

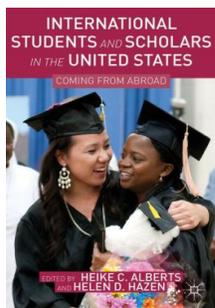
Book Review

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International Students and Scholars in the United States: Coming From Abroad

Alberts, H. C., & Hazen, H. D. (Eds.) (2013). *International students and scholars in the United States: Coming from abroad*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. 235 pp. ISBN: 978-1-137-02446-6

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International students and scholars in the United States: Coming from abroad is a well-written, well-researched, and well-timed monograph. In pursuit of higher education, international students have continued to attend colleges and universities in the United States of America in spite of the educational, emotional, and cultural issues. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), 723, 277 international students and more than 115,000 international scholars matriculated in American colleges and universities in 2010/2011 (pp. 4-9). The editors, Heike Alberts and Helen Hazen, have not only provided readers with an opportunity to learn about international students and scholars from Asia, Africa, and Europe but have also addressed critical issues faced by the international students and scholars in the United States. What is more momentous about this volume is the contribution of different authors who were international students once and who represent various countries in the world.

The first part of the book, which is appropriately titled, “Migration Patterns and Experiences,” consists of four chapters along with the introduction. In chapter two, Russell King, Allan Findlay, Jill Ahrens, and Alistair Geddes look at what motivates British students to attend American institutions. What are their career goals? How would they rate their experiences in the United States? The findings illustrate that the main reasons British students pursue higher studies in the United States are because it is an adventure, it provides them with a “world-class education” and US degrees are considered valuable, which reinforces their career goals (p.29). Largely, the overwhelming majority of the participants reported to having positive experiences in the USA.

In chapter three, Wan Yu explores the concepts of Brain Drain, Brain Gain and Brain Circulation in the context of China, the most sought after country in recruiting international students. Yu points out that after graduation, many Chinese international students are returning home. However, upon their return, finding appropriate job placement for these international migrants has not been an easy task. Yu argues that even though China is losing many of its students to the United States, it is gaining back its students as educated professionals. Thus, these occurrences are neither a Brain Drain nor a Brain Gain. In fact, it is Brain Circulation because both host country and home country benefit from this migration; the host country benefits financially, and the home country benefits educationally.

In chapter four, Helen Hazen and Heike Alberts consider what factors influence international students to come to USA and to return to their home countries. How long do the students plan to stay in the United States? By using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, Hazen and Alberts learn that international students come to the USA because American institutions not only provide educational opportunities and quality education but also financially support their students. Although many of these participants thought they would return home upon graduation, they are now hesitant to return for various personal, economical, professional, political and cultural reasons.

In chapter five, Heike Alberts studies German scholars' motivations and intentions to work and stay in the United States. Alberts conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 scholars via telephone. The author finds that what motivates German scholars to choose the United States over Germany are the opportunities provided by American institutions such as the tenure-track system, open and fair hiring procedures, good access to equipment and funding, and lastly a collegial, and nonhierarchical atmosphere.

The overarching theme for part two is Diversity, which is comprised of two chapters by Rebecca Theobald and Kavita Pandit. For instance, Theobald finds that although diversity is understood differently among different administrators and institutions, research participants who were mostly department chairs and academic deans appreciate the contributions of diverse faculty members. Additionally, Theobald raises concerns about the native born faculty members. For instance, Theobald mentions that, "Native-born minorities remain underrepresented in tenure-track positions and at research universities, suggesting that more should be done to educate, mentor, and recruit American minorities of color" (p. 115). While Theobald looks into diversity in terms of faculty, Kavita Pandit focuses on international students and diversity. She indicates the need to create programming that will bring domestic and international students together. She also mentions that many international students come with some negative assumptions toward certain minority groups. It is important that these issues are being addressed since many international students are graduate appointees who work with students on a daily basis.

The idea of Challenge and Support encompasses part three of this book. This section raises several obstacles often confronted by international students and faculty such as academic and non-academic challenges and then provides suggestions to tackle these issues. Alisa Eland and Kay Thomas, who have been closely working with international students for over 27 years, find that the primary causes of academic challenges are the differences in education systems, classroom dynamics, writing styles, course content, and styles of teaching, whereas, nonacademic challenges are the language, climate, transportation, food, living situation, managing money and living alone. Moreover international students are not only dealing with language barriers, psychological distresses, and diverse cultural, social and academic challenges but also many are often the victims of discrimination. For instance, like many students, African international students come to the USA in hopes of educational opportunities, freedom, and upward mobility. However, Jane Irungu, who has worked with African students for an extensive period, learns that many of these students face discrimination by students and faculty members. For example, "African students report being perceived as "foreigners" or "outsiders" (p. 167). To Irungu, fitting in has been troublesome for African students as the history of slavery remains powerful for many of them.

Furthermore, Ken Foote mentions that international faculty members need support with visa and immigration procedures, understanding US classroom customs, working with students and colleagues, and learning about how their department functions, as well as assistance with funding and research opportunities and the job search process. Subsequently, Hazen, Alberts, and Theobald

finish the book with a discussion over how students perceive their nonnative English speaking instructors and how nonnative English speaking instructors view their own accents. Research shows that although 59.3% of students did not believe that having nonnative English speaking instructors was inconvenient for them, 63.5% did see it as a problem (p. 205). Interestingly, 88.7% of the nonnative English speaking instructors did not find their accents to be problematic while teaching students in the classroom (p. 206).

Overall, the research findings with reference to different international groups, and the discussion of international migrations pertaining to “Brain Circulation” will contribute to the existing literature on international students and international scholars. The educational administrators in the receiving countries should consider these findings in order to assist international students and scholars to become adjusted academically, professionally, psychologically, and socially. At the same time, legislators in the home countries need to recognize some of the conversations and concerns raised by international students and scholars and implement policies to address these issues appropriately.

About the Reviewer:

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