



## NEGOTIATING EDUCATIONAL CHOICES IN UNCERTAIN TRANSNATIONAL SPACE: SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Lee Rensimer

To cite this article: Lee Rensimer (2021): NEGOTIATING EDUCATIONAL CHOICES IN UNCERTAIN TRANSNATIONAL SPACE: SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, British Journal of Educational Studies, DOI: [10.1080/00071005.2021.1935711](https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2021.1935711)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2021.1935711>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 24 Jul 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



# NEGOTIATING EDUCATIONAL CHOICES IN UNCERTAIN TRANSNATIONAL SPACE: SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

by LEE RENSIMER

*ABSTRACT: Transnational higher education (TNHE) has been characterised as a crude form of market-driven internationalisation, often targeting immobile student populations in countries with high demand for international academic degrees. In response to recent scholarship on the role of higher education internationalisation in facilitating and producing diasporic networks, this study examines its inverse: how TNHE services existing diasporic communities in situ by mobilising institutions across borders rather than student bodies. It specifically examines these dynamics within the United Arab Emirates (UAE), simultaneously host to one of the largest concentrations of TNHE globally and a five million-member diasporic community of long-term, yet impermanent residents from South Asia. Drawing on interviews with South Asian students in undergraduate degree programmes at three British international branch campuses (IBCs), it explores how students perceive their IBCs as strategic sources of valuable degree capitals for enhancing employment opportunities in the UAE and securing against precarity and uncertain futures as perpetually impermanent residents. The research implicates the role of TNHE in diaspora policymaking, asking how IBCs function as an extension of a limited social contract between a diasporic community and its 'host' state.*

**Keywords:** transnational higher education, international branch campuses, diaspora governance, South Asian diaspora, United Arab Emirates

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transnational higher education (TNHE), an umbrella term for cross-border activities including international branch campuses (IBCs), degree franchises, online provision, and collaborative international partnerships, is characterised variously as an instrument for geopolitical influence, trade in services, institutional development, supplementing domestic provision, and attracting knowledge industries (Vincent-Lancrin, 2007). National governments play a role in the development of TNHE, often through the capitalisation, deregulation or steering of TNHE activities (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2006). This

## TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

alignment inverts the spatial relationship between students and universities observed in traditional international student mobility (ISM), with institutions crossing borders primarily in service to in situ student populations (Kohler, 2019).

Emerging scholarship on the role of internationalised higher education (HE) in forming or facilitating flows of diaspora (of students, academics, or future business elites) (Bamberger, 2020a; Cai, 2012; Foulds and Zeleza, 2014; Mahieu, 2014) similarly draws critical attention to the alignment between universities and national governments, in this case to steer, shape and effectively define diasporic flows through their internationalisation policies and practices. There are evident parallels in this thematic area with TNHE; firstly at the macro level where both forms of HE strategically aim to mobilise or harness particular embodiments of knowledge, capital, or talent in service of national governments, and secondly at the individual level, where higher education institutions (HEIs) provide a bundle of degree capitals addressing the instrumental and experiential needs of particular groups (Kauppinen, 2015; Kim, 2017; Welch and Zhen, 2008).

As a point of divergence, however, some applications of TNHE service existing diasporic communities already in their 'hostlands', such as China's IBCs in Southeast Asia or the Indian and Pakistani IBCs in Dubai. In these cases, IBC students are already international, or depending on their citizenship, transnational, by virtue of their offshore positioning as a diasporic group. In this paper, I illustrate how some TNHE assemblages, with support from national 'host' governments, are the inverse of internationalised HE in the ways in which they service particular diasporic populations *in situ*. In doing so, they provide sought-after degrees and employable skills which I argue extend the relationship between diaspora and the host state and impact on mobilities in complex and contradictory ways.

To illustrate this argument, I examine one such scenario in the UAE, home to both a five million-member South Asian diaspora and the second largest concentration of IBCs after China. Like its neighbouring countries in the Arabian Gulf region, the UAE imports much of its labour through an immigration sponsorship system whilst maintaining strict limitations on legal citizenship or even permanent residency. 90% of the population is consequently 'permanently temporary and precarious' as non-Emirati expatriates (Vora, 2013, p. 30) sponsored by employers, family or educational institutions, and as noncitizens, are forced into a private market for social services including education and healthcare. In offering educational opportunities hitherto unavailable without leaving the UAE, the mass of TNHE providers capitalise on the situational immobility of various resident communities by extending essential capitals and in-demand qualifications with immediate applicability in the UAE labour market (Wilkins, 2011). The relative prestige and international cachet of the British IBCs particularly hold resonance with the South Asian diaspora as their degrees

are also perceived to enhance international mobility opportunities as a globally recognised form of cultural capital (Rensimer, 2019). In contrast with the IBCs originating from South Asia and the various foreign-styled local universities, the British IBCs ostensibly offer diasporic communities the essential bundle of capitals for maximising employment opportunities in the UAE while securing against uncertain futures as impermanent residents. The UAE national government simultaneously fulfils its objectives of retaining and upskilling its migrant labour without fundamentally transforming its migration policy or directly investing in human capital. Thus, this study offers an alternative angle to scholarship on diaspora and HE internationalisation by illustrating how alignments between national governments and TNHE can extend valuable opportunities to existing diasporic communities, simultaneously affording the essential capitals of an international academic degree as well as assets which enhance residency and onward mobility opportunities in the context of an impermanent and often tenuous residency in the UAE.

The paper first establishes its conceptual framings, highlighting relevant contributions to diaspora policy and TNHE, student mobility and migration, and academic degrees as forms of capital. The brief methodological excursus which follows lays out the empirical scope of the study and its analytical approach. It then leads into two findings sections. The first identifies the key contextual dynamics – the assemblage of TNHE serving the non-Emirati population and the majority South Asian diaspora – and how non-citizenship and market-based provision are co-constituted through the UAE's narrow social contract. The second explores how South Asian students navigate and rationalise their choices in the UAE HE market, centring on the particular ways in which the British IBCs articulate with their mobile aspirations and needs as precarious noncitizens.

## 2. THE STATE, DIASPORA, AND TNHE STUDENTS

This section selectively draws on the literature on diaspora, and state and nonstate diaspora policymaking, and TNHE students, establishing their conceptual links and applications in research on international HE and diaspora. It also attempts to embed the concepts in the context of the UAE and make explicit how these concepts are being framed for the purpose of the study.

