the current decade (e.g. Australia, Canada, South Africa, UK);
2. countries where the GER is rapidly increasing (e.g. Ghana, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Tanzania, although it is still extremely low in all countries except Malaysia and New Zealand);

3. countries where the GER is low and expansion is relatively slow (e.g. Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi).

It can be noted that this rapid expansion of higher education in Commonwealth countries first happened in the developed countries, followed by developing countries a decade later. This may be partly due to the fact that the demand for the skills required for the knowledge economy and the pressure to expand higher education were felt first in the developed countries. It was universal formal education in developed countries that exerted pressure on the higher education system to expand. At a later period, these same factors played a similar role in the expansion of the higher education systems in developing countries. It may be equally plausible to argue that, among the developing countries of the Commonwealth, those experiencing globalization have undergone a more rapid expansion of their higher education sector.

The expansion of higher education seems to have been faster in those developing countries of the Commonwealth that have a strong private sector. Many countries introduced laws in the 1990s permitting the operation of private and transnational institutions of higher education, and many such institutions were established during the past decade. It seems that rapid expansion in these countries was dependant on non-state resources, highlighting the association between globalization, markets, and the expansion of higher education, even in developing countries.
4 Globalization of higher education and cross-border mobility in Commonwealth countries

4.1 Modes of cross-border mobility

Cross-border mobility is a means of globalizing higher education. Two factors seem to have contributed positively to the process of globalizing higher education in Commonwealth countries. First, the fact that many Commonwealth countries provide instruction in English facilitates the process of enrolling in courses in other countries for many students. Since the English language enjoys a premium on the global labour market, individuals are more than willing to invest in courses offered in this language. Thus, the language factor is an added advantage in promoting cross-border mobility within Commonwealth countries.

Second, many Commonwealth countries moved away from publicly funded higher education towards market-oriented higher education. Many countries diversified their tertiary education systems and permitted the operation of private-sector establishments and cross-border institutions. With the expansion of the higher education market, private and cross-border providers have become numerous, selling courses and study programmes to foreign students. The deregulation policy measures and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) helped ensure the continuation of cross-border education in Commonwealth countries (Kubler and Lennon, 2008).

GATS covers all internationally traded services, including education. Within the education sector, GATS covers five education service categories: primary, secondary, higher, adult, and ‘other’. Cross-border education under the GATS framework can be delivered through one of four modes (Knight, 2002):

1. cross-border supply, where services are transmitted across borders (e.g. distance education programmes);
2. consumption abroad, where the consumers (students) cross the border to pursue studies;
3. the commercial presence of the provider, where service suppliers cross borders to deliver the services on-site (e.g. branch campuses or twinning and franchising arrangements); and
4. the presence of individual persons, where an individual crosses borders to provide the service (e.g. staff mobility).

Although cross-border higher education among Commonwealth countries takes place through all four modes, this paper will concentrate on the first three modes – cross-border mobility of students, programmes, and institutions.
4.2 Student mobility

Student mobility is not a new phenomenon for Commonwealth countries. In fact, for many decades this was the only mode of pursuing higher education in the small states of the Commonwealth. In the absence of universities in small island states, students traditionally sought higher education opportunities abroad. This is true of both the Pacific and Caribbean regions. The only difference may be, perhaps, that in the past study-abroad programmes were funded by the government or external agencies, whereas they are now mostly funded by the individuals themselves.

In fact, the study-abroad programme may work out to be cheaper than establishing universities, which may not be a viable option in many countries. The unit costs of higher or university education are greater in small states since they are unable to establish economies of scale (Bray and Packer, 1993). The study-abroad programmes were mainly supported by external funding. The South Pacific region is an example of the highest concentration of external funding support for higher education. ‘Nowhere else in the world is such a high proportion of post-secondary education carried out by international agencies’ (Crocombe and Crocombe, 1994: 26). However, it had its disadvantages since higher education budgets in these countries have fluctuated. The share of education in total budgets grew in many countries due to an increase in aid flows, especially after the commitment of the donor community at the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All of March 1990. However, external funding was directed mainly towards primary education and, therefore, the 1990s experienced a decline in the share of budgets for higher education in these countries (Varghese, 2003).

