THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

Trends in Higher Education

A publication of the University of the West Indies Office of Planning

Vol. 1.5 (February 2019)

Message from the Publisher

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This issue of Trends in Higher Education focuses on political developments that would impact the higher education sector. It examines events such as BREXIT; The division of power between Democrats and Republicans in the USA; The interplay between US and China in the international trading environment; the most recent developments in US/Venezuela relations; as well as Canada's legalization of cannabis use and the impact on higher educational institutions.

The discussion and analysis revealed some very insightful information which should be useful to academic administrators as they implement new strategies and policies to increase enrolment, improve research output and impact and also, improve the financial position of their institutions. For example, will BREXIT mean less research funding for UK universities since they now receive the largest grants from the European Research Fund? Further, what will be the implications for non-UK Professors and students if there is a hard Brexit deal? How will this agreement impact universities like The University of the West Indies in terms of research collaboration and student mobility across the United Kingdom higher education sector?

Political Trends in Higher Education

It is expected that there will be a high level of political turbulence and change in the next twelve months that can affect overall governance and policy priorities. Events include:

i. Britain's impending withdrawal from the European Union (EU) or Brexit
ii. European Parliament elections[1]
iii. Geopolitical tensions and uncertainty including 'grey wars'[2] and in particular, the US-China power play
iv. Possible crippling of Trump's agenda in the Democrat-controlled House[3]
v. The outcome of national elections which will most likely have implications for policy, market stability and geopolitical relations[4]
vi. The uncertainty surrounding the relationship between the USA and Venezuela

The interplay among these events will in some way, affect higher education in the areas of student enrolment, staff mobility, research funding and collaboration, and expansion. A few major political developments specific to influential countries, but which have implications for the higher education sector are discussed here. These include the 2019 US legislative agenda for higher education, Brexit, and rising geopolitical tensions across the world.

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US Legislative agenda and issues affecting higher education

It is anticipated that higher education would l be deeply influenced by changes in political power in terms of access to affordable, high-quality college opportunities (Harnisch 2018, 4).

Accreditation processes and changing accountability requirements

The Trump administration, believes that rewriting the rules for college accrediting agencies is the best way to encourage innovation. The Department of Education's roadmap shows how the administration will reshape the higher education sector by loosening the regulatory processes aimed at improving efficiencies and fostering innovation. The idea is to reduce compliance requirements for accreditors, freeing them up to focus on educational quality while more clearly defining the college oversight roles of those agencies, state governments, and federal regulators.

Focus will therefore be on quality in higher education and the processes to (re)accredit universities and colleges. The proposed changes to the accreditation process are as follows:

- Eliminate a requirement that new accrediting agencies prove that they have at least two years of experience
- Limit the number of reviews a school must undergo in order to offer new academic programmes
- Create a caveat to accreditation standards for religious colleges
- Evaluate the rules for competency-based education
- Re-examine the requirements for online education, including faculty interaction
- Eliminate a restriction that colleges and universities cannot outsource more than 50 percent of an academic programme to a separate education provider that's not eligible for federal aid
- Change the 2010 definition of a credit hour
- Address requirements for credit transfer between institutions
- Consider workforce preparation by way of on-the-job training focused on collaborations between community colleges, continuing education programmes at four-year institutions and trade associations or employers

The drawback of these proposed changes is that they would make it more difficult for both the states and the Education Department in the United States, to hold institutions accountable when they provide poor quality education and create trapdoors to yearly federal financial aid (Camera, January 2019).

