

The momentum, rationales, and consequences of student mobility to the EU countries: The cases of Russia, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia

Dr Maia Chankseliani, University of Oxford

24 May 2017 15.00 to 17.00 - 8W 4.23

Abstract

Momentum - The presentation will chart the flows of students from Russia, Eastern Europe (Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine), Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) to the EU countries since the late 1990s to show a dramatic increase in the numbers of students from this region pursuing degree programmes at European universities.

Rationale – Under the conditions of accelerating competition between nation-states and universities, expanding individualisation, growing influence of non-state actors, and the new reality of Brexit, narrative and numeric data are used to explore the rationales of UK higher education internationalisation, specifically motives of attracting students from Eastern Europe, Russia, Caucasus, and Central Asia to the UK. Amongst four main rationales of international student recruitment, economic rationale emerges as the most decisive. However, interviewees also view international student mobility as an expression of socio-economic transformation in sending countries as well as political and strategic priorities in the UK. They refer to the economic situation in post-Soviet Eurasia, the development of the HE sector within the source countries, the UK government discourse on migration, and universities' own strategic planning as four main issues that can influence future trends of student mobility from this region to the UK.

Consequences – Finally, the presentation will suggest that there may exist links between outbound student mobility and the levels of attained democracy in former Soviet countries. This is a pertinent topic in the context marked by serious concerns for democratic development of post-Soviet Eurasia and increasing numbers of mobile students from these countries choosing to study either in Europe or in Russia. The analysis of cross-sectional data on student mobility and attained democracy shows that former Soviet countries with higher proportions of students studying in Europe have achieved higher levels of democratic development. In contrast, countries with higher proportions of students studying in the most popular, authoritarian destination – the Russian Federation – have reached significantly lower levels of democratic development. A parsimonious regression model containing two explanatory variables measuring outbound student mobility to Europe and to Russia explains 66% of the variation in the democratic development of former Soviet countries. It is suggested that internationalisation of European higher education can offer the potential of facilitating democratic socialisation, especially in environments where large proportions of students from less-democratic countries choose to study in a democratic context for an extended period of time.

Biography

Dr. Maia Chankseliani is an international development professional with a doctorate from Cambridge University (UK) and a master's from Harvard University (USA). With ten years of experience in educational research, policy-making, teaching and leadership, she brings in technical expertise in quantitative and qualitative research as well as exceptional interpersonal and leadership skills.

Dr. Chankseliani is based at the Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE) at the University of Oxford. Her previous jobs with public, non-profit, and private organizations have involved design, implementation, and evaluation of various policies and programmes directed towards better quality and more equitable education provision in Georgia and internationally. Dr. Chankseliani served as a policy-maker at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. At different times, she has undertaken consultancy assignments with the World Bank Institute, Cantabrigia Advisors, Education Development Center, International Initiative to End Child Labor, Public Policy and Management Institute.

Dr. Chankseliani's primary area of expertise is post-secondary education - workforce development/employability, higher education access, vocational excellence, adult education and training. She has been engaged with primary and secondary education-related projects on child labour in Ghana, public-private partnerships in Africa, teacher educators' professional development in Pakistan, civic education in Georgia, creative partnerships in England, and gender equality in Mozambique. She has also worked on issues of labour market research in Georgia and civil service modernization in Kazakhstan.