There are a few other countries in the Commonwealth that traditionally send a large share of their students abroad for higher studies. This has been the case of Cyprus, which, even after founding its own university in 1992, continued to send nearly 50 per cent of its higher education students abroad. Similarly, Singapore and Malaysia used to send nearly one-fifth of their tertiary education students abroad (UNESCO, 1999). However, the motivation encouraging these students to pursue their tertiary education abroad was more the quality of the education offered in the English language than increasing access or opportunities for higher education. Further, the students from these countries were mainly supported either by national governments or individual funding rather than external funding.

In 2006, the number of students seeking cross-border education globally amounted to nearly 2.9 million (OECD, 2008), creating a market worth US$40–50 billion. In 2005 alone, the USA earned US$14.1 billion from cross-border education; the UK earned US$6.1 billion; and Australia US$5.6 billion (Bashir, 2007).

There is competition among countries and higher education institutions to attract foreign students. The most prevalent pattern of cross-border student flow is from developing towards developed countries. The USA attracts the single largest share of foreign students (20 per cent), followed by the UK (13 per cent), Germany (8 per cent), France (8 per cent), Australia (7 per cent), and Japan (4 per cent) (IIE, 2007). Asian countries top the list of sending countries with a share of 45.3 per cent of students, followed by Europe (23 per cent), Africa (9.9 per cent), North America (3.5 per cent), and South America (5 per cent) (OECD, 2008).
Globalization and cross-border education: Challenges for the development of higher education in Commonwealth countries

There are some Commonwealth countries among the important global players in cross-border higher education. Countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the UK hosted a total of 0.74 million foreign students in 2008 (UNESCO-UIS, 2010), accounting for nearly a quarter (24.8 per cent) of the global flow of international students (Table 4.1). One can see that the number of students hosted by these countries increased substantially during the decade ending in 2006. It rose by nearly 1.6 times in the UK, 2.2 times in Australia and Canada, and more than 4 times in South Africa. The biggest increase of nearly 8 times took place in New Zealand. This shows that Commonwealth countries are becoming a favourite destination for international students, although the number of international students declined in Canada and New Zealand between 2006 and 2008.

Table 4.1 Major host countries in the Commonwealth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of foreign students hosted (000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>35.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>12.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>197.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>343.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * = 1994; ** = 1995

Most students seeking admission to universities or higher education institutions in the above-mentioned countries are from other Commonwealth countries. Table 4.2 provides information regarding the sending countries. The number of students sent by the developed countries, with the exception of Australia, increased moderately and was less than the increase in the number of students hosted by them, as can be seen by comparing Table 4.2 with Table 4.1. The number of students sent abroad increased nearly twofold in most of the developing countries. In some instances, such as Bangladesh, the increase was threefold, and fourfold in the case of Nigeria. While the biggest increase of nearly 3.5 times was experienced by India, Malaysia experienced a decline in the number of students travelling abroad, and in Singapore the increase was moderate. The decline of students going abroad from Malaysia may be partly due to the presence of a number of branch campuses of foreign universities operating in that country.

In 1959, during the first meeting of Commonwealth ministers in Oxford, a Commonwealth Shared Scholarship Scheme was introduced to support cross-border higher education studies in Commonwealth countries. This scheme provided an opportunity for students from other Commonwealth countries to study in the UK, and for British nationals to study in another Commonwealth country. More than 25,000 students benefited from this scheme between 1959 and 2009 (Oxford University, 2009). Similar scholarship schemes were made available from Australia, New Zealand, and other countries.
Nowadays, the possibilities for fellowships are declining, and cross-border higher education is increasingly funded by households. In a recent report submitted to the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in South Africa, it is noted that the largest source of funds for cross-border studies is private or self-funding (CEC, 2006). With the financing burden shifting from public to private sources, the cost factors are becoming important considerations for students when choosing a country for cross-border study.