Student financial aid and for-profit Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)

The cost of attending a university or college in the US is high. According to Powell (September 2018), the average tuition fees for academic year 2018/2019 were: public in-state US$9,716; public out-of-state US$21,629; and private US$35,676. A 2018 study by Scott-Clayton examined student debt and default from the moment students first entered college, to when they repaid loans up to 20 years later, for two cohorts of first-time entrants (in 1995/1996 and 2003/2004). That study found:

- Cumulative default rates continued to rise between 12 and 20 years after initial entry for the 1996 cohort. Applying these trends to the 2004 entry cohort suggests that nearly 40% of borrowers may default on their student loans by 2023.
- For-profit borrowers default at twice the rate of public two-year borrowers (52% versus 26% after 12 years), but because for-profit students are more likely to borrow, the rate of default among all for-profit entrants is nearly four times that of public two-year entrants (47% versus 13%).
- Out of 100 students who attended a for-profit institution, 23 defaulted within 12 years of starting college in the 1996 cohort compared to 43 in the 2004 cohort (compared to an increase from just 8 to 11 students among entrants who never attended a for-profit) (Scott-Clayton 2018, 1-2).

These results provide evidence to policy makers to support efforts to regulate the for-profit sector, to improve degree attainment and promote income-contingent loan repayment options for students.

Another area of concern is the Republican led US government inclination to impose new borrowing limits for graduate students. Scott-Clayton (2018, 9) noted, “Graduate students also represent a growing share of student debt.” Moreover, by reducing students’ ability to borrow, it would most likely reduce the number of students who would be able to afford costly graduate programmes. As a result, the loss of revenue from these programmes could have a domino effect on universities and colleges that rely on full-pay graduate students, some of which go towards subsidizing undergraduate programmes (Mulhere 2018). Tertiary institutions are concerned that there is “a growing bipartisan drive to base federal financial aid eligibility on a student’s major. This is likely to reduce access to academic programs, since only wealthy students might be able to afford to study certain majors” (Mulhere 2018).

Brexit and implications for student mobility and recruitment, research funding and staff

The UK HEIs benefit from its position as a ‘gateway’ to Europe by attracting students and researchers including individual recipients of research fellowships. Further, they are beneficiaries of collaborative funding bids. As such, Brexit will have consequences for any higher education project involving UK universities and those in Europe.

According to Scott (2018, 1), HEIs are likely to face significant consequences post-Brexit in the areas of
(i) student recruitment and mobility;
(ii) research funding for programmes;
(iii) and academic/research staff.
A soft Brexit, which would be welcomed by UK universities, would provide ongoing access to EU funding, research programmes and academic networks. A hard Brexit means that EU students would be charged full international fees to study in the United Kingdom, freedom of movement for researchers would be restricted and the UK would no longer be able to participate in collaborative bids for funding.

Student mobility and recruitment
In relation to recruitment, there were 138,000 students from other EU countries studying in UK institutions in 2016/2017 (UK CISA 2019), across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.[5] Since the referendum in 2016, Scott (2018, 4) noted that the number of applications from EU students has declined by seven percent. Concerns over Brexit have prompted many EU students to worry about how they would pay their full international fees, their eligibility for student loans, their immigration status, and stringent checks on their academic ability and English language skills. While after Brexit universities would be able to charge other EU students higher fees, there is speculation that many HEIs would adopt a compromised position, charging EU students higher fees than UK students, but lower than the high fees currently charged to international students (Scott 2018, 5). Currently, EU students enjoy the right to free movement but post-Brexit EU students may be subject to the same visa regime as international students although they would likely qualify for the highest category of visa applicants, Tier 4. Similarly, British students wishing to study in Europe fear limited access and potentially higher fees due to Brexit. Hanover Research (2019, 4) noted that 14% of new international students say they are less likely to study in the UK because of Brexit.

The UK is a net importer of Erasmus students – there were 31,067 Erasmus students from other EU member states who attended UK institutions in 2015 (Scott 2018, 1). If, following Brexit, the UK ceases to participate in EU-funded student mobility programmes, both UK and other EU students would be affected in their access to study-mobility opportunities and experiences. A no-deal Brexit will disrupt European student exchange programmes, leaving institutions open to legal challenges from dissatisfied students who were promised a study-abroad year (Fazackerley November 2018).

