



E-ISSN: 2706-8927  
P-ISSN: 2706-8919  
[www.allstudyjournal.com](http://www.allstudyjournal.com)  
IJAAS 2020; 2(2): 319-322  
Received: 23-01-2020  
Accepted: 28-02-2020

**Mamtaj Azmi**  
Ex Student of North Bengal  
University, NBU, Siliguri,  
Darjeeling, West Bengal, India

## Impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on higher education: Student perspectives from Mainland China and Hong Kong

**Mamtaj Azmi**

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.33545/27068919.2020.v2.i2d.1003>

### Abstract

The COVID-19 epidemic has shaped more than half of our lives, canceling plans, enhancing livelihoods and causing feelings of grief, stress and anxiety. The study critically examines how students in Mainland China and Hong Kong envision foreign studies planning against the COVID-19 crisis. Among 2739 respondents, 84% showed no interest in studying abroad after the epidemic. For those respondents who will continue further degrees abroad, Asian regions and countries, notably Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan, are listed in the top five, in addition to the US and the UK. While the epidemic has significantly reduced international student mobility, it is also changing the mobility flow of international students, and East Asian countries and regions are facing greater opportunities in the increasingly competitive higher education sector for international students. This article also suggests that the current global health crisis will intensify social and economic disparities in various higher education systems, when some countries fail to maintain international learning scales due to various economic recovery paces in the COVID-19 era.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, mobility, higher education, international students, stress, anxiety

### Introduction

In March 2020, outbreaks of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) reached all countries of the western world. It affected higher education development in various aspects, including the shift of face-to-face teaching to online teaching and learning, the cancellation of physical events and activities and the formation of a 'new normality' in higher education. While COVID-19 has presented many challenges to higher education in teaching, teaching, research collaboration and institutional governance, also brings a great opportunity for different stakeholders to re-think and even design higher education with an effective risk-management plan to make the sector more permanent and flexible in future.

The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic is notable in international higher education, particularly student mobility (Altbach & de Wit, 2020; Mok, 2020a) [6, 22]. Due to travel restrictions and campus closures, many students changed or canceled their plans to study abroad. Therefore, higher education institutions (HEIs) of major destination countries such as the US, UK and Australia have anticipated a substantial reduction in international students coming for the coming semester. For example, from a survey conducted by the Institute of International Education, approximately 90% of US colleges and universities have projected a decrease in international student enrollment, and 30% of the HEI indicated a substantial decrease in the academic year 2020-2021 (Martel 2020) [19]. A recent study published in April 2020 by the British Council shows that 39% of Chinese students, as the largest source of international students in the UK, are unsure of canceling their study plans (Dernin, 2020) [23]. Similarly, the Australian HEI will lose about 150,000 Chinese in the coming school year. Before the current global health crisis, growing debates have surfaced critically review the future of internationalization of education, especially when people begin to question the value and benefits that international education brings. COVID-19 epidemic again raises future issues internationally education. Will COVID-19 adversely affect international education and student mobility? Different groups of stakeholders of global higher education realize epidemic brought on by international higher education and, in particular, international student mobility.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Mamtaj Azmi**  
Ex Student of North Bengal  
University, NBU, Siliguri,  
Darjeeling, West Bengal, India

For health and safety concerns of canceling international students their plans for study abroad during the epidemic, which are harmful policies implementation by some popular destination countries becomes a hindrance international Student Mobility.

For example, the US federal government implemented Policy of not issuing student visas to international students if they take all online courses in the coming fall semester.

Even though the adverse effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on the international level have been well recognized in education and student mobility, some scholars are still on hold an optimistic view that international student mobility will remain strong after the epidemic, SARS conditions in 2003 and economic crisis in 2008. Furthermore, previous attempts to globalize and internationalize higher education in each county has given a solid foundation for student mobility, including compatible education system, integrated credit transfer system, and provocative policies for student exchange.

The modern world in which all individuals are able to travel and communicate rapidly is rarely compelled to present social isolation and restrictions that are associated with feelings of despair and excitement. This unprecedented situation relating to the outbreak of COVID-19 is clearly demonstrating that individuals are largely and emotionally unaffected by the harmful effects of biological disasters, showing directly how everyone can be vulnerable and helpless.

Social disturbances and significant lockdown restrictions were first moved to China and later to most European countries where Italy and Spain experienced a tragic development of a number of positive cases. Although government regulations are necessary to maintain social balance and guarantee the safety of all individuals, COVID-19 is a direct strategy for managing psychosocial issues related to the crisis and its consequences in the community are currently lacking.

Children, away from their school, friends, and colleagues, staying at home can have many questions about the outbreak and they look toward their parents or caregivers to get the answer. Not all children and parents respond to stress in the same way. Kids can experience anxiety, distress, social isolation, and an abusive environment that can have short- or long-term effects on their mental health.