Table 4.2  Students sent abroad from Commonwealth countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sending country</th>
<th>Number of students sent (000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>241.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The level of fees levied from students of higher education varies among countries in the Commonwealth. Some countries do not levy tuition fees for any students; some countries levy the same level of fees for domestic and foreign students; and some countries levy high fees for foreign students and low fees for domestic students. The major host countries of the Commonwealth (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK) all levy varying levels of tuition fees. One of the reasons for an increase in the flow of students to Australia and New Zealand in the 1990s may be due to the low level of tuition fees and low cost of living compared to the UK (Varghese, 2008).
4.3 Institutional and programme mobility

Another aspect of cross-border education is institutional mobility. Institutional mobility takes place mainly through branch campuses, franchising, or twinning arrangements. While branch campuses are more visible, franchising and twinning arrangements can be less visible, even when quantitatively they constitute larger segments of institutional mobility. The most important players in the context of institutional mobility in the Commonwealth are Australia and the UK. Malaysia is a good example of a host country for institutions since branch campuses can be found there of Nottingham University (UK), Monash University and Curtin University (Australia), etc. (Sirat, 2006).

India has several foreign institutions in operation, mainly from the UK and the USA. A study of 131 foreign-affiliated institutions in India (Bhushan, 2005) showed that 59 partnered with universities in the UK and 66 partnered with universities in the USA. High-level delegations are visiting India to establish branch campuses or collaborations with Indian institutions. Professor Rick Trainor, President of Universities UK (which represents the heads of all UK universities), led a delegation of British Vice-Chancellors to India to discuss institutional collaborations, and student and teacher mobility between premier institutions in India and the UK (Kings College, 2008).

Private higher education institutions offer an easy entry point for foreign providers. In fact, in many countries transnational providers operate through private institutions. Many of them offer market-friendly courses to cater to private business enterprises – foreign or domestic. Courses in business administration, computer science, accounting, marketing, economics, and communication are very common in such institutions. Collaboration with foreign universities and institutions helps the local private universities to obtain academic credibility and to raise their reputation for quality, which consequently allows them to charge higher fees.

Some private universities in Asia attract foreign students from neighbouring countries. For example, the North South University of Bangladesh enrolls students from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and other countries (Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2004). Similarly, the branch campuses of foreign universities located in Malaysia attract foreign students. This is also the case of transnational providers operating in Singapore and South Africa, for example.

Some small island states of the Commonwealth that do not have a university of their own have branch campuses of some (although few) foreign universities or institutions. Other modes of cross-border education are also common in small states; the availability of computer facilities gives access to study programmes and resource materials through distance and Internet education, which are increasingly replacing overseas study, enabling students to pursue higher education programmes in foreign universities without leaving their home country. Thus, the combination of expanding connectivity and the growing reservoir of open education eliminates the disadvantages faced by the small states (Daniel, 2006).

Technological advances have allowed the expansion of programme mobility, and this concerns not only the small states of the Commonwealth. Due to its low cost and the fact that it reduces migration and brain drain, many countries worldwide are increasingly implementing this mode of educational expansion. Any institution wishing to introduce distance education can now use a range of open-source learning management systems or software platforms that
Globalization of higher education and cross-border mobility in Commonwealth countries

support e-learning. Indeed, some of the large states in the Commonwealth have some of the largest distance-learning programmes and virtual universities in the world. Some of the national open universities enrol a large number of students from abroad; the Indira Gandhi National Open University in Delhi, for example, enrolls almost 11,000 foreign students.

Some Malaysian universities franchise their programmes to local private colleges. This enables those who were unable to access public universities to study in a private university and obtain a university degree.
Demand for quality-assurance mechanisms

In the past, most Commonwealth countries relied on public universities for the provision of higher education. Public universities traditionally had an established mechanism for the control of academic quality. At times, these were influenced, if not controlled, by the state. The quality-control mechanisms focused mainly on the input factors, such as: student selection and admission, staff qualifications, financial allocations, scores in examinations, etc. Nowadays, the approach to quality assessment is changing as other actors enter the scene. The state is no longer the sole provider of higher education in most countries. The existence of a multiplicity of providers – public, private and cross-border – and modes raises the issue of comparability and the quality of the higher education imparted.

What makes the assessment of quality in the present context different is also its change in focus from the traditional quality-control mechanisms. Quality assurance in the present context focuses not only on input factors but also on the teaching/learning process – an area relatively untouched by traditional procedures – as well as on outcomes, in place of the traditional focus on inputs and the regularity of assessment against the traditional ad hoc approach.

Nowadays, most of the large states in the Commonwealth have set up accreditation agencies to ensure quality in higher education. They are mostly national in character. Accreditation is a process by which an agency – external, public, or private – evaluates the quality of a higher education institution or its programmes in order to formally recognize its ability to meet pre-determined standards and criteria.