Research funding
A hard Brexit would adversely affect research collaborations with Europe, and UK disciplines could be left with huge gaps in funding. This is of particular concern to those involved in the arts, humanities and social sciences with some doubt about the UK government replacing the funding for these sectors in a context of the growing marketization of higher education (Courtois June 2018). The UK has been one of the major engines of research and innovation within the wider European project and "has secured the largest number of projects funded by the European Research Council - more than 10 per cent more than its nearest rival, Germany, and 40 per cent more than France" (Scott 2018, 6).

UK universities have gained a large share of funding under the Horizon 2020 programme. Exact monetary figures are difficult to calculate since most of the funding is distributed to a consortia of universities from several European countries. However, the United Kingdom is the second-largest recipient of competitive research funding from the European Union after Germany (Courtois June 2018).[6] Between February and September 2016 the UK received 15% of the projects and 16% of the funding, but for the equivalent period in 2017 (post referendum) the UK's share fell to 12% of projects and 13% of funding (Scott 2018, 6). Despite concerns that the outcomes of the referendum have impacted the UK's ability to win grant funding, the UK secured €752 million (£654 million) worth of Horizon 2020 projects that started in 2018, just ahead of Germany, with coordinated projects worth €751 million (Grove January 2019). A recent survey of European researchers suggested that Brexit will lead to reduced funding from the EU for research at British universities (SCUP Fall 2018, 17). With diminished funding from the EU, UK universities may engage in less research overall, which in turn may affect international research collaboration(s). At the same time, reallocated EU funding may make collaboration with researchers in other EU countries such as Germany, more attractive (SCUP Fall 2018, 17).

While there are temporary assurances on guaranteed funding under Horizon 2020 until Brexit[7], unless special arrangements are made to continue the UK's participation in the next cycle of European research funding, HEIs in the UK will experience both a scientific and financial loss. If Britain leaves the EU as an associate member in a soft-exit deal, it can pay to be part of the next European research programme, Horizon Europe, which is expected to distribute another €100bn to researchers over seven years. However, the regulations for Horizon Europe, including the deals on offer to associated countries are still to be finalized. The negotiations, if open to associated countries, can take up to a year (Morgan January 2019). At present, given that a no-deal Brexit is quite likely, universities are identifying ways to safeguard European research collaborations for example Cardiff University is considering offering key researchers joint contracts with universities across the Channel, with as much as 80% of their time spent outside the UK, allowing access to European cash. Imperial College London announced "double contracts" with the Technical University of Munich.

Also, nearly half of the academic papers produced by the United Kingdom are written in collaboration with at least one international partner – and among the top 20 countries UK academics cooperate the most with, 13 are in the EU. A significant proportion of these jointly authored papers arise from research collaborations also funded by the EU (Courtois June 2018). This would most likely impact research output and subsequently their international rankings.

With the possibility of a no-deal Brexit looming, there are concerns by a number of university laboratories and research institutes including some from the Russell Group that they could face supply shortages if Brexit causes complications with the supply chains regarding the import and export of goods and research materials (Pells January 2019). This has led several universities and institutes to conduct additional risk assessments (e.g. Universities of Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham and Warwick, plus University College London and Imperial College) and develop emergency/contingency plans, including the possibility of stockpiling supplies such as reagents to prevent project delays.

EU academics in UK universities

UK universities are exceptionally international, with Scott (2018, 9) noting that the "scientific capacity depends on inward migration - by non-UK students and academic staff" which is "crucial to its intellectual creativity, scientific productivity and material base." Overall, in 2015/2016, only two-thirds of academic staff was British with the largest group from EU countries – 17% at British universities (Courtois June 2018; Scott 2018, 7).[8] At some universities the proportion of EU academic staff is much higher (e.g. University of Kent the percentage of non-UK academic staff is approaching 50%) with high percentages found among senior professors and post-doctoral fellows and early-career researchers. Almost a quarter of academic staff in the Russell Group universities is from other EU countries. Staff from other EU-countries can account for between 25% and 36% of the disciplines - economics (36%), modern languages (35%), humanities (almost 25%), mathematics (29%), and physics (28%). The Francis Crick Institute, a biomedical research centre in London, surveyed its research staff on Brexit – 40% of whom were European: 78% of the EU researchers said they were less likely to stay after Brexit.

