

06.4.2026

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Title

The Great Brain race : how global universities are reshaping the world

Publisher

Princeton [u.a.] : Princeton Univ. Press, 2010

Collation

240 S.

Publication year

2010

ISBN

978-0-691-14689-8

Inventory number

77091

Keywords

Hochschule und Staat : allgemein ; Hochschulreform : allgemein ; Hochschule : Wettbewerb ; Globalisierung ; Internationalität ; Austausch von Wissenschaftlern und Studenten ; Ausland : China : Studenten, Studium, Lehre ; Ausland : Europa : Studenten, Studium, Lehre ; Ausland : USA : Studenten, Studium, Lehre ; Ausland : Indien : Studenten, Studium, Lehre

Abstract

In The Great Brain Race, Ben Wildavsky, senior fellow at the Kauffman Foundation, guest scholar at the Brookings Institution, and former US News & World Report education editor, delivers a comprehensive overview of the globalization of academia. Beginning with an introduction of the phenomenon and an outline of his basic project, Wildavsky dives into an examination of international student movement, the expansion of universities into a transnational context, and the development of competitive, world-class universities around the world. Key factors at work in this examination are

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the sheer number of students studying abroad, the dynamic globalization models of universities such as NYU and regions such as Qatar's Education City, and the impressive rise of top-notch universities in non-traditional locales ranging from China, to India, South Korea, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia. Wildavsky then turns to the global spread of university ranking systems, from the well-known US News & World Report, to up-and-comers like the Academic Ranking of World Universities, a research-focused publication by Shanghai Jiaotong University, and the arguably UK-centric Times Higher Education. Following the exploration of these metrics, he then assesses the rise of for-profit and online education facilities, which carry the benefits of providing readily accessible, career-oriented learning options, but suffer from questions regarding the quality of their educational services and their positive or negative impacts on the education systems around them. While The Great Brain Race does an excellent job of examining the various angles at work in academic globalization, and while it provides many interesting facts regarding this ongoing movement, readers may find the book to be lacking as far as a core argument or motivational purpose. The introduction and final chapter of the book take a stab at establishing this sort of motivating theme, where Wildavsky discusses his worries about the obstacles facing academic globalization, and his support of its many benefits, which he stylizes as being part of a positive-sum "free trade in minds". Despite this attempt, and in large part due to the dynamic nature and incredible breadth of his project, the book falls somewhat short of introducing a unique premise, and may instead be highlighted for its strengths as a broad-based survey and referential resource to better understand the globalization of the academic field. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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