External quality assurance (EQA) is very often based on minimum standards, although there are instances where it is based on high-level quality. At the minimum level, standards focus on input factors related to student admissions, staff qualifications, facilities, and funding. The process factors considered are management and research activities. The focus of EQA is to determine to what extent the institution or programme conforms to the prescribed standards. In a sense, it gives formal certification to an institute or programme indicating that it has met the minimum expected standards.

Higher education in many countries is diversified in terms of both institutions and programmes. The non-university sector is also expanding its share in enrolment. Although EQA systems can address both the university and non-university sectors, very often they focus only on universities. This is primarily due to the fact that universities enjoy an almost total autonomy in introducing study programmes, while the non-university sector is more under the control of the public authorities or is managed by the private sector. In many countries, accreditation mechanisms are in place to grant private universities a license to operate. In some Commonwealth countries, this licensing process is a three-stage process consisting of provisional registration, full registration, and accreditation. It is alleged that in some countries, EQA operates more as a regulating mechanism of private and transnational providers.

It seems that the globalization of higher education also calls for the globalization of quality assurance and accreditation services (Martin and Stella, 2007). There are accreditation
Demand for quality-assurance mechanisms

agencies located in one country that cover institutions in other countries. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in the USA is one example. Recent developments in the area indicate that there is a growing trend towards developing regulatory frameworks for quality assurance at the regional and international levels, in addition to such frameworks at the national levels. The regional regulations in the area of quality control mechanisms focus on the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education, which was established by the Council of Europe in cooperation with UNESCO and adopted at the Lisbon Convention (1997). The code protects students from fraudulent degrees and qualifications, and prevents the national authorities from devising too strict regulations for transnational education (Verbik and Jokivirta, 2005). UNESCO and OECD have developed a set of guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education (UNESCO and OECD, 2005). The other guidelines produced jointly by UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning (Knight, 2006) provide a more detailed description of the modalities, especially for countries entering GATS negotiations.

Many countries have invested in setting up accreditation agencies. However, the simple creation of these agencies may not be sufficient to ensure quality. There is a need to make sure that they function autonomously and effectively, covering all public, private, and trans-border institutions engaged in higher education. Since the non-university tertiary education sector is expanding, it is important to extend the purview of EQA to all such institutions.
Challenges facing higher education development in Commonwealth countries

There are broadly three categories of Commonwealth countries with regard to higher education: (1) advanced countries with massified higher education systems, (2) developing countries with less-developed but quickly expanding systems of higher education, and (3) small states without a university of their own. The need to expand opportunities may be equally important to the latter two categories, and ensuring the quality of higher education may be a common interest of all countries in all categories.

The first challenge facing developing countries and small states is how to expand the higher education system. It is becoming increasingly clear that expansion of higher education through public institutions has its limitations, given the fiscal capacity of the state. The option then is to expand higher education relying on non-state resources. This implies: (1) privatizing public institutions of higher education, (2) promoting private higher education, (3) encouraging cross-border providers, and (4) expanding opportunities for distance learning – the promotion of e-learning.

The privatization of public institutions implies the adoption of market principles in the operation of public institutions of higher education. Cost-recovery methods are examples of this strategy. Many countries in Africa have adopted the pattern of a dual-track system, where one group of students is supported by the state and receives subsidized education, while another group pays for its education. This has been a successful strategy to expand higher education through public institutions in many countries. In fact, in many cases the number of students sponsored by the government increased marginally, while the number of fee-paying students increased substantially. In universities such as Makerere in Uganda, nearly 80 per cent of the students in the public university are private (fee paying). The challenge is how to introduce cost-recovery methods, since experience shows that such efforts are resisted in many instances.

Private higher education has become a common phenomenon in many countries. The actual number of such institutions sometimes surpasses the number of public institutions, although, in terms of enrolment, public institutions still account for the largest share and accommodate the majority of students. However, it is important to note that the share of the private sector in enrolment is increasing in many countries, reaching nearly one-third of the total enrolment.

There are different types of transnational providers. Some are private institutions in the host and sending countries; some consist of a public institution in the sending country and a private institution in the host country; and some operate in collaboration with domestic institutions of higher education, especially private institutions.

