

Hilary Perraton: International students 1860-2010: Policy and practice around the world – a review
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While writing this review at the start of 2021, the future of international student mobility feels somewhat in limbo. There has been a flurry of online think pieces and academic commentaries attempting to predict the post-COVID future of the internationalisation of higher education (and I am guilty here of chiming in myself). Questions have been raised about whether and how mobility will be changed or shaped by the pandemic and subsequent shifts to online learning, dubbed by White and Lee (2020) as a 'post-mobility world'. Like so much of life these days, the future for (international) higher education seems far from clear.

In such situations, it helps to reflect on the past, and in that regard, I have had the pleasure of reading Hilary Perraton's *International Students 1860-2010*. Perraton's in-depth account of international students during the last 150 years is organised across 12 chapters in two parts. The first five chapters focus on 'narratives', taking the reader through a chronological history of international students. The second half shifts focus to 'themes', where key topics are developed in greater detail, such as Indian students and the British Empire or the competition for students under the Cold War. In this section, several unique chapters stretch this topic to new facets, including the international mobility of children for education or international military training (although a rationale for how such themes were developed or chosen would have been welcomed).

Perraton's historical account of international student mobility is painstakingly and meticulously researched. It provides for the reader a tightly woven synthesis of sources spanning centuries and continents, of which the sheer organisation required I do not envy. The book is, in essence, a compendium of practices that have informed and underpinned the presence of international students for over 150 years. It is one that I will return to often and see myself citing regularly, a go-to reference tome for the history of this field.

In reading Perraton's account of international student mobility, one gets a sense of how it is inextricably tied to international relations. Throughout the book, student mobility ebbs and flows over the years, the predominant sending and receiving countries shifting at whims as relationships between nations strengthen or sour. New policies, between or within countries, alter flows of mobility, shaping what is possible or impossible for hopeful student migrants. The book also shows just how fragile the ecosystem of international mobility can be, stopped in its tracks all at once by war or times of global crisis (not unlike what we are seeing in our present time). It is a reminder that there is always liminality to what we perceive as mobility's status quo.

Such notions are far from surprising, but something is striking about seeing the history displayed collectively. International student mobility and migration is a rapidly growing field of research (as described by King and Raghuram 2013), but there is a tendency to see it as a 'new' phenomenon. This book counters such inclinations by providing a reminder of the historical legacy of international student mobility. While likely not Perraton's intention, the book on the whole serves as a statement that our current times are far from distinctive: migration will continue as it always has, marked and marred by the circumstances under which it occurs. In that regard, as a former international student and migrant scholar, I saw myself in this book, not necessarily as an individual, but through reflecting on the existing policies and structures that made my journey possible in this specific moment in our shared geopolitical history.

The book also displays student migration's unevenness – how it is inherently tied to capitalism, colonialism, and uneven global power relations. These issues are ever-present in Perraton's writing

and are (rightfully) explicitly named throughout the book. However, it is here that I would have liked to see a stronger recognition of the ways that colonialism is often the very epistemic foundation for international student mobility (see, for example, Stein and de Andreotti 2016), as it is at times portrayed in the book as a more passive driver. Perhaps unintentionally, there is also an implied superiority of 'Western' or 'European' education in places, where international students from the Global South are portrayed as 'travelling to escape from blocked opportunities at home' (p. 22). Thus, there could be more reflection on the ways that international students are systemically 'othered' in higher education's (neo)colonial discourses, frequently framed through a Eurocentric lens (Aman 2015). Similarly in regards to race, the assertion, for example, that Indian students studying at Cambridge before the First World War were 'aware of racism and prejudice, this was more often to be found outside university walls than within' (p. 157), does not sit well with more recent critiques of structural whiteness in British higher education (Arday and Mirza 2018; Pilkington, 2013). These criticisms are not necessarily limited to this specific book but are wider problematic discourses that are pervasive in the field of international higher education.

Despite these critiques, this book is to be lauded for contributing a detailed synthesis and historical account of a multifaceted global topic. The book encourages reflection on a wide range of social, political, and historical complexities that have shaped international student mobility, providing pathways for further learning on this topic for both novices and experts. It is a welcome read, particularly in the uncertainties of our current times, as it prompts one to think about the future and how student mobility might move forward from the narratives outlined. Perraton refrains from offering their own reflections on this, but this means there is space for other researchers to take up the mantle and consider where we might go from here.

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