

INTERNATIONALIZATION

Education is at the forefront of global development and, with globalization making it easier than ever for people to move abroad for work and study opportunities, it is not difficult to see the appeal of pursuing an international education. As international students have become a valuable global commodity, the present education market is unfolding into a thoroughly new era. Recognizing education as a major export and considering its high financial impact, competition to attract international students has been intensified during the past decade. International students not only fuel the education sector but they are also key asset for technology and economic development. More than one million international students studying in US, the most popular destination for overseas students, contributed \$45 billion to the US economy and supported more than 450,000 jobs in 2018, according to the US Department of Commerce. The race to play a major role in the global education market is not limited to developed countries such as US and UK. In recent years, our neighboring countries including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and UAE have launched extensive investment plans to expand their share in global education market. As a successful example, number of foreign students studying in Turkey's colleges and universities has been increased from 15,000 in 2003 to 120,000 in 2018.

In addition to huge financial benefit, international students are becoming increasingly important for universities and nations due to their contributions, which goes beyond the direct and indirect economic impact. The intangible positive impact of international students includes academic, research, and cultural dimensions contributing towards an inclusive, innovative, and interconnected global society.

Furthermore, international students increase the social and cultural diversity of our universities, enriching the research and learning environment and helping our students to develop internationally relevant skills. International students, on the other hand, could be a source of cultural influence upon returning home. Many go on to influential positions in their home country and the goodwill built up from their years in Iran could prove very beneficial for our country both economically and politically.

In short, our education sector especially higher education needs to take serious actions towards internationalization and attracting international students. It seems that unless we start immediately, change the policies drastically, and giving the internationalization process the support it deserves, we will find ourselves left behind in this fierce economic race.

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