Both private and cross-border institutions levy fees from students. The amount of fees depends on the type of institution. There are two types of private and cross-border institutions – for-profit and not-for-profit institutions. It is important to avoid the commercialization of higher education by these institutions, and there is a need to regulate the opening and operation
of private and cross-border institutions (Varghese, 2009). The challenge lies in developing mechanisms to regulate these institutions.

The open and distance-learning systems have widened the scope for expanding higher education. Technological advances and their availability have provided opportunities for people to follow programmes of study and courses at their own pace. This is a particularly important mode for expanding higher education in small states. Higher education through this mode is less expensive than the face-to-face mode. The major challenge will be to ensure the availability of the technology to people who would like to pursue higher education through this mode.

All of these modes of expanding higher education anticipate a transfer of the financial burden to individuals and households. However, this does not mean that the state will cease to fund higher education; it will continue to do so as far as possible. However, the opportunities to pursue higher education will not be limited by the fiscal capacity of the state and its willingness to fund students.

There is a need to introduce student-support systems as part of the cost-recovery or private-sector operations. Student loans will be offered to students to help cover their fees and living expenses. The student-loan schemes introduced in many countries in the 1970s were not a success. However, the new initiatives in student loans seem to be working. Unlike in the past, when loans were given by the government, these loans are more often offered by banks and other commercial organizations. The challenge is not to distribute loans to students, but to keep track of them and recover them when the students have finished their studies. In some developing countries, the cost of recovering loans exceeds the amount recovered, and the government has almost abandoned the idea of recovering them altogether.

It is important to ensure equity while the higher education system expands. Cost-recovery measures are not equity-friendly. There is a need to ensure that the interests of those from economically poorer backgrounds and socially disadvantaged groups are protected. Public financial intervention targeting students from these groups may be necessary to maintain equity in the system.

An equally important area is ensuring the quality of the higher education imparted. There is a need for regulation to ensure quality at all stages. This is more essential in the context of the proliferation of institutions and programmes, especially through private and transnational providers. Permission to own and operate a private or cross-border institution needs to be granted after the minimum facilities and conditions are guaranteed. There are instances of fraud in the operation of transnational providers (Hallak and Poisson, 2007). Some cross-border providers are found to be of dubious quality, with bogus institutions and fake degrees. Some such institutions automatically increase their fees every year. However, some national authorities stipulate the regulations on fees, and prohibit cross-border or private providers from raising tuition fees without their prior approval.

Nowadays, many countries involved in cross-border higher education insist that foreign institutions must already be accredited in their country of origin before they are granted permission to operate in the host country. Further, most countries which agree to cross-border education demand that the establishment of a foreign institution systematically follow the
procedures for seeking permission from the concerned ministry (very often the ministry of education) before the campus is opened in the host country.

Finally, the state may not be able to provide funding support to expand higher education. However, this does not imply that state intervention is not necessary. There is a need to separate state intervention from financing issues. Government intervention is needed more to develop policy, provide a framework for action, and ensure equity and quality rather than to finance educational development. Government intervention is needed more to regulate the system than to control and finance higher education development.
References


Other titles on external quality assurance and higher education

Institutional restructuring in higher education in Asia: trends and patterns
by N.V. Varghese

The National Accreditation System in Colombia: experiences from the National Council of Accreditation (CNA)
by José Revelo Revelo; Carlos Augusto Hernández

Accreditation in the USA: origins, developments and future prospects
by Elaine El-Khawas

Accreditation in the higher-education system of Hungary: a case study for international comparison
by Tamás Kozma in collaboration with Imre Radácsi, Magdolna Rébay, Tamás Hives

External quality assurance in Indian higher education: case study of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
by Antony Stella

Reforming higher education in the Nordic countries – studies of change in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden
by Ingemar Fägerlind, Görel Strömqvist (Eds.)