### **Factors influencing students to study abroad**

Development of globalization and internationalization of higher education, the demand for students for higher education has expanded dramatically, and a large intended to study abroad in proportion of students who cross the border education is booming on an unprecedented scale. Much of the literature for analyzing the process is influenced by the "push-pull" theory. Typically, push factors are related to some negative aspects of home countries that force students to leave abroad and study. Pull factors are associated with positive aspects of the destination that attract students to study in other countries. Both push and pull factors attract students and motivate them to study abroad, which gives assessors the reason for the outflow and is also relevant to the first phase of the three-stage model, whether they study abroad.

A person's motivation to study abroad has become complex and varied as students have more opportunities to choose their preferred destinations. To better understand the factors

influencing the study the process of decision-making abroad and human capital theory has been applied as an alternative approach to clarify the demands of study abroad. There are three dimensions within human-capital theory Scholarly, Social and Cultural.

Mainland China and Hong Kong have diverse places for students to study abroad, mainly in English-speaking countries. University reputation and university rankings are the most important factors affecting Chinese the choice of students for the final destination is the US and the UK are two major destinations due to the strong reputation of the universities in these two countries. Based on the study conducted by Austin and Shane (2016) <sup>[8]</sup>, students choose America as a destination because the employer believed to have a tendency to recruit employees returning from the US more opportunities to increase creativity and develop critical thinking because the lack of innovation in the educational system in China is criticized.

According to study on Mainland China and Hong Kong University Students' attitudes towards study abroad have approved the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on international higher education and student Mobility. Barriers to students pursuing their further degrees abroad include travel restrictions, visa restrictions and campus lockdowns in destination countries also concern students' health and safety as their families. Some practical reasons like delays in English tests also prevent students from completing applications in time.

About the reasons for the popularity of countries and regions in East Asia Students from Mainland China and Hong Kong study abroad, acting as proximity an essential cause during COVID-19 and even in the post-COVID era. Most Students in Mainland China and Hong Kong are funded by families to study abroad, their parents hope they can have him for safety consideration. Travel restrictions and key controls for Western countries' pushout factors Destination countries like the US and UK make it impossible for Mainland China this year for students to physically enter their programs. Worsening epidemic situation in America and the new social movement have made it more difficult for Mainland China and Hong Kong students to decide.

When assessing "winners" and "losers" in attracting international students, when some countries did not ignore the negative social and economic consequences that would become winners because they would still have the financial capacity to support youth to study abroad. Analyzing the internationalization of higher education, especially international student mobility, we must accept that social and economic inequalities will be intensified in different parts of the world. For those countries that can manage their economic development there may be rebirth after COVID-19 and continue to support international learning. In addition, for those traditional strong countries in terms of higher education, such as US and the UK, even though they, especially the US, are greatly affected by the epidemic, they will still retain their charm due to their reputation for higher education. Considering human capital investment of the region, as well as future students and their parents.

The effects of the epidemic on international higher education are revealed various aspects. Due to student mobility, lack of international students the epidemic will have a significant impact for foreign higher educational

institutions, Especially for those who financially depend on the tuition of international students.

It is not difficult to imagine some higher education systems or institutions, especially when they are faced with the cruel reality of closing them, relying too heavily on fees generated from international student bodies. The world, even in the post-COVID-19 period, will certainly be "divided" with the intensity of social and economic inequalities on a global scale because of the different places of economic recovery. This will increase heated debate on the value of internationalization of education, especially when people "for whom international education is suspected" interest "before the current global health crisis.

### Conclusion

The COVID-19 epidemic has negatively affected the internationalization of higher education, the trend of regionalization following and after the COVID-19 epidemic may become a new trend in international higher education. The findings of this survey and the practice of Hong Kong universities in attracting doctoral students may predate this trend. This trend will be possible in other regions such as Asia and Europe, where further regionalization of higher education may be enhanced due to the epidemic. Current research is set against the context outlined above to examine how students in Hong Kong and Mainland China respond to the global health crisis, resulting from COVID-19 when overseas learning was planned. Research team adopted survey tool and successfully collected 2,739 responses university students in Mainland China and Hong Kong Special Administrative Study on their expectations abroad after the region (Hong Kong) epidemic. In comparison with Traditional pull-push factor for international student mobility, COVID-19 Pandemic re-orders when students are considering studying abroad. Health and safety have become primary concerns for Mainland China, and under the Hong Kong student epidemic, in countries adjacent to East Asia and regions such as Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan. Their first thought due to expected better management of the pandemic and the pandemic crisis besides proximity to mainland China and Hong Kong.