### 2.1 *Diaspora Policymaking and TNHE*

Research on transnational mobility of individuals and institutions inevitably centres the role of the state in defining and shaping flows (Geiger, 2013; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003). Despite the shift in conceptual emphasis from uni-directionality to a global circulation of flows – of capital, technologies, ideologies and bodies – the transnational subject is refracted through bordered

*TRANSNATIONAL SPACE*, spatial analytics of ‘home’ and ‘host’. Contemporary diaspora theory rests on the same assumption (Shuval, 2000), emphasising how transnational diasporic actor groups are constructed through state policy or the absence thereof. Where the analytical emphasis is placed on home or host state policy for governing diasporic groups, a host state may aim to attract and retain particular forms of human capital, or the state of a diasporic ‘homeland’ may aim to harness the benefits of its diaspora by defining and categorising in the interest of ‘tapping’ material resources or ‘embracing’ the immaterial, sociocultural benefits of a cohesive transnational subjecthood (Gamlen, 2014). This analytical framing by itself is problematically adherent to methodological nationalism, when in reality diasporas even within the same host country are highly heterogeneous, despite migration policy discourse suggesting otherwise (Chikanda *et al.*, 2016). However defined by states, diasporic groups share experiences of being governed through embrace or coercion through national and subnational migratory policies (Baser and Ozturk, 2020; Margheritis, 2016), lending conceptual utility to analyses of emplaced diasporic groups in transnational mobility scholarship.

Despite the centrality of the state in the governance of transnational migration, supranational, subnational and private organisations contribute in shaping migration and cultivating diasporic flows (Geiger, 2013). HEIs play their part, often in alignment but not explicit collaboration with home and host national migration policy, through their various on and offshore internationalisation activities. Recent studies illustrate how transnational mobilities are produced through HE initiatives in emigrant homelands to socialise diasporic identities and affinities with the nation and national state, where diasporic bodies are viewed by the state as symbolically and economically strategic resources to be harnessed (Bamberger, 2020; Mahieu, 2014). Others point to the programmes and policies of internationalising HEIs targeting diasporic academics or ‘knowledge diaspora’ as a ‘rich source of intellectual remittances’ for the homeland (Cai, 2012; Foulds and Zeleza, 2014, p. 16; Obamba, 2013) and, not unlike HE in dominant international student markets, a source of fee-paying students (Bamberger, 2020a). All of these onshore examples function as *de facto* diaspora policies with a varying degree of alignment between the state and HEIs.

TNHE enters this discussion as a counterpoint to onshore diaspora policy-making, as TNHE institutions service offshore populations *in situ*, replacing the international mobility of students, and in some cases, academic staff, with mobile institutions (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2006). In the contemporary wave of IBCs and transnational degree franchises, the political relationship between TNHE, the state and the governance of transnational mobility is less apparent, due in part to the widely commercial orientation of TNHE, although historical formations of TNHE illuminate overt state functions of HE export and academic mobility (Healey, 2014; Pietsch, 2016). State rationales for TNHE vary with the scale and scope of provision; as a primarily fee-based, unsubsidised service, TNHE concentrates in regions with expansive demand for HE not met by

domestic supply, typically supplementing existing forms of provision (British Council & DAAD, 2014; He, 2016). Larger TNHE partnerships delivering more reputable and specialised qualifications are seen to strategically contribute to the production and retention of human capital and skills in host state economies (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2006; Vincent-Lancrin, 2007). Their use in skilled migration or knowledge ‘hubs’ further function as strategic magnets for knowledge migration of scholarly communities and students seen to stimulate demand while also absorbing existing demand (Knight, 2014; Lane, 2011). These conceptualisations centre the use of TNHE as a policy tool of national host governments to indirectly govern the circulation of desirable bodies (e.g., ‘brains’, ‘skilled labour’, human capital), often in tandem with the liberalisation of migration pathways, de- and reregulation of economic spaces or ‘zones’, and use of governmental technologies to draw students ‘into an aspirational space that articulates [their] hopes with the political-economic aspirations of the state’ (Collins *et al.*, 2014, p. 673). With the explicit purpose of TNHE to reach immobile populations who would not otherwise travel internationally to study, its entanglement in migratory biopolitics draws critical questions to its role in shaping who gets to be mobile and who does not.

The relationship between TNHE and diaspora (governance, policymaking, or mobility), to date, has not been examined. Their interface is evident, albeit not explicitly theorised, in research tracking the growth and development of particular TNHE flows. The emergence of Chinese IBCs across Southeast Asia, South Korean IBCs in China and Uzbekistan, and a Turkish university in Germany and USA suggest rationales along the lines of servicing their expatriate and diasporic communities (Garrett *et al.*, 2016); the same might be said of the numerous Indian IBCs in the UAE, although this poses the danger of provincializing South-South and South-North transnational exports of HE and obscuring their potentially commercial and competitive logics. The literature on TNHE hubs, particularly the geopolitical and domestic functions of IBC concentrations in globalising spaces like the UAE or Singapore, evidence how TNHE facilitates transnational circulations of embodied knowledge (Collins *et al.*, 2014; Lane and Kinser, 2011; Sidhu *et al.*, 2011), but their relationship to specific diasporic bodies in these studies is not explored. The process of navigating and making meaning of this entanglement between, on one hand, the migration regimes and bordering policies of national states, and on the other, TNHE as an alternative to domestic HEIs, engenders a set of shared experiences and agencies which can fruitfully inform conceptualisations of diasporic identity formation and transnational mobility.

The UAE exemplifies this conceptualisation of governing diasporic populations through TNHE provision. Its tight controls on both citizenship and access to state universities pushes its majority noncitizen population into the commercial HE market established with state policy steering and investment (detailed further in section four). This substitution of direct social provision with market-

*TRANSNATIONAL SPACE*

based private education forms part of a thinned-down neoliberal social contract, where employment-based visa sponsorship and minimal taxation come with reduced rights compared to those held by Emirati nationals, such as public subsidies and irrevocable tenure (Ali, 2010; Ridge *et al.*, 2018). This social contract is experienced by all noncitizen communities in the UAE, albeit to differing degrees, and therefore constitutes a form of diaspora governance, shaping who migrates to the UAE and how various diasporic identities form around the noncitizen experience.

The notion of a 'South Asian diaspora' in the UAE is appreciably problematic, as it conceals the enormous complexities of migrant lives in the situated context of UAE migration policy and homogenises the numerous diasporas within South Asia, including the nationalist, religious and ethnic cleavages between South Asian communities (Rangaswamy, 2005); South Asian nationals in the Gulf region are nevertheless recognised conceptually in migration literature from as early as the 1980s as an 'incipient diaspora-in-the-making' with identities and community infrastructures (e.g., clubs, temples, restaurants and schools) maintaining members' orientations towards national homelands (Kanchana, 2020). The concept of diaspora is seldom employed in popular and policy discourses within the UAE, opting instead for discursive terms which position migrants by profession, and invariably their social class, nationality, ethnicity and standing in the UAE labour hierarchy (e.g., 'guest labourers', 'expatriates') (Koutonin, 2015). This study, however, centres the experiences of South Asian nationals in the UAE to theorise relationships between the state, TNHE and diaspora governance; for these purposes the concept of South Asian diaspora is adopted here, although it used more as a loose conceptual container of multiple diasporas sharing similar trajectories of multi-generational migration and experiences of precarity as noncitizens.