Growth and expansion of private higher education in Africa
Edited by N.V. Varghese

In pursuit of continuing quality in higher education through accreditation: the Philippine experience
by Adriano A. Arcelo

Private higher education in Georgia
by George Sharvashidze

Private higher education in Kenya
by Okwach Abagi, Juliana Nzomo, Wycliffe Otieno
Edited by N.V. Varghese

Entrepreneurialism and the transformation of Russian universities
by Michael Shattock (Ed.), Evgeni Kniazev, Nikolay Pelikhov, Aljona Sandgren, Nikolai Toivonen

Private higher education in Bangladesh (web only)
by Mahmudul Alam, M. Shamsul Haque, Syed Fahad Siddique
Edited by N.V. Varghese

GATS and higher education: the need for regulatory policies (web only)
by N.V. Varghese

Knowledge for the future: research capacity in developing countries (web only)
by N.V. Varghese, B.C. Sanyal

Cross-border higher education: regulation, quality assurance and impact (2 vols.)
by Michaela Martin (Ed.)

External quality assurance: options for higher education managers
Set of IIEP training modules

External quality assurance in higher education: making choices
by Michaela Martin, Antony Stella

Trends in diversification of post-secondary education
by N.V. Varghese, V. Püttmann
IIEP publications and documents

More than 1,500 titles on all aspects of educational planning have been published by the International Institute for Educational Planning. A comprehensive catalogue is available in the following subject categories:

**Educational planning and global issues**
- General studies – global/developmental issues

**Administration and management of education**

**Economics of education**
- Costs and financing – employment – international cooperation

**Quality of education**
- Evaluation – innovation – supervision

**Different levels of formal education**
- Primary to higher education

**Alternative strategies for education**
- Lifelong education – non-formal education – disadvantaged groups – gender education

Copies of the Catalogue may be obtained on request from:
IIEP, Publications and Communications Unit
info@iiep.unesco.org

Titles of new publications and abstracts may be consulted online:
www.iiep.unesco.org
The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) is an international centre for advanced training and research in the field of educational planning. It was established by UNESCO in 1963 and is financed by UNESCO and by voluntary contributions from Member States. In recent years the following Member States have provided voluntary contributions to the Institute: Australia, Denmark, India, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

The Institute’s aim is to contribute to the development of education throughout the world, by expanding both knowledge and the supply of competent professionals in the field of educational planning. In this endeavour the Institute cooperates with training and research organizations in Member States. The IIEP Governing Board, which approves the Institute’s programme and budget, consists of a maximum of eight elected members and four members designated by the United Nations Organization and certain of its specialized agencies and institutes.

Chairperson:
Raymond E. Wanner (USA)
Senior Adviser on UNESCO issues, United Nations Foundation, Washington DC, USA.

Designated Members:
Christine Evans-Klock
Director, ILO Skills and Employability Department, Geneva, Switzerland.

Carlos Lopes
Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director,
United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations, New York, USA.

Jamil Salmi
Education Sector Manager, the World Bank Institute, Washington DC, USA.

Guillermo Sunkel
Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division (ECLAC), Santiago, Chile.

Elected Members:
Aziza Bennani (Morocco)
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Morocco to UNESCO.

Nina Yefimovna Borevskaya (Russia)
Chief Researcher and Project Head, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Moscow.

Birger Fredriksen (Norway)
Consultant on Education Development for the World Bank.

Ricardo Henriques (Brazil)
Special Adviser of the President, National Economic and Social Development Bank.

Takyiwaa Manuh (Ghana)
Director, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.

Jean-Jacques Paul (France)
Professor of Economics of Education, Department of Economics and Business Administration, University of Bourgogne, Dijon.

Zhang Xinsheing (China)
Vice-Minister of Education, China.

Inquiries about the Institute should be addressed to:
The Office of the Director, International Institute for Educational Planning,
7-9 rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris, France
Commonwealth countries vary widely in terms of their size and level of development. A few of them are advanced economies with massified systems of higher education, whereas the majority are developing countries with a small but expanding higher education sector. The proliferation of institutions and programmes and the increase in student numbers have given rise to problems related to quality. The major challenge lies in developing strategies to expand higher education while devising measures to ensure equity and quality. The role of the state remains important in developing policies to promote equity, ensure quality, and regulate the operation of multiple agencies that offer higher education. This regulatory role of the state continues to increase even when its role in financing higher education may be on the decline.

N.V. Varghese is currently Head of the Governance and Management in Education Unit at the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) in Paris. Prior to joining IIEP in 1999, he was Professor and Head of the Educational Planning Unit at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) in New Delhi. He has published books and articles in the areas of educational planning, financing and quality of education.