Higher education and the Covid-19 pandemic – worldwide developments

[Simon Marginson, Oxford, for MEXT Symposium 30 November 2020]

1. Student voice – an increasingly important factor
2. Technology – great growth of online education, likely to have some permanent effects, including increase in global meetings
3. International mobility – negated, disrupted, will recover unevenly
4. Finance - destabilisation of institutions in market countries
5. Graduate outcomes – sharply worsened underemployment
6. Collaboration - in courses and facilities, in Covid-19 research
7. Social differentiation – disadvantaged social groups are further disadvantaged during the pandemic time, digital divide
8. Global differentiation – some countries handle the pandemic better and will recover better, in general and in higher education

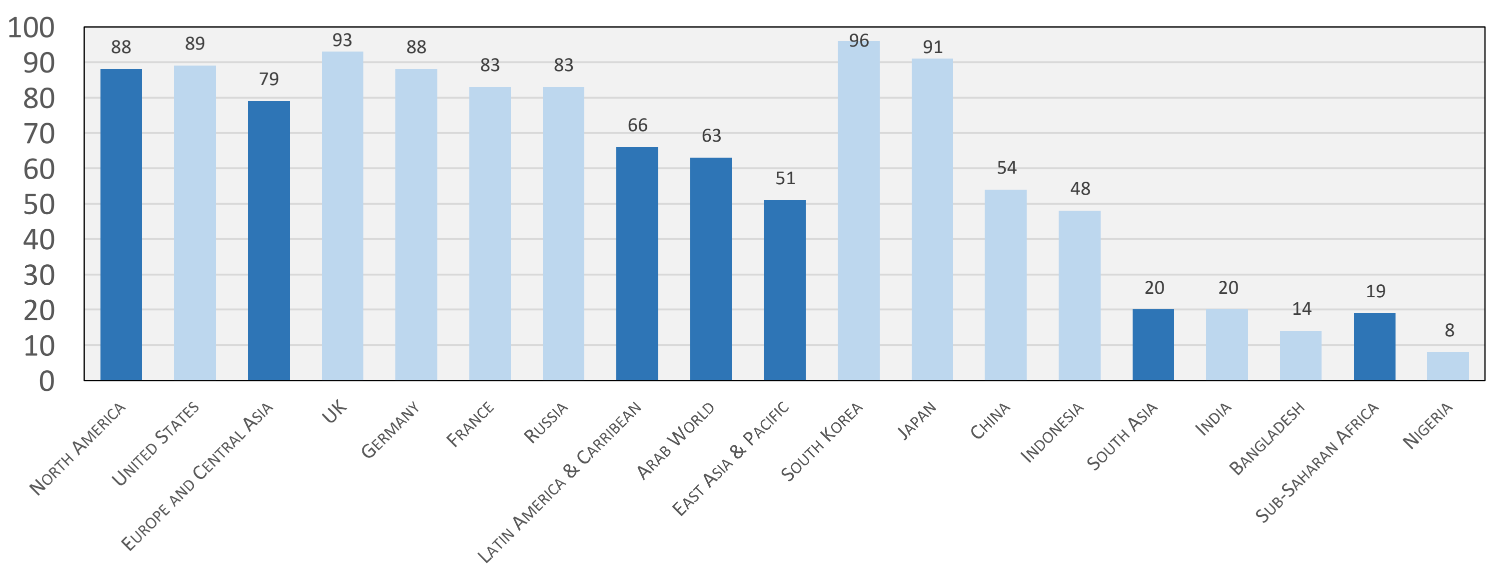
The Covid-19 death toll varies greatly across the world

Country/region	Covid-19 dead (27.11.20)	Per 10,000 people
China	4,739	0.03
Japan	2,051	0.16
South Korea	516	0.10
Vietnam	35	0.00
Singapore	28	0.05
Taiwan	7	0.00
Germany	15,586	1.87
Denmark	811	1.39
Finland	388	0.70
Russia	38,558	2.67
Poland	15,568	4.10
United States	263,455	8.03
Brazil	171,460	8.12
United Kingdom	57,031	8.53

Online education – a solution, *the* solution?

