



Rethinking International Student Mobility through the Lens of “Crisis” at a Juncture of Pandemic and Global Uncertainties

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Abstract

International student mobility (ISM), defined as the movement of students to pursue tertiary education outside their countries of citizenship, has conventionally been understood in terms of micro social actors' behaviours of cultural capital accumulation and macro-level institutional processes following the logics of neoliberal globalization and knowledge economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has abruptly and severely impacted ISM, plunging the latter into what seems to be a “crisis”. Taking this fluid juncture as an opportunity for reflection and re-thinking, this paper re-examines ISM through the discursive lens of “crisis”. Broadening the “crisis” perspective beyond the pandemic to include a longitudinal view over the 20th century through to the present, the paper considers the ways in which movement and recruitment of international students may be seen as consequences of as well as responses to “crises” of various natures—geopolitical, economic, and social. The author's own work on student mobilities in Asia is drawn upon for illustration. The paper ends by briefly considering both the immediate crises confronting ISM, as well as various broader global uncertainties lying ahead.

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