

The pandemic and the future of university education

A perspective from student learning research

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Preliminaries

- We are in a crisis ('unprecedented') right now – make no mistake - but aim of this seminar is to try and look beyond that
- This crisis has us focused especially on (especially short-term) financial sustainability - important – but not focus of this seminar
- I am going to focus on the educational purposes of HE – undergraduate and (post)graduate programmes

What I want to try and do

- We are stuck in some very old conversations



employability

rankings

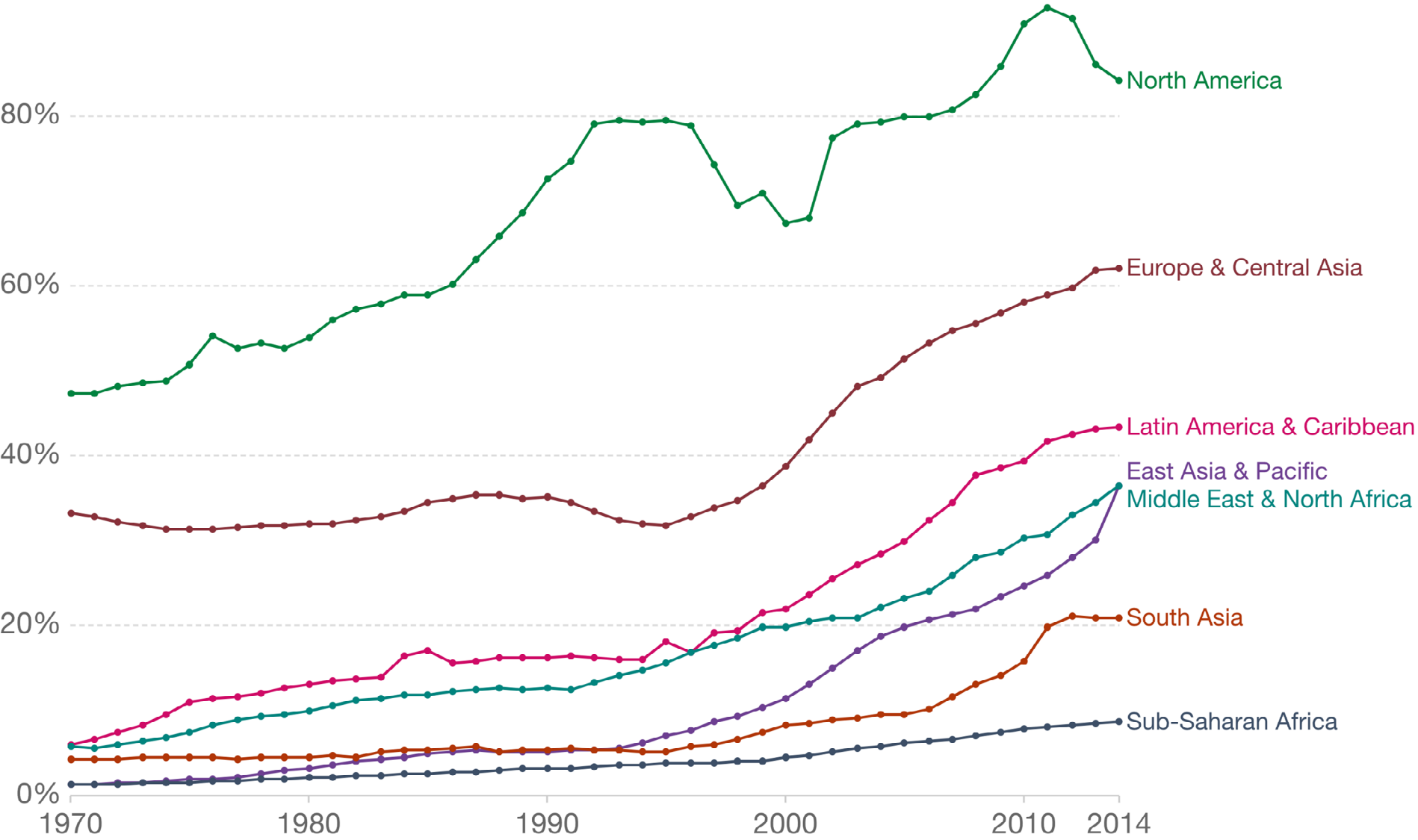
quality

online
education

- Can we try and shift the conversation to what we are certainly going to have to think more about in the post-COVID era?

Gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education, 1970 to 2014

Total enrollment in tertiary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total population of the five-year age group following on from secondary school leaving.



Source: World Bank

A few starting points

- The desire for higher education (of as high a perceived status as possible) is not going to go away for middle class and aspirational middle class families globally (look at the trends from early 90s)
- Note that globally while we talk as if it is one thing – and mostly it does reference a generally held ideal – the reality on the ground varies dramatically across national contexts and even within national contexts
- Let's try and avoid having elite US HE stand in for the whole system globally (is it a 'system' globally?)


Core of my argument

- Higher Education only worth the label if transformative for the individual and for society
- This transformation comes through a students' engagement with specialized knowledge, mediated by a community of teachers who facilitate access to this knowledge
- You cannot measure the quality of this transformation through graduate salaries (duh)
- Transformation is especially significant for FIF students – to have a way of relating to knowledge that is not necessarily shared in your family – a whole new way of seeing the world and seeing your potential place(s) in society – also complex identity move

It has opened my mind to many things in terms of worldview; I don't limit myself to wanting something that is in my immediate vicinity. It helped me aspire for more and to want to question things more and not just be happy with the status quo. It has helped me form relationships and not only on a cultural level but on more levels than that. It helped me develop a sense of who I am and developed me academically and holistically and helped me have an appreciation of who I am ... it has made me appreciate the world more.

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Some further pointers

- This transformation is maybe best delivered (especially post school) in settings that promote intense engagement
 - Online interaction is a part of our life so there is no reason why HE teaching wouldn't use it (at least in part) and smartly
 - Face to face interaction is expensive to arrange so best we make best use of it (to do things that can't so easily be done online)
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- We need to think a LOT more about affordability.
 - Not sure it can be done if you want to play the status game in your locality. e.g. limited evidence on the value of really small classes (but US private colleges have this as big selling point which drives behavior across the sector)