The international movement of students and staff

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There are three stages in the development of student and staff overseas education and research. The first is the "free market" or laissez-faire stage where individuals select their own academic and research programmes, enter or associate themselves with institutions that will accept them, and are essentially accountable to no one but themselves. This first and primitive stage is likened to the early automobile in open country with no traffic problems, few "Stop" signs, no policemen and hardly any accidents.

As higher education expanded after World War II and the international dimension of higher education expanded at the same time, and as the purposes of international education became more differentiated and complex, overseas study and research projects became a matter of more than individual concern. They became a feature of both educational and national policy.

On closer examination questions begin to arise about both the assumptions and the actual consequences of overseas educational activity. As a result, "Stop" and "Go" signs begin to appear, dangers are identified, and prospective hostels are marked for high standards of bed, board and room charges. Home institutions ask consistent questions about the way achievement. Students are interviewed before over-seas study and research is arranged in advance, funding and sometimes political, with a concluding comment on what is euphemistically called the "brain drain".

First as to students. We know that students seek foreign educational experience for a whole variety of reasons - some educationally respectable, some educationally neutral. We also know that there are a great many of them engaged in foreign educational institutions. A reasonable guess is that there are over 700,000 students studying in countries other than their own. Some go abroad because there are literally no places for them at home. There are 5,000 U.S. students at the Autonomous University of Guadalajara because they could not enter the narrow doors of U.S. medical schools. Some go abroad because their governments find it less expensive to pay their costs in foreign universities than to expand their own.

Some wish to supplement their domestic education by continuing their studies in more sophisticated institutions, or to engage in graduate or professional studies, or to go to a country whose culture they wish to understand. Some are political or social refugees, or wish to escape a repressive system or to engage in graduate or professional studies, or to go to a country whose culture they wish to understand. Some are political or social refugees, or wish to escape a repressive system. Some wish to supplement their domestic education by continuing their studies in more sophisticated institutions, or to engage in graduate or professional studies, or to go to a country whose culture they wish to understand. Some are political or social refugees, or wish to escape a repressive system. Some wish to supplement their domestic education by continuing their studies in more sophisticated institutions, or to engage in graduate or professional studies, or to go to a country whose culture they wish to understand. Some are political or social refugees, or wish to escape a repressive system. Some wish to supplement their domestic education by continuing their studies in more sophisticated institutions, or to engage in graduate or professional studies, or to go to a country whose culture they wish to understand. Some are political or social refugees, or wish to escape a repressive system. Some wish to supplement their domestic education by continuing their studies in more sophisticated institutions, or to engage in graduate or professional studies, or to go to a country whose culture they wish to understand. Some are political or social refugees, or wish to escape a repressive system. Some wish to supplement their domestic education by continuing their studies in more sophisticated institutions, or to engage in graduate or professional studies, or to go to a country whose culture they wish to understand. Some are political or social refugees, or wish to escape a repressive system.

Putting aside for the moment the controls of the respective nations on the movement of brainpower, there remains great freedom of choice for both students and staff and the wave of the future involves more structured arrangements with increased institutional responsibility and accountability. Hopefully, this process of organization will not too severely curtail the elan and spontaneity of the current scene. To return to the automotive analogy, we surely need the autobahn and the railroad track, but the private car will always have its uses. And footpaths must still be provided for those who wish to reach their destination by bicycle or even on foot.

Having laid the groundwork for the evolution of staff and student foreign experience, perhaps a more detailed look at the scene is in order. Student comments will be followed by a brief reference to those of staff, with a concluding comment on what is euphemistically called the "brain drain".

We have not fully entered the "restricted market" era because the guidance is important, the purposes uncertain, the restrictions are full of loopholes, and institutional and national differences vary so considerably as to allow great freedom of choice. However, restrictions are on the increase everywhere. Differential tuition penalties for the foreigner, quotas are an established feature of the landscape, work opportunities and financial assistance for foreign students are progressively reduced, and the choice of institutions is no longer entirely free.

We have just described some of the features of Stage Two. By the emergence of systems and arrangements worked out between institutions of different nationalities, appropriate preparation and services are arranged in advance, funding and sometimes political and enforcement, and financial solvency has become the most widely used second "free market". At this stage, it sometimes seems that governments encourage such an exodus as a way to be rid of troublesome persons.

The second point concerns employment prospects. Some students seem to come to different conclusions as to whether an overseas experience in a tight job market helps or hinders their careers. Some believe that their chances of entry into their own professional fields are better if they stay close to home and personally cultivate their connections. Others believe that the academic records of applicants are so close that an overseas experience might be the deciding factor in their favour. Since there is no single evidence either way, everyone must make the best possible guess. Perhaps the only thing reasonably certain is the retarding influence of rising costs everywhere and, for U.S. students, the decline of the value of the dollar. But in spite of all this, over 110,000 U.S. students studied abroad during the last academic year.

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From the point of view of the receiving country there is also the potential for some substantial representation of foreign students for a variety of reasons. There is the belief that their own students will become less parochial, that graduates will return home as friends of their hosts, that some of the best will stay to add to the pool of high-level manpower and artistic and cultural talent. For countries facing a surplus of places like the United States and others expecting a demographic decline their market, in the demonstration of foreign students. They may become a source of educational income. Barbara Stain has suggested that in the United States this may amount to almost $700 million. But that time for other countries is not now.

At the present writing, foreign students are a substantial cost to many receiving countries that face a demographic bulge for the next decade or so. As a result, some countries have established quotas for foreign students (7 percent in Germany), announced reduction in numbers (U.K. and France) and even threatened to cut them off entirely (Italy). Others have thought to apply the "head and shoulders" formula (a foreigner must be "head and shoulders" above a native prospect) to teaching assistantships which will directly affect the prospect for foreign would-be graduate students.

There are also cultural problems which can turn into psychological and political problems. Iranian students overseas seem to have a large complement of persons visible and vocally opposed to their own regime. Since foreign students seem to swarm together, a large block of Iranian students on one campus can be a complicating factor for the local community. Even when relatively quiescent, they can be a hard group to assimilate, with covert purposes, the whole overseas research process can be destroyed.

When research turns into participation in local economic or social development, the process also becomes tricky. Here the aura becomes decisive in order to establish a purity of purpose, a concern for the people to be aided, a willingness to work in harness with native colleagues, and a proven objectivity and insightfulness in reports on findings. Better to work quietly under the umbrella of the international academic jet and shoulders" above a native prospect) to teaching assistantships which will directly affect the prospect for foreign would-be graduate students.

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