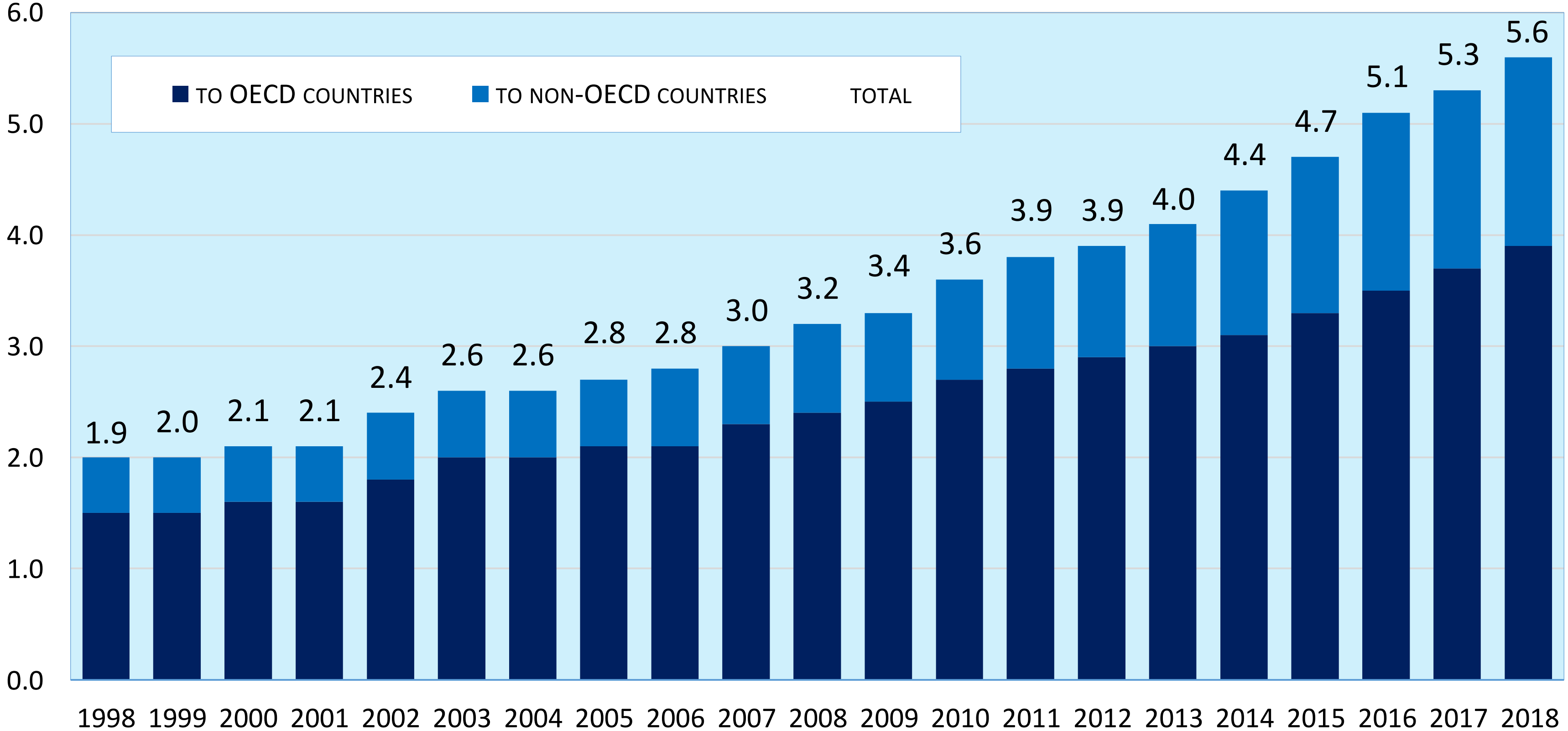
- Reassertion of sociability as the 'glue' in learning
- Logistical problems of hybrid model in teaching
- Problems of online education only – digital divide
- Potentials and limitations of MOOCs
- Lasting benefits of online evolution in 2020

