

The secret life of international student recruitment agents, 18 November 2020



00:32:38 Nick Scott: Question: Do Universities always use agents who are based abroad, or are there UK based? If only foreign, why, in the experts' view, is this? Thanks

00:33:49 Simon Marginson: My first test match - watched Ian Redpath in his first test spend almost a full day making 97. On 93 for 25 minutes, hit a four, bowled next ball. 'What a loser' we school kids said to each other.

00:34:22 Simon Marginson: that was for Trevor only! Apologies

00:34:43 Vincenzo Raimo: Hi Nick, yes there are lots of in country based agents in the UK and AU who recruit international students often from one uni to another - BA to MA

00:36:59 Brenda McMahon: Is there any analysis showing agent with high O4?

00:39:05 Simon Marginson: colleagues it is time now to formulate your questions about agents so as to take part in the Chat

00:39:31 Morten Hansen: What is the typical length of agent contracts (a couple of pages or many pages)? Are the contracts in the High Contractual Specificity quadrants normally legal contracts that if broken could result in legal dispute, or do these contracts tend to be more like a very specific 'memorandum of cooperation' that have little legal basis?

00:40:42 Berta Guillamón: Do agents usually cover accommodation as well?

00:40:59 David Law: When will the new paper be published? The detail is impressive but needs to be studied to really understand it.

00:41:14 Nick Scott: To what extent do the experts feel that universities are able to meet their obligations under domestic legislation. For example the UK Bribery Act sets out requirements and controls for UK companies/organisations - can UK Universities ensure their agents are compliant?

00:42:46 Charley Robinson: Could you unpack what you mean by transparency a little please?

00:42:51 Berta Guillamón: Are there any specifics in relation to asian agents?

00:43:30 Robin Shields: Are agents mainly small companies? Is there any evidence of consolidation processes (i.e. multi-national agents, chains, etc)?

00:43:51 Doria Abdullah: Not a question, but comment to contribute to discussion (great study btw, looking forward to the forthcoming paper!): it's common for us to work with agents for international students @ Malaysia. We interviewed, trained, put agents on probation status, and monitor progress. We also put in a clause that allows us to terminate contract for any non compliance. IMO It's truly the HEI roles to manage this process, rather than the national agencies (eg ministries).

00:43:54 Ameet Kumar Bali: Mostly international students those who want to join the international universities for higher education become the prey of fake agents and these agents loot theirs hard earning money. What these universities are doing to stop these fake agents and have any strategies or plan to develop the trust deficit of interested students in these universities. The second important these universities have 100 percent job placement there for which these students want to join. Ameet Kumar Bali from India

00:44:05 Berta Guillamón: Which would be the route to market in origin countries of these agents?

00:45:34 Vincenzo Raimo: Nick, Worth checking out the Transparency International guide for non-profits and universities on Bribery Act compliance and responsibilities

00:47:16 Vincenzo Raimo: And re Transparency have a look at the QAA guidance which suggests HEIs in UK to make up-to-date lists of agents available and make clear that agents are paid a fee

00:49:17 Marko Turk: Thank you for interesting presentations and exposures. I want to point this out from a rhetorical perspective. If we are basing our discussion on the premise that one of the global issues of higher education is the commercialization which has been affecting the HE system for the ages may we emphasize that the idea of educational agents is something which supports, even more, encourages the strength of commercialization of the HE in whole?

00:50:44 philip altbach: Is it fair to say that the entire agent system does not represent the interest of students but entirely the interests of the universities who hire the agents?

00:51:15 Vincenzo Raimo: Very much agree with Pii Tuulai's comments - this isn't just about agent behaviour but also about universities - so the secret life of universities work with agents

00:51:18 Brenda McMahon: Although not for accreditation purposes, the British Council Agent and Cousellor training suite is available for all agents recruiting to the UK. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/education-agents/training-agents>

00:57:16 philip altbach: Do the speakers think that the post-covid environment will change the current agent environment?

00:57:35 Laura Spencer: Can you share your thoughts about the growth of 'super agents' that have an extensive network of sub-agents? (Enter into exclusivity agreements with HEIs; negotiate incredibly high commission rates etc.) Do you have

concerns? They seem to be changing the nature of HEI-Agent relations...? Shifting balance of power?!

00:59:41 Emma Tayou: I find the case of IDP very interesting, in that it is still 50% owned by Australian Universities (initially set up as 100% owned by universities) - does this skew the figures shown earlier regarding the % of Australian students that use an agent? Is there a clear difference in their practices vs other agents? Also very interesting given the increasing Rest of World placement by IDP

01:03:26 Cassie Zhang: I have a question on the typology of the agency contracts and a typology of the universities identified in Iona's research. I wonder - in your findings - does these two typologies of agency contract and Higher education institutions are related in any way?