However, after Brexit the extent to which academics from the EU would be welcomed or recruited in the UK would depend on the immigration climate. While the UK Government agreed that all EU citizens currently resident in the UK would be free to apply for 'settled status', and promised that the application process would be relatively inexpensive and easy, there has been media reports of academics being threatened with a loss of their status in some British universities. If there is an inordinate amount of academics (rising stars) exiting from the UK as a result of Brexit, this presents an opportunity for EU universities to strengthen their academic standing by offering them academic positions in the establishments. This development would most likely adversely affect British universities their research outputs and influence, and standing in global university ranking schemes.

Western universities relations with China/geopolitical considerations in academic collaboration

Annually, over 600,000 Chinese students enrol in Western universities, over half of whom study in the United States. The enrolment numbers of Chinese students have grown from 67,000 in 2007 to 351,000 in 2017, a 424% increase over ten years. Given the global anti-immigrant rhetoric, Western anxiety over China's geopolitical ambitions, this can affect Chinese students studying-abroad. The US visa agencies recently received instructions to reconsider granting visas to Chinese students applying to certain STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) as well as limiting the length of their stay (Barnes October 2018).

There has been a steady increase of Chinese students in the UK over the years with currently around 200,000 studying at UK universities, with 58% pursuing masters' degrees. In the year ending March 2018, the UK issued around 89,000 Tier 4 study visas to Chinese students, representing year-on-year growth of 15%. About 58% of Chinese students in the UK are pursuing a master's course (Barnes October 2018). A drawback, however, is that the UK expects students to leave the country once their student visas expire unlike Australia. Given the impending Brexit, UK universities may seek to maximise opportunities for enrolment from Asia and in particular, China.

Universities should develop a clear understanding of the Chinese state according to Morgan (November 2018). A report from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (a think tank) identified the US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Germany as the top countries for research collaboration with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and indicated that the number of peer-reviewed articles published because of such links has grown sevenfold in a decade (Huang and Steger October 2018). The Report drew attention to China's efforts to blur the lines between civilian and military research through military-civil fusion. Nevertheless, some universities, like the University of New South Wales and Curtin University, have defended their partnerships with PLA scientists. They argue that it did not undermine intellectual property or security, and the research collaboration provided several benefits including scientific developments, funding opportunities and published work (Chandran November 2018).

Western-China academic engagements and Chinese presence on campuses are also being questioned. Bader (2018, 3) highlighted that "donations to universities and think tanks by Chinese individuals and companies, even from Hong Kong, are increasingly being turned down under political pressure or due to pre-emptive capitulation by institutions worried about reputational damage." For example, Bader (2018, 3) also noted that Confucius Institutes teaching Chinese language and culture on campuses are under attack because of their affiliation with the Chinese government, and some have been forced to close (e.g. Confucius Institute University of West Florida).

International student growth online

It is expected that international student enrolment will decline further due to national and global influences such as travel bans and, immigration policies.

International enrolment at colleges and Optional Practical Training (OPT) programmes in the US topped one million students in 2017/2018 (of which 271,738 were new international students) and provided $39 billion in revenue (Hanover Research 2019, 4). The *ICEF Monitor* (May 2018) provided the following insights into sending trends to US universities and colleges for the period March 2017 to March 2018:

- The number of Latin American students in the US actually increased by more than 4% over the year with Brazil (+13%), Argentina (+7%), and Chile (+6%)
- Africa registered a nearly 2% increase for the year, led by the key emerging markets of Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana which respectively grew by nearly 8%, 6%, and 5% year-over-year.
- Nearly eight in ten foreign students in the US came from Asia, and just under half of all F and M visa holders (49%) came from China and India alone – marginally increasing over the last year at 1% and 2% respectively.
- South Korea, which remains the third largest sender, continued to decline with a nearly 8% drop-off. The next-largest sender, Saudi Arabia, was also down for the same period (-17%) as the long-running King Abdullah Scholarship Programme draws to a close.