## 2.2 *TNHE Students and Degree Capitals*

The students in TNHE and TNHE hubs particularly, are not well researched or understood (Brooks and Waters, 2011; Kosmützky and Putty, 2016). In contrast with traditional international students, TNHE often caters to students with limited mobility and those unable to afford study overseas (British Council & DAAD, 2014; Levatino, 2017; Tsiligiris, 2014; Wilkins *et al.*, 2011), which may be coupled with social and cultural preferences for studying in place (such as the appeal of IBCs in the UAE or Malaysia for Muslim students) (Wilkins *et al.*, 2011). The preponderance of research on the demand end of ISM concentrates on mobile and relatively privileged students who migrate for degree-level education, often drawing on rational economic lenses where student agency is reductively framed within a market paradigm of consumer choice (Sidhu and Dall'Alba, 2012). This particular framing of students erases their complexity and makes invisible labour and family migration which is increasingly



intertwined with mobility and knowledge acquisition (Beech, 2019; Raghuram, 2013). A broader theorisation of student mobility is critical given how knowledge acquisition and skilled labour, the consumption and production elements within knowledge capital, are spatially linked in knowledge economy discourses (Olssen and Peters, 2005) and concentrated in knowledge hubs (Collins *et al.*, 2014; Shields and Edwards, 2010). Market-orientated ISM frameworks (e.g., the popular ‘push-pull’ model) are therefore insufficient in theorising other enactments of migration: the foreign resident, mobile dependents, or mobile professionals studying part-time, all of whom may constitute ‘international students’ alongside other migration-based identities. The TNHE student similarly exhibits complexity and difference from their mainstream ISM counterparts, although the paucity of research on them limits how they can be understood beyond their ‘motivations’ using the same rational choice-making analytical lenses applied to international students in general (e.g., Wilkins *et al.*, 2011).

As TNHE students are variously non-mobile given how TNHE providers cross borders rather than students, a more fitting vocabulary to conceptualise the relationship between students and TNHE providers is that of social (dis)advantage and (in)access, both of which recentre students as positioned by structures which enable or impede their accumulation of essential degree capitals (Sin *et al.*, 2019; Waters and Leung, 2013). These sociological lenses stemming from domestic HE access debates broaden the analysis of TNHE students as complex agents with intersecting commitments (as part-time students, working professionals, family members or migrants) and subjectivities refracted through social class, migration status, and positioning within their national or subnational knowledge economy agenda. The assets for navigating the TNHE terrain are not dissimilar to those used in theorising mobile international students, including economic, social, and cultural capitals as per Bourdieu (1986) and Ong (1999), framed collectively here as academic degree capital, but their accumulation and conversion into opportunities for low-mobility TNHE students theoretically take place through and after their degree programmes rather than prior to them (Robertson *et al.*, 2011). TNHE students are not necessarily low-income given the relative expense of TNHE programmes over local HEIs in many contexts, nor are their choices to study *in situ* governed exclusively by costs (taking into account work and family commitments, which correspond with TNHE students) (British Council & DAAD, 2014); however, they are situated differently from other domestic and international students in the ways in which their choices may be circumscribed either by limited mobility or exclusion from other forms of HE (Waters and Leung, 2013). TNHE consequently can serve as a strategic source of positional goods and valuable degree capitals leading to employment opportunities, depending on the form of provision and context in which the degree is evaluated (Kohler, 2019; Sin *et al.*, 2019) and refracted through the degree holder’s social position as dictated by nationality, ethnicity, gender and age (Sin, 2013).



## TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

Where degree capital articulates with mobility to enable future work and study opportunities is especially relevant for understanding how TNHE degrees can constitute instrumental forms of ‘flexible’ citizenship (Ong, 1999). Seen variously as global cultural capital or cosmopolitan capital, these concepts posit that the possession of exclusive qualifications, globally-orientated attitudes, knowledge and competencies reflecting elite dispositions operates as ‘a locus of stratification in a global world’ and thus constitute embodied and institutionalised forms of capital (Igarashi and Saito, 2014, p. 233; Kim, 2011; Weenink, 2008). This translates into social advantages, specifically with applications for international mobility opportunities, realised through enhanced competitiveness in international labour markets, postgraduate study opportunities, and migration regimes, all of which recognise particular (principally Western) degree forms and their attendant competencies as both legitimate and desirable (Findlay, 2011).

Global cultural capital operates as a flexible form of documentation with value which translates across cultural and geopolitical spaces (Ong, 1999); this is particularly salient for marginalised transnational communities – migrants, impermanent residents, contingent diaspora, among others – for whom precarity is countered, albeit only partially, by leveraging degree capitals as strategic assets for staying in place or securing tenure opportunities elsewhere. Insofar as transnational ‘bodies are simultaneously mobile and emplaced’ by borders and bordering policies (Dunn, 2010, p. 5), such assets can be understood as a vital resource in the migration toolbox for navigating disadvantageous positionings within migration regimes. TNHE therefore imparts valuable degree capitals for enhancing positional mobility and potentially transnationality; however, these possibilities must be critically tempered by accounting for the positional value of the TNHE provider in the global HE hierarchy and in its contextual applications, the specific form of TNHE (given the wide differences between comprehensive IBCs and no-frills degree franchises, and how they correspond with production of degree capitals), and how they are leveraged in conjunction with other non-degree-related capitals.

This framing of TNHE students as complex yet emplaced agents aligns with the South Asian diasporic students in this study, who seek through their HE choices the accumulation of strategic capitals to mitigate precarity and broaden opportunities internationally. This raises broad questions around how diasporic students form perceptions of degree value and act upon them in the context of contingent residency in the UAE (addressed partially here and in Rensimer, 2019), as well as questions beyond the scope of this study, including the potential leverage of different degree forms and how opportunities materialise through the accumulation of degree capital.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study stems from a larger project examining the interrelationship between university representations and student sensemaking in the three largest British IBCs in the UAE (Rensimer, 2019), with two in Dubai and one in Ras Al Khaimah.<sup>1</sup> The project utilised complementary ethnographic, document and visual analysis methods to identify and trace discourses of a ‘global’ British higher education and their translocation in the UAE TNHE landscape. The data speaking to British IBC students’ experiences and sensemaking were produced through semi-structured interviews, participant and non-participant observations (Bernard, 2002) at various campus and marketing events between 2014 and 2016. As none of the students were Emirati, participants were asked open-ended questions about their perceived relationships to the UAE and their citizenship countries, their aspirations, and how their choice of a British IBC speaks to or was informed by their experiences of belonging in the UAE and their post-university plans. Responses to these questions relate to the conceptualisations of diaspora in this study insofar as the majority of student participants were UAE residents of South Asian origin and nationality.