Proportion (%) of population with access to Internet, 2019 or nearest year



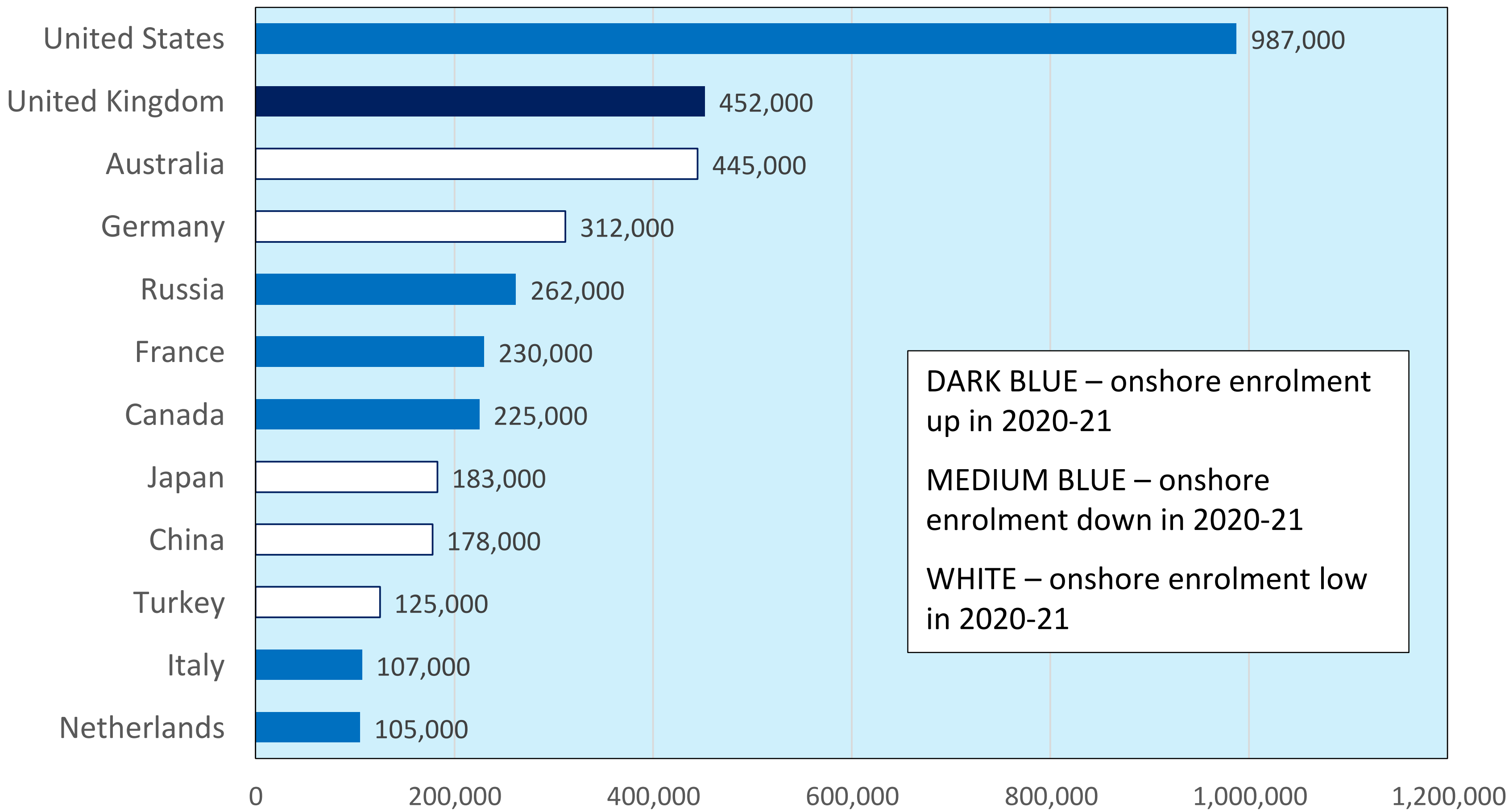
Student mobility – before the pandemic

International/ foreign students in tertiary education, worldwide number, 1998-2018 (millions), UESCO data 2020