In a survey conducted by the Institute of International Education (IIE), enrolment of first-time international students fell an average of 7% in fall 2017 from a year ago across 522 US institutions (Zhou May 2018). The current anti-immigrant climate in the US has caused a waning of interest in studying in the US - 81% of current international students expressed concern over recent political developments, with one-third of over 2,000 students surveyed citing a decreased interest in US study in light of the political climate (Hanover Research 2019, 5).

Also, as a result of US policies, international student visas declined. More specifically, *ICEF Monitor* (May 2018) reported that there were

0.5% fewer F-1 and M-1 visa holders in March 2018 – a measure for the number of foreign students enrolled in academic and vocational programmes – in the US than a year ago. The US issued visas to less than 400,000 international students in fiscal year 2017, a 17% decline from 2016, and a 40% drop from 2015 (Zhou May 2018). Further, as there are fewer work opportunities for students it has led to students seeking education elsewhere. The process for acquiring an H-1B visa that allowed graduates to work for up to six years in the US has lengthened. More importantly, Hanover Research (2019, 5) reported that less than one-fourth of employers plan to hire international students.

Hanover Research (2018, 5) noted that Europe, Asia, and developing countries are seeing an increase in their international enrolment rates.[9] Although the online market of international students is much smaller than the physical flow of student, it provides an opportunity for some US institutions looking to boost enrolment of international students. Potential markets for US online programmes include Hong Kong and Dubai (SCUP Fall 2018, 20).

The promulgation of a new law in Indonesia allows for the establishment of international branch campuses allowing them to operate in special economic zones subject to ministerial approval (Ross January 2019). They would be authorised to employ both foreign and local staff but would need to partner with Indonesian universities and teach four mandatory subjects: citizenship, religious instruction, Indonesian language, and Indonesian state ideology (*Pancasila*). Also, the foreign university would have to be ranked among the world's top 200 in university or subject league tables. Several Australian universities have undertaken preparatory work and it has been identified as one of the sites of academic engagement.

The legalization of cannabis and use on campuses

The Canadian government's promulgation of *The Cannabis Act* created a new regulatory framework for the production, distribution, sale, and possession of cannabis in Canada, but it also gives provinces and municipalities the authority to enact some of their own guidelines and restrictions (Duggal July 2018). This means that universities will have to consider both federal and provincial laws when drafting their own policies for the use of recreational and/or medicinal cannabis.

Duggal (July 2018) noted "most universities that ban the smoking of tobacco products on campus will likely extend this to cover cannabis as well." The University of Regina just instituted a full smoking ban, whether tobacco or cannabis, scheduled to take effect in the academic year 2018/2019. At the University of Saskatchewan, smoking is banned inside residences and other buildings and within a 10-metre perimeter of them, along with outdoor seating areas, but is allowed elsewhere on campus. The growing cannabis in student residences will not be permitted at Acadia University or the Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina. The consuming of edible forms of cannabis will be allowed at McMaster University, but there is to be no underage consumption or consumption in public similar to alcohol. In terms of campus public education and awareness on cannabis use, the approach is on harm reduction and responsible use at McMaster, University of Alberta, Mount Allison University, and other universities.

Conclusion

HEIs including The University of the West Indies should continue to monitor the effects of changes to public policies and legislation by governments and their agencies, which can affect the performance of, or the options open to the institution and the conditions that affect students' behaviour. This includes actions, which may affect external funding streams, research collaborations, and conditions for recruiting international students (enrolment). In light of the above discussions, opportunities may exist for HEIs to attract international students. At the same time, as players in the online higher education sector expands it may mean the potential loss of a market. In addition, HEIs should continue to monitor changes to research funding and collaborators.[10]

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UWI “Triple A” Strategic Plan: Revitalizing Caribbean Development

Do you know that the there are five **Core Values** of the current 2017-2022 Strategic Plan?