The primary data for this study are interviews with a subset of 29 South Asian undergraduate students. Some participants had limited knowledge of and attachment to the UAE, having migrated with their families as adolescents; others were born in the UAE as second or even third generation residents with established family networks and commercial ties in the region. Although their trajectories and pathways to the UAE were distinct, participants’ experiences and sense of belonging are probably better conceptualised across a complex spectrum of diasporic membership and interlocking identities (Naik, 2019). While the participants in this study could be characterised as much by their distinctive trajectories and experiences, participants were considered noncitizen diaspora if they were born in or had migrated to the UAE as dependent minors, regardless of the substance of their constructed relationship to the UAE. Their varying experiences of migration naturally informed differential access to strategic social capital, knowledge of the opportunity landscape and sense of security in their adoptive home, and these differences were factored into the analysis.

Students were recruited through key participants (e.g., student union representatives), sometimes with the assistance of institutional staff, and further snowballing from those initial contacts.<sup>2</sup> Interviews were conducted individually or in pairs, lasting approximately one hour per student. Responses were transcribed, and subsequently coded, analysed and synthesised using an iterative five-stage process informed by phenomenology which entailed familiarisation with the data, identification of meaningful statements, coding, summarisation and thematization (Vagle, 2010). In recognition of the inseparability of the researcher (*ibid.*), I also continually produced analytical memos to reflect and locate myself and my assumptions in both the interviews and the analysis.

*TRANSNATIONAL SPACE*

Meaningful statements, and the values coding process which emerged from them (Saldaña, 2009), pertained to students' experiences of migration, impermanence, and notions of home and belonging, alongside perceptions of their HE opportunities, knowledge of foreign universities offered through IBCs, and trade-offs in their choice of university. As transcripts and statements were repeatedly analysed through these classifications and codes were refined, thematic findings began to emerge speaking to shared experiences of the UAE migration regime and the value stemming from British IBCs which militated against their precarious tenure in specific and broadly imagined ways.

## 4. EDUCATION AND NEOLIBERAL NON-CITIZENSHIP

Non-Emirati foreign residents in the UAE make up approximately 90% of the total population of 9.9 million, with the majority of residents comprising South Asian nationals, particularly from India (38%), Bangladesh (10%), and Pakistan (9%) (World Population Review, 2020). With immigration to the UAE growing apace from the 1970s and spiking in the late 2000s, South Asians have been a consistent, sizeable part of the social and economic landscape, resulting in migrant families with residential and commercial ties spanning multiple generations. While occupying a range of skilled and unskilled professions across the public and private sector, lifelong expatriate South Asian nationals are defined by the state as foreign residents, requiring sponsorship by an employer, family member or educational institution to maintain residency. This shared experience of impermanent, contingent tenure fosters a contradictory sense of belonging, where residents may be born, educated, employed and even retire in the UAE without ever securing the guarantees attended by permanent residency, access to public funds, or the legal rights enjoyed by Emirati nationals. As 'impossible citizens' of the UAE, long-term residents' ties to their countries of citizenship are maintained through structured experiences of formal exclusion, including private education, which 'instills and solidifies a sense of nonbelonging in expatriate children' (Vora, 2013, p. 157). As the right to sponsor family members is continuously redefined along gender and class lines,<sup>3</sup> nationality-based communities and family networks facilitate pathways to sustained residency through employment and marriage. Five-year visas for students, as well as ten-year 'Golden Visas' for wealthy and well-connected expatriates, are more recent developments in the UAE migration regime.

Exclusionary policies governing the scope of educational opportunities available to the non-citizen majority force residents in the UAE into a private market for both compulsory and post-compulsory education, where they may choose among fee-paying schools with varying international curricula (e.g., Indian CBSE, Pakistani FBlSE, British GSCE/A-levels, American diploma, or International Baccalaureate). With educational options stratified by these curricular choices and fees, the socialisation of non-Emirati youth in the

UAE is widely circumscribed by nationality and household income. Thus, the schooling landscape in the private market contributes not only to the maintenance of social stratification, but also the cohesion of diasporic communities, through the concentration of social networks and shared educational experiences largely within national groups and socioeconomic backgrounds (Ridge *et al.*, 2018).

This process of stratification widely continues at the tertiary education level. The UAE yields a highly diversified HE sector combining large national universities, local private institutions, and transnational providers concentrating in the Emirates of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah. However, entrance to these institutions is bifurcated along nationality lines, with subsidised and often exclusive access to national institutions for Emirati citizens and a private commercial market for the noncitizen majority. Emirati enrolments are rare in IBCs,<sup>4</sup> particularly within the commercial model championed in Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah, due to most IBCs' lack of national accreditation<sup>5</sup> and cost relative to the heavily subsidised national universities. A hybrid middle ground enrolling both Emirati and non-Emirati nationals also exists in the form of local, private institutions, often with foreign branding (e.g., American University of Sharjah or Canadian University Dubai). These private institutions have relevance to debates on inclusion and informal citizenship as rare spaces of integrated education between Emirati and foreign nationals in the UAE (Vora, 2013). However, with tuition fees often two or three times that of commercial IBCs, and independence from a foreign 'home' university, these institutions are not IBCs, and their academic degrees are often seen as having a provincial value limited to the UAE and surrounding Gulf region (discussed further in next section).

As national and local private HEIs may be off limits or unaffordable to many foreign residents (Wilkins, 2011), IBCs serve as an alternative to leaving the UAE to study, with providers competing on cost and specialised degree programmes designed to particularly appeal to residents seeking career-orientated foreign qualifications. Despite the high number of HEIs in the UAE recognised as IBCs<sup>6</sup> (31 according to Garrett *et al.*, 2016), their student enrolments are concentrated in only a small number of these providers. Of the approximately 23,000 students enrolled in Dubai IBCs,<sup>7</sup> 80% attend only seven institutions: two from the UK, one from Australia, and four from India (in order with respect to enrolment size); when looking exclusively at undergraduates, their share of the Dubai IBC market increases to 84%. Seen in this light, the actual IBC landscape is considerably narrower. The few IBCs in Ras Al Khaimah and Abu Dhabi broaden this range; however, both enrol relatively fewer students, with no-frills degree franchises in the former and high-end elite IBCs in the latter.

The Indian IBCs present opportunities to extend near exclusive socialisation with Indian nationals of similar social class and enable career

*TRANSNATIONAL SPACE*

opportunities in India in the event of a planned or unplanned departure from the UAE. Further to these HEIs' brand reputation in the Indian HE context, their curricular and pedagogical formats hold familiar appeal to Indian nationals, particularly those educated in Indian CBSE-curriculum schools. The British IBCs, despite their marketing efforts portraying themselves as diverse, cosmopolitan institutions (leaning towards a majority white student body which conforms to imaginations of a British campus), are made up of mostly South Asian nationals, alongside a minority of Arab and Sub-Saharan African students (Rensimer, 2019). In both the Indian and British IBCs there is a strong continuity in the 'neoliberal and cosmopolitan ideologies of citizenship' embedded in private school curricula, enabling lifelong noncitizens to continue their education as 'transnational subjects who expect to reside in several places over the course of their lifetimes' (Vora, 2013, p. 157). This expectation stems in part from experiences of contingent residency in the UAE and socialisation as impermanent noncitizens, experienced through, among other things, procuring education through private markets (or leaving to study).