Student mobility – after the pandemic

International students in 2020 compared to UNESCO 2018 enrolment



International student mobility has been affected by the pandemic differently from country to country

'The crisis has affected the safety and legal status of international students in their host country, the continuity of learning and the delivery of course material, and student perception of the value of their degree, all of which could have dire consequences for international student mobility in the coming years' - OECD, *Education at a Glance 2020*

- USA (987,000 in 2018), 43% drop in new enrolments in 2020-21
- Inward plane travel is partly or largely blocked into Australia (445,000 students in 2018), Germany (312,000), Japan (183,000), Turkey (125,000)
- Germany international applications down 20%, Netherlands down more
- International enrolment severely impaired in many other countries including China, Canada, New Zealand
- UK (452,000 students in 2018): has never closed the border though the pandemic is rife, this year 2020-21 accepting 7% more non-European international students, growth is in high prestige universities, but students have not been provided with promised 'near normal' higher education

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Students have been sold the lie they are able to have a full university experience. They can't

Jo Grady

The government and vice-chancellors have a duty of care, yet in too many colleges, Covid security is mere hygiene theatre

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People wearing face masks walk past Wadham College, Oxford University, ahead of the new academic year. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

With a new term already under way in many universities, the higher education sector has never felt more beleaguered - and most of the blame for its current state of disarray lies with the government.

In the past few weeks the Department for Education has amassed a staggering charge sheet: the exam results fiasco; trying to force campuses to open more widely without a test and trace system in place; threatening to lock university students down in unfamiliar

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How universities tricked students into returning to campus

Lorna Finlayson

Students were promised face-to-face teaching, but as soon as their fees and rents were secured, institutions turned their backs on them

Coronavirus - latest updates

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'Students have been lured back to campuses they have been told are "Covid safe", only to find themselves trapped in cramped and overpriced accommodation.' Photograph: Joel Goodman/The Guardian

The outbreaks of coronavirus as students return to universities were not just predictable: they were predicted. In August, the Independent Sage group of scientists called on universities to make online teaching the "default option". The main lecturers' union, UCU, echoed this call. Even not-so-independent Sage (the official body that advises the government) warned in early September that "significant outbreaks" associated with universities were "highly likely", hinting at the prospect of local lockdowns to prevent students from returning home for Christmas.

To blame the outbreaks on illicit or ill-advised partying by students is to

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Necessities of a market-driven approach?

Where will global student mobility recover best?

- East Asia (China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan) and some European countries (e.g. Finland, Denmark, Germany) have managed the pandemic best and will spring back in higher education. In these countries public universities have strong government support. All of these countries can gain ground early in their share of global student flows if they want to increase recruitment
- Despite high Covid-19 death tolls US and UK will remain high demand nations (numbers are essentially supply driven, and that will not change); UK will gain short term from low mobility into US; US will spring back after the pandemic, Biden will support international education but question-mark about China
- Australia has a lower Covid-19 death toll, but is blocking inward flights. Weaker demand than US/UK, slow recovery to pre-pandemic levels, political tension with China, research decline in future may impact global reputation
- Canada looks like a long-term winner. It is offering support measures targeted at students affected by the virus, including additional work rights, and access to unemployment benefits

The New Cold War may further disrupt academic mobility

Other emerging issues

- Research in most countries has been sustained well during the pandemic, but there have been reductions to junior science positions in some countries – danger of a 'lost generation' of doctoral graduates
- In the longer run, this may affect 'World-Class University' programs
- Total student/family demand for tertiary and higher education will increase ('recession shelter' effect)
- Graduate under-employment in recession conditions will be a major public issue in most countries and may lead some in government and the public to question the value of higher education . . .
- Especially given that one effect of the pandemic is to further disadvantage students from poorer families, rural areas and in some countries, under-represented minorities – so placing in more question higher education's role in facilitating social mobility and equity

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Thank you for giving your attention to this presentation

”I have an attention span that's as long as it has to be” – attributed to Donald Trump