And another question is more about the relevant regulatory environment in the UK, I wonder what kind of the role British council play in this market?

01:04:58 Eddie West: Hong Kong Consumer Council

01:05:04 Eddie West: Are Students Protected? An In-depth Look Into Overseas Education Advisory Services

01:05:08 John Philip: At the end of the day, Agents are a necessary evil - just because they are the closest access to the HEI that a potential student has. That said, the trend in Markets like India, is to have locally hired representatives

01:05:12 Eddie West:
https://www.consumer.org.hk/ws_en/competition_issues/reports/post_secondary.html

01:05:48 Stephanie Kim: Could you comment on how private pathway providers affect the world of agents. For example, do such for-profit providers pay more commission than traditional HEIs? How does this affect agent behavior?

01:05:56 Charley Robinson: Thanks so much - really interesting to see this research and the timing is good. British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA) and UKCISA have jointly commissioned a piece of research with HEIs, students, agents and government and sector stakeholders looking into the use of international recruitment agents reviewing existing quality assurance mechanisms, benchmarking against other English speaking destinations, and making recommendations for future development. BUILA members will be familiar with this work but we will be communicating the research and findings more widely very soon!

01:09:28 John Philip: While 'Agents' may represent multiple institutes, the locally hired 'representative', will be exclusively answerable to their employer institute.

01:21:04 Thomas Hale: Hi all - Thomas Hale here from the Financial Times. Thanks all for the presentation. Very quick question if there's time - how does the concept of a "contract" between a university and an agent fit into the widespread role of pathway

providers (i.e. Navitas), to whom the universities effectively outsource the recruitment. In that case, isn't there a degree of separation between the institution and the agent, complicating an attempt to analyse the commercial relationship between the two?

01:21:09 Robin Shields: Great presentation, thanks everyone!

01:21:32 John Philip: Thank you!

01:22:13 Stephanie Kim: Thomas Hale, thank you for the question. It's the same one I asked a few moments earlier. I hope the speakers have a chance to answer it.

01:22:28 Stephanie Kim: Great presentation, by the way. Thank you!

01:23:05 David Law: Excellent presentation. Thank you.

01:23:07 Ameet Kumar Bali: Thanks for informative presentation

01:23:48 CGHE Webinars: Thanks everyone. Our next webinar will be tomorrow on 'University Research Capacity in Post-Soviet Countries: Case Studies of Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Russia'. Register here: <https://www.researchcghe.org/events/cghe-seminar/university-research-capacity-in-post-soviet-countries-case-studies-of-armenia-kazakhstan-and-russia/>

01:23:52 Vincenzo Raimo: Thomas, pathway providers act as both agents and conduits for agents to universities and vice versa

01:24:33 Vincenzo Raimo: Thanks everyone for attending. Please follow-up with emails!

01:24:34 Thomas Hale: Hi Stephanie - please feel free to drop me an email on this - thomas.hale@ft.com

01:24:41 CGHE Webinars: A recording of this webinar will be on the CGHE site tomorrow morning: <https://www.researchcghe.org/events/cghe-seminar/the-secret-life-of-international-student-recruitment-agents/>

01:25:10 CGHE Webinars: And you can join the CGHE mailing list to hear about all future events and publications: <https://researchcghe.us12.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=16ff8239ab5aa3c8d4f636725&id=1cadde4c55>

01:25:13 CGHE Webinars: Thanks!

01:25:38 Laura Spencer: Very interesting discussion - thank you very much.

01:26:58 Vincenzo Raimo: Great point Pii Tuulia - agents should be eyes and ears on the ground

01:27:37 Vicky Lewis: Thanks for a really interesting and insightful session.

01:27:40 Vincenzo Raimo: Thanks again Simon and CGHE

01:27:43 Cassie Zhang: Thank you very much for sharing your research findings and It is really a pleasure seeing you all "in real life"! ;)

01:27:53 Claire Cheng: Thank you for the informative presentation. I would encourage scholars and researchers also look at the recruitment issue through the lens of students and parents in different contexts. As I am aware of, a large majority of students actually are not aware of the existence of agents and their contracts with HEIs. Knowing what students really need and want for their "dream education" is the core and mission of all educators. Just a little feedback on future endeavors, thank you again all.

01:28:18 Pete Mayadunne: Thank you very much everyone.

01:28:28 Charley Robinson: Thank you for a great presentation! Great session

01:28:28 Cassie Zhang: Thank you Simon for organising the webinar