The relationship between neoliberal non-citizenship and the UAE as a complex and often contradictory space is especially evident in young South Asian residents' discourses of home and belonging. The attribution of 'home' to the UAE was widespread among student participants, and this was often expressed through their deep familiarity with place, their social networks, and enculturation as UAE residents (inevitably contrasted with identities stemming from their countries of citizenship, which for most of the participants were relatively unfamiliar places). However, articulations of the UAE as 'home' were never unqualified. Reflecting firm understandings of their place in the socio-political hierarchies of belonging as noncitizens, participants talked openly about the limitations of their adoptive home, typically in comparison to their countries of citizenship and idealised third locations (without exception, Anglophone Western countries). Many felt that the UAE was a place where their labour and consumption were welcomed, but without a sense of expectation or guarantee which extended into the distant future. They described the UAE as an ideal place to work, start a career and finance their future plans, but not to start a family.

Student: Everyone would say that this is my home, this is my home. Because they love UAE, it's given so much to us. The UAE has given so much to the expatriates and all, so yeah why not? It's home for us.

Researcher: So can you imagine having children here and grandchildren, and staying in the UAE?

Student: [*laughs*] Maybe. Because what I've been thinking is like doing my job over here, and not my marriage life over here. So what

will happen is I could try shift myself over to somewhere abroad, maybe somewhere Australia, UK, maybe. (Hamza, male Pakistani national, migrated from Karachi to Abu Dhabi with family as an infant)

Another student, right after describing his deep sense of cultural and religious connection to the UAE, characterised it similarly:

Obviously Australia and Canada would have more of a future for me ... In UAE, everyone is just involved in business. I mean if you're having business, good ... [but] every year you have to renew stuff, and it's a bit tough compared to Australia, New Zealand and Canada obviously. At least you get PR [permanent residency] over there. (Faisal, male Afghan national, born in Pakistan and migrated to Sharjah with family as an infant)

For these students the thinned out social contract of the UAE was contrasted with that of Western migratory destinations where taxation came with guarantees, either of permanent tenure or social provision. The student quoted above critically linked the premise of tax-free employment in the UAE to the absence of economic and social rights as a noncitizen, pinpointing market-based provision as a substitute for a deeper social contract.

And plus the benefits that you get, I mean you can say tax-free country but ... It's not free at all. ... Everything is private. Even the government hospitals. You have to pay something when you are treated there. And so even if you're not paying tax, you have to pay for everything else: schools, hospitals, everything ... It's an open market.

These qualified articulations of 'home' are reflective of a neoliberal cosmopolitanism, in which rights relating to mobility and belonging across multiple national spaces are understood and acted upon through individualist economic lenses (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). They also speak to the South Asian diasporic experience particularly, which uniquely as the ethnic majority constituency but political minority, has a private education landscape more or less reflecting their educational needs and preferences. While the diasporic experience is tremendously complex and heterogeneous, the consumption of private education of one kind or another is a common experience informing and consolidating the study participants' senses of nonbelonging, foreign national identity and potential transnational mobility.

## 5. NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY: TNHE AS STRATEGIC AGENCY

Resident South Asian students' pursuit of valuable degree capital in British IBCs was not wholly distinct from that of other students including those at other institutions. Like most non-Emirati students in the UAE, their responses described a need for employable skills sought by white collar industries in the

## TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

UAE labour market. What made British IBCs exceptional for participants was the perceived strength of the British HE brand reputation and its global cachet, which held promise as a positionally competitive and elite qualification for the purposes of employment within both the UAE and the global labour market. In comparison with UAE-based competitor HEIs, participants described British universities as having a more targeted focus on specialist knowledge, employable skills, and a professional development orientation than the four-year Indian IBCs and American-style local institutions, both having broad and classroom-intensive curricular requirements which were seen by many participants as superfluous to participants' strongly instrumental motivations in HE. Participants viewed the relatively narrow focus of their British degree programmes as particularly desirable in a competitive labour market, where the professional disposition of a British education 'just gives you a little bit of an edge' (Dave, male Indian national, migrated with family from Mumbai to Dubai as an infant) over comparably qualified candidates from the four-year institutions. This view is consistent with research on British TNHE (British Council & DAAD, 2014), which finds graduates not necessarily filling skills gaps in local labour markets but believing that their qualification provides them with advantages in acquiring competitive positions.

Although niche degree programmes strengthened participants' perceptions of particular British IBCs, institutional considerations came second to national HE brands, similar to choice-making in traditional ISM contexts where destination country is the primary concern (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The South Asian study participants repeatedly identified the British degree itself as the single, essential component which secured them future opportunities over their competitors, and therefore the most convertible and flexible form of cultural capital accessible to them. These articulations of value were assertively stated as universally held truths about the positional superiority of British HE in the global degree market, although few participants drew associations between British education and the lasting imprint of colonial systems of education in South Asia which engendered among South Asian diaspora both familiarity and symbolic value in its modern forms (Walker, 2014). Rather, participants' claims to its universality belied the specific recognition value it had to them as a qualification with potential application in South Asian labour markets as well as Anglophone Western destinations. While commercial IBCs selectively offer programmes with relevance to local labour markets (Garrett *et al.*, 2016), the British degree was seen to possess a flexibility which extended beyond the UAE as an elite qualification easily translated across educational geographies. These perceptions of the universal value and portability of the degree were seen to be sound investments in cultural capital, which assured opportunities and secured futures for its holders. British academic degrees therefore held enormous currency for South Asian students as a perceived enabler of international mobility, including onward migration for work or further study.



Within the range of HE options in the UAE, participants articulated degree value and choices which were grounded in comparison with institutional competitors, often with a focus on the limitations posed by other accessible forms of degree capital. A commonly held view of the American-style private universities was that their local origination, rather than as a subsidiary of a foreign home campus, restricted their graduates to opportunities in the UAE, and at best the Gulf region, due to their independence from an exogenous national HE system. However, participants also extended this logic to the Indian and Pakistani IBCs, which were critically construed as 'local' institutions which limited mobility horizontally between the UAE and South Asia. This was explained by participants as contrasting with the 'global' and upward mobility opportunities afforded by the Western, mainly Anglophone IBCs.

Everyone was like, [Indian IBC], you're kind of just restricted to here; but then [British IBC], you'd have more opportunities elsewhere as well. That's how, at least, people think out here, and that's what I've heard when I speak to people. Because my parents, their friends and, again, their kids who are also going to university, that's kind of their opinion as well, that globally [British IBC] would give you more access. So, again, it's just the degree. It just allows you to get more access to different places. (Nazma, female Indian national, born in Saudi Arabia and migrated with family to Dubai as an infant)

Her classmate, also participating in the interview, clarified,

It's not really [British IBC], but the fact that [British IBC] is technically a British university. And it's the fact that because you have a British degree, it takes you more places. (Alpana, female Indian national, migrated with family from Kerala to Dubai as an infant)

These statements, reflecting views held consistently by South Asian participants, concentrated almost exclusively on an instrumental degree value grounded specifically in mobility opportunities – effectively the promise of cosmopolitan capital – at times even against other forms of advantage acquired through a degree, such as the social and cultural capitals extended by the Indian and Pakistani IBCs to the South Asian diaspora specifically.