They are: Integrity, Excellence, Gender Justice, Diversity and Student Centeredness.

[1] A new European Parliament will be elected in May 2019 and with it, a new president of the European Commission. See EIU. *A New Political Phase for Europe*. 2018. EIU Limited, 2018.

[2] Australia *News* noted that one of the risks in 2019 is 'gray wars', which would include disinformation campaigns, election interference, cyber-attacks, digital espionage, debt imprisonment, mercenary combatants, and military manoeuvres. See Jamie Seidel. "2019 will be a year of uncertainty, warns international think tank." *Australia News.* News Corp Australia Network. January 3, 2019. https://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/world-economy/2019-will-be-a-year-of-uncertainty-warns-international-think-tank/news-story/d39a478241b87336897cd3718418514b.

[3] Curran (December 2018) noted that in the US., the Democrat-controlled the House of Representatives could not only cripple President Trump's agenda, but also open the way for investigations into his administration, his presidential campaign and his family's business empire. That would mean two years of policy gridlock and threatened government shutdowns. See Enda Curran. **"**The Biggest Political Risks to the World Economy in 2019**."** *Bloomberg,* December 5, 2018. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-05/governments-behaving-badly-political-risks-to-growth-in-2019

[4] The outcome of stream of national elections in Asia (India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand), Pacific (Australia), Europe (Greece, Poland, Ukraine), Americas (Canada, Argentina, Guatemala, Uruguay, etc.), Africa (Nigeria, South Africa), and the Middle East (Afghanistan, Israel) can have implications for policy, market stability and geopolitical relations. As the results of Brazil's elections (October 2018) showed, strongmen with unconventional platforms continue to appeal. Curran (December 2018) noted, "[v]oters are more keen on sending a message to the establishment than on signing off on more of the same." Moreover, "major developed economies, [like] Canada and Australia face elections, though radical policy shifts are less likely in either country." See Curran.

[5] UK CISA notes that Germany, France, Italy, Republic of Ireland, and Greece are among the top five sending countries for higher education enrolments since 2013/2014. See UK Council of International Student Affairs.

[6] The EU also accounts for some 10% of Scottish university research funding. See Declan Butler, "How Scotland's science minister aims to protect research from Brexit." *Nature*, 23 November 2018. https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07516-5. ERC projects worth €314 million began under the guidance of UK-based researchers in 2018 – 30% more than the value of projects started under German guidance (€242 million). The UK's ERC total was almost 80% higher than France's income (€175 million) and almost five times the amount awarded to Spanish-led research projects (€67 million). See Grove, January 2019.

[7] Horizon 2020 closes at the end of 2020, which coincides with the EU's favoured date for the end of any Brexit transitional period.

[8] Around one in four of Scotland's full-time researchers are nationals of other European Union countries (Butler November 2018).

[9] Hanover Research (2018, 5) noted that Europe, Asia, and developing countries are seeing an increase in their international enrolment rates. Germany in 2013 announced plans to increase its number of international students to 350,000 by 2020, a goal it reached during the 2016-2017 school year. Canada hopes to attract 450,000 international students by 2022, an aim which it inched closer to in 2016, and has even taken recent steps to give international students an easier path to citizenship. Australia, in October 2017, reported having about 350,000 international higher education students, up 15% from the previous year. China's international student population, now the third highest in the world, has grown more than tenfold since 1995 due to the country's sizable number of top-ranked universities, low cost of living, and availability of scholarships.

[10] The *CARICOM Regional Commission on Marijuana 2018* recommended the "dismantling of prohibition in its totality, to be replaced by a strictly regulated framework akin to that for alcohol and tobacco, which are harmful substances that are not criminalised."