### References

- Altbach PG. Impact and adjustment: Foreign students in comparative perspective. *Higher Education*. 1991;21(3):305-323.
- Chao CN, Hegarty N, Angelidis J, Lu VF. Chinese students' motivations for studying in the United States. *Journal of International Students*. 2019;7(2):257-269.
- Bourdieu P. *Masculine domination*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; c2001.
- Cebolla-Boado H, Hu Y, Soysal YN. Why study abroad? Sorting of Chinese students across British universities. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 2018;39(3):365-380.
- Goris JAQ. How will COVID-19 affect international academic mobility? Paris: UNESCO; c2020. <https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/2020/06/26/how-will-covid-19-affect-international-academic-mobility/>.
- Altbach P, De Wit H. Post Pandemic Outlook for HE is Bleakest for the Poorest. *University World News*; c2020 Apr 4. [https://www.universityworldnews.com/page.php?page=UW\\_Main](https://www.universityworldnews.com/page.php?page=UW_Main), accessed 15 July 2020.
- Chen LH. Choosing Canadian graduate schools from afar: East Asian students' perspectives. *Higher Education*. 2007;54:759-780. China's Ministry of Education. (2020). China's Ministry of Education issues the first warning for studying abroad in 2020. Beijing: China's Ministry of Education. [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/gzdt\\_gzdt/s5987/202006/t20200609\\_464131.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/202006/t20200609_464131.html).
- Austin L, Shen L. Factors influencing Chinese students' decisions to study in the United States. *Journal of International Students*. 2016;6(3):722-732. Beijing Overseas Study Service Association (BOSSA). (2020). Coronavirus' impact on Chinese students and agents. Beijing: BOSSA. <https://www.bossacossa.org/coronavirus-impact-on-chinese-agents-students-studyabroad>.
- Cozart DL, Rojewski JW. Career aspirations and emotional adjustment of Chinese international graduate students. *SAGE Open*; c2015, 5(4). doi/10.1177/2158244015621349.
- Briggs S. An exploratory study of the factors influencing undergraduate student choice: The case of higher education in Scotland. *Studies in Higher Education*. 2006;31(6):705-722.
- Deviney D, Vrba T, Mills L, Ball E. Why some students study abroad and others stay? *Research in Higher Education Journal*. 2014;25:1-14.
- Bodycott P. Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What Mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of Research in International Education*. 2009;8(3):349-373.
- Durnin M. Covid-19 update: China survey results. London: British Council; c2020. [https://education-services.britishcouncil.org/insights-blog/covid-19-update-chinasurvey-results?\\_ga=2.183165667.436377671.1596516253-1764238916.1596516253](https://education-services.britishcouncil.org/insights-blog/covid-19-update-chinasurvey-results?_ga=2.183165667.436377671.1596516253-1764238916.1596516253).
- Heisel M. COVID-19: The end of or revival of international higher education; c2020. *Berkeley News*, 7 May 2020. <https://news.berkeley.edu/2020/05/07/covid-19-theend-or-revival-of-international-higher-education/>.
- Fong VL. Paradise redefined: Transnational Chinese students and the quest for flexible citizenship in the developed world. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; c2011.
- Helms RM. Can internationalization survive coronavirus? You need to see my data. *Higher Education Today*; 2020 Mar 4. <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2020/03/04/can-internationalization-survivecoronavirus-need-see-data/>.
- Xiong W, Mok KH. Critical reflections on Mainland China and Taiwan overseas returnees' job search and career development experiences in the rising trend of anti-globalization. *Higher Education Policy*. 2020;33(3):413-436. [researchcghe.org/perch/resources/publications/wp54to-publish.pdf](https://researchcghe.org/perch/resources/publications/wp54to-publish.pdf)
- Xiong W, Mok KH, Jiang J. Hong Kong university students' online learning experiences under the Covid-19 pandemic. Oxford, UK: Higher Education Policy Institute; c2020. <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2020/08/03/hong-kong->

- university-studentonline-learning- experiences-under-the-covid-19-pandemic.
19. Martel M. COVID-19 effects on U.S. higher education campus: From emergency response to planning for future student mobility. Washington, DC: Institute of International Education; c2020. <https://www.iie.org/en/Research-andInsights/Publications/COVID-19-Effects-on-US-Higher-Education-Campuses-Report2>.
  20. Schulmann P. Perfect storm: The impact of the coronavirus crisis on international student mobility to the United States. New York: World Education Services; c2020. <https://wenr.wes.org/2020/05/perfect-storm-the-impact-of-the-coronaviruscrisis-on-international-student-mobility-to-the-united-states>.
  21. Mazzarol T, Soutar GN. Pushæ pull factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management*. 2002;16:82-90.
  22. Mok KH. Impact of COVID-19 on Overseas Studies. Paper presented at the Seminar on Higher Education in the Plague Year: The Transformative Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, 21 May 2020, University of Oxford; c2020a.
  23. Batubara F, Derin T, Putri NS, Yudar RS. Five factors influencing the students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language: a closer look into montessori classroom environment. *REiLA: Journal of Research and Innovation in Language*. 2020 Aug 28;2(2):76-84.