The analysis found South Asian students' pursuit of Western, particularly British academic degrees, was aimed to maximise perceived opportunities beyond the UAE, on the assumption that they are globally more valuable by international employers and migration regimes, and therefore more convertible as a form of capital. However, regardless of whether participants had fully formed aspirations to leave the UAE, the British degree served as a form of security backstopping unplanned futures against unknowable events, which was pivotal in light of the omnipresent pitfalls of contingent residency. As Faisal, introduced above, put it aptly, 'the thing is, you never know when they're going to kick you out ... little thing[s] happen and then they're like "you're going

*TRANSNATIONAL SPACE*

back to your country". This view of an unwelcoming and unpredictable host government was not unusual among participants. Equally commonplace were accounts of their residency being contingent on employment, which students linked to the strategic importance of degree capital.

I mean here's the thing in UAE. You can always come back on the same visa, but yeah sending back the whole family also. It's like, if you're actually good, you have good experience or anything it's easy for you to find a job. If you have a [Western] degree you get a job like that [*snaps fingers*]. Like that in UAE. So if you lose your job you'll find another one, that's given for sure. (Hamad, male Indian national, migrated from Bihar to Sharjah with family as an infant)

Both Hamad and Faisal's choice of British IBCs were in pursuit of a degree asset which simultaneously enhanced tenure security in the UAE *and* onward international mobility. These applications appear contradictory in the present tense but could be understood through the prism of future uncertainty and the need to hedge against it. This finding was manifest in the various ways participants outlined their future migratory plans, usually to pursue postgraduate studies in Anglophone Western countries, while at the same time, the IBCs saw surprisingly low participation in their exchange mechanisms which allowed current undergraduates to transfer to the UK campuses. According to participants, the reality of leaving home ran contrary to the residential security and social and cultural proximity extended through attendance at an IBC. In keeping with studies on 'upward' ISM and academic degrees as forms of essential capital (Brooks and Waters, 2011; Findlay, 2011; Kim, 2011), the value of an elite international degree was therefore understood in its abstract or potential form as a strategic asset which in this case materialised as stability and belonging in the present. Their accounts of navigating the pitfalls and assets within UAE residency may not speak exclusively to the South Asian diasporic experience; students' choice of British over South Asian IBCs, however, was found to be based on the perceived relative value of the British degree, a value which partly stems from the situated context of South Asian migration to the UAE and the need to secure enhanced onward mobility.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The role of IBCs in this context, serving primarily noncitizen residents with limited mobility, aligns with the general function of TNHE in reaching students who otherwise would not cross borders for their degree (British Council & DAAD, 2014; Levatino, 2017; Tsiligiris, 2014). This illustrates, among other things, the contrasting needs and assets available to students between IBCs and traditional ISM, with an inverted relationship to mobility (one pursuing a degree to enable future mobility, the other exercising mobility to pursue a degree) (Kohler, 2019; Sin *et al.*, 2019), raising new questions about how degree capital is acquired and converted into mobility opportunities. While the question of whether IBCs extend valuable opportunities or exploit circumstances in

complex transnational spaces can be asked of marketized universities in both onshore and offshore contexts, it is especially salient in the UAE HE market where a private, commercialised system of social provision intersects with a migration system of impermanent tenure and transient, contingent employment. In this context degree providers, particularly Anglophone Western IBCs, are perceived to insure against the precarity of impermanent residency with valuable degree capital and potential ‘upward’ international mobility, softening the sharp edges of a sponsorship system which provides no assurances to even its lifelong residents.

In this study, I illustrated how TNHE is implicated in the limited social contract between noncitizens and the UAE national government, and by extension it constitutes a component of diaspora policy governing the scope of educational experiences, aspirations and choices of the South Asian diasporic community. It builds upon research on diaspora governance strategies of states (Baser and Ozturk, 2020; Gamlen, 2014; Margheritis, 2016) and institutions, specifically HE (Bamberger, 2020; Cai, 2012; Mahieu, 2014), making an original contribution by bringing TNHE into the equation. The student accounts portrayed above critically link experiences of belonging and nonbelonging within a system of neoliberal non-citizenship, where market-based provision of HE is viewed as a costly yet essential source of opportunity to secure employment and residency. The findings further show how South Asian diaspora navigate the pitfalls of impermanent residency by investing in the accumulation of valuable degree capital, and make assessments of which providers extend the most advantageous ‘package’ of capitals – social, cultural, and cosmopolitan. These findings align with research on traditional ISM and degree capital accumulation (Brooks and Waters, 2011; Findlay, 2011; Igarashi and Saito, 2014; Kim, 2011), particularly diasporic students in internationalised HE (Bamberger, 2020a). In this case, such assessments were made within the context of a TNHE market which is both highly stratified (based on perceptions of quality, prestige, and global recognition, and their material outcomes) and unique (based on competition between national HE brands which would not be in direct, proximal competition outside of the TNHE market).

As this study evidences, the British IBCs in this context have a particular resonance with diasporic South Asian residents for their package simultaneously offering specialised professional education for competitive positioning in the UAE labour market and the global cachet and recognition of the British degree to leverage future international mobility opportunities. Both of these applications of academic degree capital point to their value as strategic assets to a diasporic community facing the uncertain political and economic headwinds affecting their tenuous residency in an adoptive home. The global pandemic serves as a vivid illustration of the insecurities within transnational biopolitics, with the reported repatriation of 400,000 Indian nationals from the UAE between May and September 2020 (Haza and Badam, 2020). Further to its inevitable impact on IBC enrolments, the economic fallout

## TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

resulting from the pandemic illustrates the limitations of academic degree capital in insuring against such shocks in an uncertain transnational space.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to the two anonymous reviewers, I would like to thank the guest editors of this special issue and organisers of the BAICE forum on diaspora and HE internationalisation for their valuable comments as this paper evolved from idea to presentation to publication.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The institution in Ras Al Khaimah was formerly an IBC and subsequently scaled down to an academic centre managed by a degree franchisee. Despite this redesignation, it is popularly considered a branch campus by the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education and Cross-Border Education Research Team (Garrett *et al.*, 2016).
- <sup>2</sup> All participants were briefed on the purpose and risks of the study and their consent was obtained orally prior to interviews. Participants quoted in this manuscript have been given pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity. This study, conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was approved by the Education and Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board under approval ID number 2015–0111.
- <sup>3</sup> In order to sponsor one's family, an employed resident must surpass a salary level determined by the national government. Children can be sponsored until age 18 for males and until marriage for females.
- <sup>4</sup> With the exception of Abu Dhabi's IBCs (e.g., New York University Abu Dhabi and Sorbonne-Paris) which are funded by that Emirate and are consequently attended by a minority of Emirati nationals.
- <sup>5</sup> A degree accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) is a prerequisite for employment in the UAE public sector and is therefore particularly desirable for Emirati citizens. A limited number of IBCs have acquired national accreditation; however, this adds onerous curricular and staffing requirements which some institutions see as compromising their equivalency with home campuses.
- <sup>6</sup> The definitive criteria of an IBC are hotly debated, with some disagreement concerning what constitutes a 'campus', to the inclusion or exclusion of some degree franchises and study sites with fly-in teaching staff.
- <sup>7</sup> In 2019–20 academic year, using KHDA Open Data (<https://www.khda.gov.ae/en/opendata>). The figures provided here exclude enrolments from local private providers also licensed by the KHDA.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## REFERENCES

- Ali, S. (2010) Permanent impermanence, *Contexts*, 9 (2), 26–31. doi:[10.1525/ctx.2010.9.2.26](https://doi.org/10.1525/ctx.2010.9.2.26)
- Bamberger, A. (2020a) Accumulating cosmopolitan and ethnic identity capital through international student mobility, *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(7), 1–13.
- Bamberger, A. (2020b). *Diaspora, State and University: an analysis of internationalisation of higher education in Israel*. PhD Thesis, UCL Institute of Education.
- Baser, B. and Ozturk, A. E. (2020) Positive and negative diaspora governance in context: from public diplomacy to transnational authoritarianism, *Middle East Critique*, 29 (3), 319–334. doi:[10.1080/19436149.2020.1770449](https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2020.1770449)
- Beech, S. E. (2019) *The Geographies of International Student Mobility: Spaces, Places and Decision-Making* (Singapore, Palgrave Macmillan).
- Bernard, H. R. (2002) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Walnut Creek, AltaMira Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, USA, Greenwood Press), 241–258.
- British Council & DAAD. (2014) *Impacts of Transnational Education on Host Countries: Academic, Cultural, Economic and Skills Impacts and Implications of Programme and Provider Mobility* (London, British Council).
- Brooks, R. and Waters, J. (2011) *Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalization of Higher Education* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan).
- Cai, H. (2012) Deploying the Chinese knowledge diaspora: a case study of Peking University, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 32 (3), 367–379. doi:[10.1080/02188791.2012.711242](https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2012.711242)
- Chikanda, A., Crush, J. and Walton-Roberts, M. (2016) Introduction: disaggregating diasporas. In A. Chikanda, J. Crush and M. Walton-Roberts (Eds) *Diasporas, Development and Governance* (Cham, Switzerland, Springer International Publishing), 1–18.
- Collins, F. L., Sidhu, R., Lewis, N. and Yeoh, B. (2014) Mobility and desire: international students and Asian regionalism in aspirational Singapore, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35 (5), 661–676.
- Dunn, K. (2010) Embodied transnationalism: bodies in transnational spaces, *Population, Space and Place*, 16 (1), 1–9.
- Findlay, A. (2011) An assessment of supply and demand-side theorizations of international student mobility, *International Migration*, 49 (2), 162–190. doi:[10.1111/j.1468-2435.2010.00643.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2010.00643.x)
- Foulds, K. and Zeleza, P. T. (2014) The African academic diaspora and African higher education, *International Higher Education*, 76 (Summer), 16–17. doi:[10.6017/ihe.2014.76.5526](https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2014.76.5526)
- Gamlen, A. (2014) Diaspora institutions and diaspora governance, *International Migration Review*, 48 (S1), S180–S217. doi:[10.1111/imre.12136](https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12136)
- Garrett, R., Kinser, K., Lane, J. E. and Merola, R. (2016) *International Branch Campuses - Trends and Developments 2016* (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) & The Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-BERT)), London, UK.
- Geiger, M. (2013) The transformation of migration politics: from migration control to disciplining mobility. In M. Geiger and A. Pécoud (Eds) *Disciplining the Transnational Mobility of People* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan), 15–40.
- Haza, R. and Badam, R. T. (2020, September 23). Coronavirus: more than 50,000 Indians repatriated from Ras Al Khaimah since June. *The National*.

## TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

- He, L. (2016) Transnational higher education institutions in China: a comparison of policy orientation and reality, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20 (1), 79–95. doi:[10.1177/1028315315602931](https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315315602931)
- Healey, N. (2014) When is an international branch campus? *International Higher Education*, 78 (78), 22–23. doi:[10.6017/ihe.2014.78.5808](https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2014.78.5808)
- Igarashi, H. and Saito, H. (2014) Cosmopolitanism as cultural capital: exploring the intersection of globalization, education and stratification, *Cultural Sociology*, 8 (3), 222–239. doi:[10.1177/1749975514523935](https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975514523935)
- Kanchana, R. (2020) Cricket, an oddity in the Arab-Gulf lands or a mirror of an enduring South Asian diaspora? *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterraneos*, 28 (28), 121–135. doi:[10.15366/reim2020.28.007](https://doi.org/10.15366/reim2020.28.007)
- Kauppinen, I. (2015) Towards a theory of transnational academic capitalism, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36 (2), 336–353. doi:[10.1080/01425692.2013.823833](https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2013.823833)
- Kim, J. (2011) Aspiration for global cultural capital in the stratified realm of global higher education: why do Korean students go to US graduate schools? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32 (1), 109–126. doi:[10.1080/01425692.2011.527725](https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2011.527725)
- Kim, T. (2017) Academic mobility, transnational identity capital, and stratification under conditions of academic capitalism, *Higher Education*, 73 (6), 981–997. doi:[10.1007/s10734-017-0118-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0118-0)
- Knight, J. (2014) International education Hubs: collaboration for competitiveness and sustainability, *New Directions for Higher Education*, 168 (Winter), 83–96. doi:[10.1002/he.20115](https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20115)
- Kohler, C. W. (2019) Locally international: how students at an American International Branch Campus in Singapore negotiate the spatial dimensions of their transnational higher education, *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*, 11, 127–130. doi:[10.32674/jcihe.v11iWinter.1422](https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v11iWinter.1422)
- Kosmützky, A. and Putty, R. (2016) Transcending borders and traversing boundaries: a systematic review of the literature on transnational, offshore, cross-border, and borderless higher education, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20 (1), 8–33. doi:[10.1177/1028315315604719](https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315315604719)
- Koutonin, M. R. (2015). Why are white people expats when the rest of us are immigrants? <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/mar/13/white-people-expats-immigrants-migration> (accessed 29 July 2020).
- Lane, J. E. (2011) Importing private higher education: international branch campuses, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 13 (4), 367–381. doi:[10.1080/13876988.2011.583106](https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2011.583106)
- Lane, J. E. and Kinser, K. (2011) Reconsidering privatization in cross-border engagements: the sometimes public nature of private activity, *Higher Education Policy*, 24 (2), 255–273. doi:[10.1057/hep.2011.2](https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2011.2)
- Levatino, A. (2017) Transnational higher education and international student mobility: determinants and linkage, *Higher Education*, 73 (5), 637–653. doi:[10.1007/s10734-016-9985-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-9985-z)
- Levitt, P. and de la Dehesa, R. (2003) Transnational migration and the redefinition of the state: variations and explanations, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 26 (4), 587–611. doi:[10.1080/0141987032000087325](https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987032000087325)
- Mahieu, R. (2014) Feeding the Ties to “Home”: diaspora policies for the next generations, *International Migration*, 53 (2), 397–408. doi:[10.1111/imig.12183](https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12183)
- Margheritis, A. (2016) *Migration Governance across Regions: State-Diaspora Relations in the Latin America-Southern Europe Corridor* (Abingdon, Routledge).

- Mazzarol, T. and Soutar, G. N. (2002) "Push-pull" factors influencing international student destination choice, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16 (2), 82–90.
- McBurnie, G. and Ziguras, C. (2006) *Transnational Education: Issues and Trends in Offshore Higher Education* (London, Routledge).
- Naik, M. (2019) Exploring identity construction amongst Upper Middle Class second-generation Indian immigrants in Dubai, *Confluence: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3. <https://cjids.in/volume-iii-2019/exploring-identity-construction-amongst-upper-middle-class-second-generation-indian-immigrants-in-dubai/> (accessed 27 October 2020).
- Obama, M. O. (2013) Transnational knowledge partnerships: new calculus and politics in Africa's development, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43 (1), 124–145. doi:10.1080/03057925.2013.746576
- Olssen, M. and Peters, M. A. (2005) Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism, *Journal of Education Policy*, 20 (3), 313–345. doi:10.1080/02680930500108718
- Ong, A. (1999) *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, Duke University Press).
- Pietsch, T. (2016) Between the local and the universal: academic worlds and the long history of the university. In M.-H. Chou, I. Kamola and T. Pietsch (Eds) *Transnational Politics of Higher Education: Contesting the Global/Transforming the Local* (Abingdon, Routledge), 21–41.
- Raghuram, P. (2013) Theorising the spaces of student Migration, *Population, Space and Place*, 19 (2), 138–154. doi:10.1002/psp.1747
- Rangaswamy, P. (2005) South Asian diaspora. In M. Ember, C. R. Ember and I. Skoggard (Eds) *Encyclopedia of Diasporas* (Boston, Springer), 285–296.
- Rensimer, L. (2019). *Going global: representation and sense-making in the British International Branch Campuses of the United Arab Emirates*. PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Ridge, N., Shami, S. and Kippels, S. (2018) Private education in the absence of a public option: the cases of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, 3 (2), 41–59.
- Robertson, S., Hoare, L. and Harwood, A. (2011) Returnees, student-migrants and second chance learners: case studies of positional and transformative outcomes of Australian international education, *Compare*, 41 (5), 685–698. doi:10.1080/03057925.2011.562369
- Saldaña, J. (2009) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications Ltd).
- Shields, R. and Edwards, R. M. (2010) Student mobility and emerging Hubs in global higher education. In L. M. Portnoi, V. Rust and S. S. Bagley (Eds) *Higher Education, Policy, and the Global Competition Phenomenon* (New York, NY, Palgrave Macmillan), 235–248.
- Shuval, J. T. (2000) Diaspora migration: definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm, *International Migration*, 38 (5), 41–56. doi:10.1111/1468-2435.00127
- Sidhu, R. and Dall'Alba, G. (2012) International education and (Dis)embodied Cosmopolitanisms, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44 (4), 413–431. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00722.x
- Sidhu, R., Ho, K.-C. and Yeoh, B. (2011) Emerging education hubs: the case of Singapore, *Higher Education*, 61 (1), 23–40. doi:10.1007/s10734-010-9323-9
- Sin, I. L. (2013) Cultural capital and distinction: aspirations of the "other" foreign student, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34 (5–6), 848–867. doi:10.1080/01425692.2013.816030



## TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

- Sm, I. L., Leung, M. W. H. and Waters, J. (2019) Degrees of value: comparing the contextual complexities of UK transnational education in Malaysia and Hong Kong, *Compare*, 49 (1), 132–148. doi:[10.1080/03057925.2017.1390663](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2017.1390663)
- Tsiligiris, V. (2014) *Transnational Higher Education Vs. International Student Mobility: Substitutes or Distinct Markets?* (Redhill, Surrey, UK, Observatory on Borderless Higher Education).
- Vagle, M. D. (2010) Re-framing Schön's call for a phenomenology of practice: a post-intentional approach, *Reflective Practice*, 11 (3), 393–407. doi:[10.1080/14623943.2010.487375](https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2010.487375)
- Vertovec, S. and Cohen, R. (2002) Introduction: conceiving cosmopolitanism. In S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (Eds) *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), 1–22.
- Vincent-Lancrin, S. (2007) Developing capacity through cross-border tertiary education. In S. Vincent-Lancrin (Ed.) *Cross-Border Tertiary Education: A Way Towards Capacity Development* (Paris, OECD and the World Bank), 47–108.
- Vora, N. (2013) *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (Durham, NC, USA, Duke University Press).
- Walker, P. (2014) International student policies in UK higher education from colonialism to the coalition: developments and consequences, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18 (4), 325–344. doi:[10.1177/1028315312467355](https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315312467355)
- Waters, J. and Leung, M. (2013) A colourful university life? Transnational Higher education and the spatial dimensions of institutional social capital in Hong Kong, *Population, Space and Place*, 19 (2), 155–167. doi:[10.1002/psp.1748](https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1748)
- Weenink, D. (2008) Cosmopolitanism as a form of capital: parents preparing their children for a globalizing world, *Sociology*, 42 (6), 1089–1106. doi:[10.1177/0038038508096935](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508096935)
- Welch, A. R. and Zhen, Z. (2008) Higher education and global talent flows: brain drain, overseas chinese intellectuals, and diasporic knowledge networks, *Higher Education Policy*, 21 (4), 519–537. doi:[10.1057/hep.2008.20](https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2008.20)
- Wilkins, S. (2011) Who benefits from foreign universities in the Arab Gulf States?, *Australian Universities' Review*, 53 (1), 73–83.
- Wilkins, S., Balakrishnan, M. S. and Huisman, J. (2011) Student choice in higher education: motivations for choosing to study at an international branch campus, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16 (5), 413–433. doi:[10.1177/1028315311429002](https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315311429002)
- World Population Review. (2020). United Arab Emirates Population 2020 (Live). <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-arab-emirates-population> (accessed 23 July 2020).

Correspondence Lee Rensimer [l.rensimer@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:l.rensimer@ucl.ac.uk) Education, Practice and Society, UCL Institute of Education, University College London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL