Trends in Asia and the Pacific Higher Education Arena

Regsuren Bat-Erdene

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia *August 23, 2010*

Asia and the Pacific

- 48 countries in Asia and the Pacific
- over three billion people - almost 60 per cent of the world's population
- one third of the world's higher education enrolments
- 28 per cent of the world's wealth

- a profound impact on the world economy, governance, culture, environment, technology, and social tolerance
- need to be prepared to participate in an increasingly competitive and globalized economy

Issues and trends in the region

- quantitative expansion and massification;
- the role of private higher education;
- quality, quality assurance and academic excellence;
- credit transfer and the mutual recognition of qualifications;
- resources and further diversification of funding; and
- trade in education services and attitudes towards foreign providers and GATS.

Expansion and massification

- Rapid growth in student enrolments and expansion towards **massification**

Reason:

- **relaxation of policies** with regard to private higher education – number of new private colleges and universities:
- **Distance education and open learning** in such countries as China, India, Iran, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan and Malaysia.
- **Diversified student population**: increasing proportion of female and mature-age students, and increasing recognition of the value of lifelong learning and professional updating. Increasing proportion of full-time students to undertaking some part-time work.

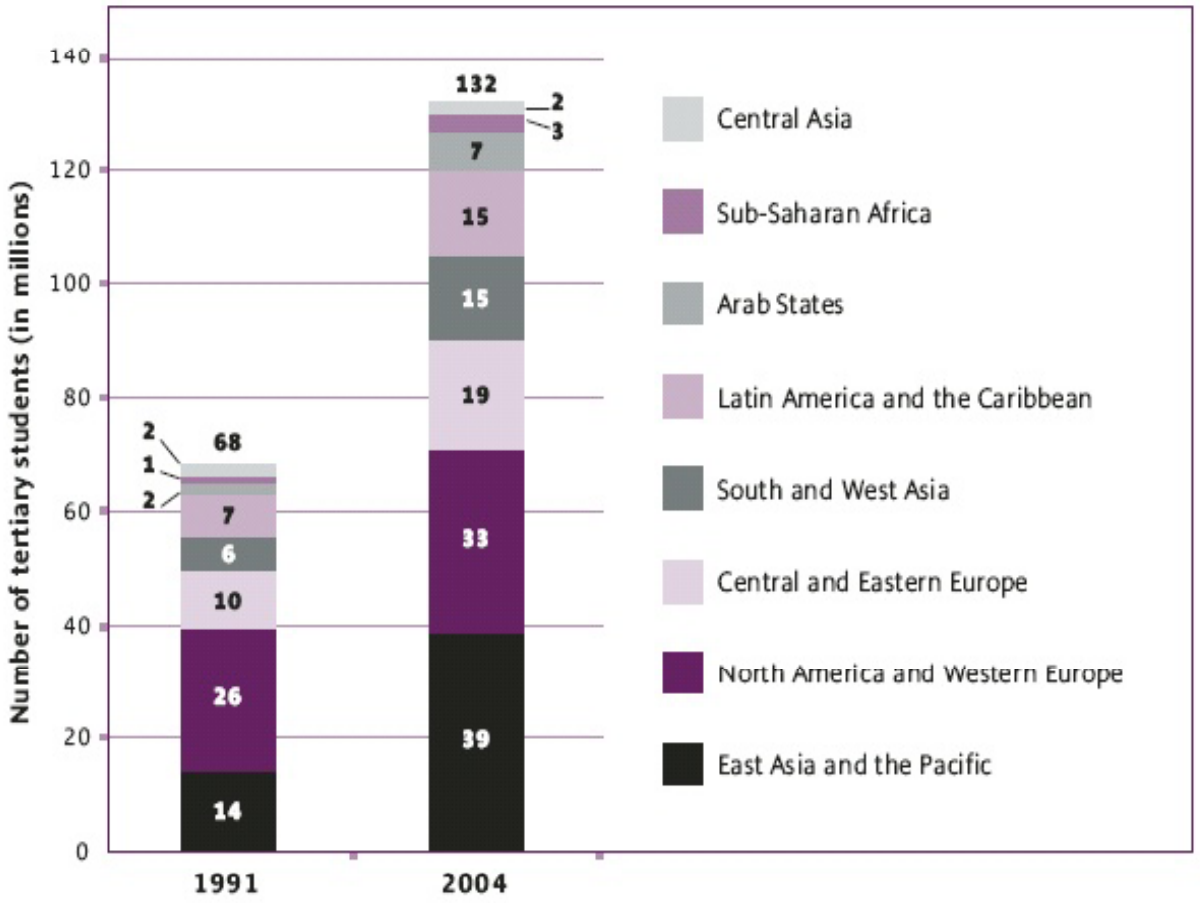
expansion and massification (cont-d)

- Areas of growth:
  - student access, in particular, responding to the needs of industry and new technologies, proportion of students in Natural Sciences, Engineering and Agriculture is on the rise
  - strengthened research and postgraduate programs,
  - more equitable representation of different social groups among graduates,
  - renewal of curricula and adoption of new teaching and delivery methods, and
  - enhanced institutional management and strategic planning capacity.
- Challenges:
  - **Public funding** continue to be a reason for serious concern.
  - **Unemployment of graduates** in some fields and lack of highly qualified professionals generally in less developed nations
  - **Quality** of courses, facilities, staff and graduates and a lack of scientific equipment.

Tertiary student growth

Growth in the number of tertiary students worldwide since 1991

Absolute number of tertiary students, 1991 and 2004, in millions

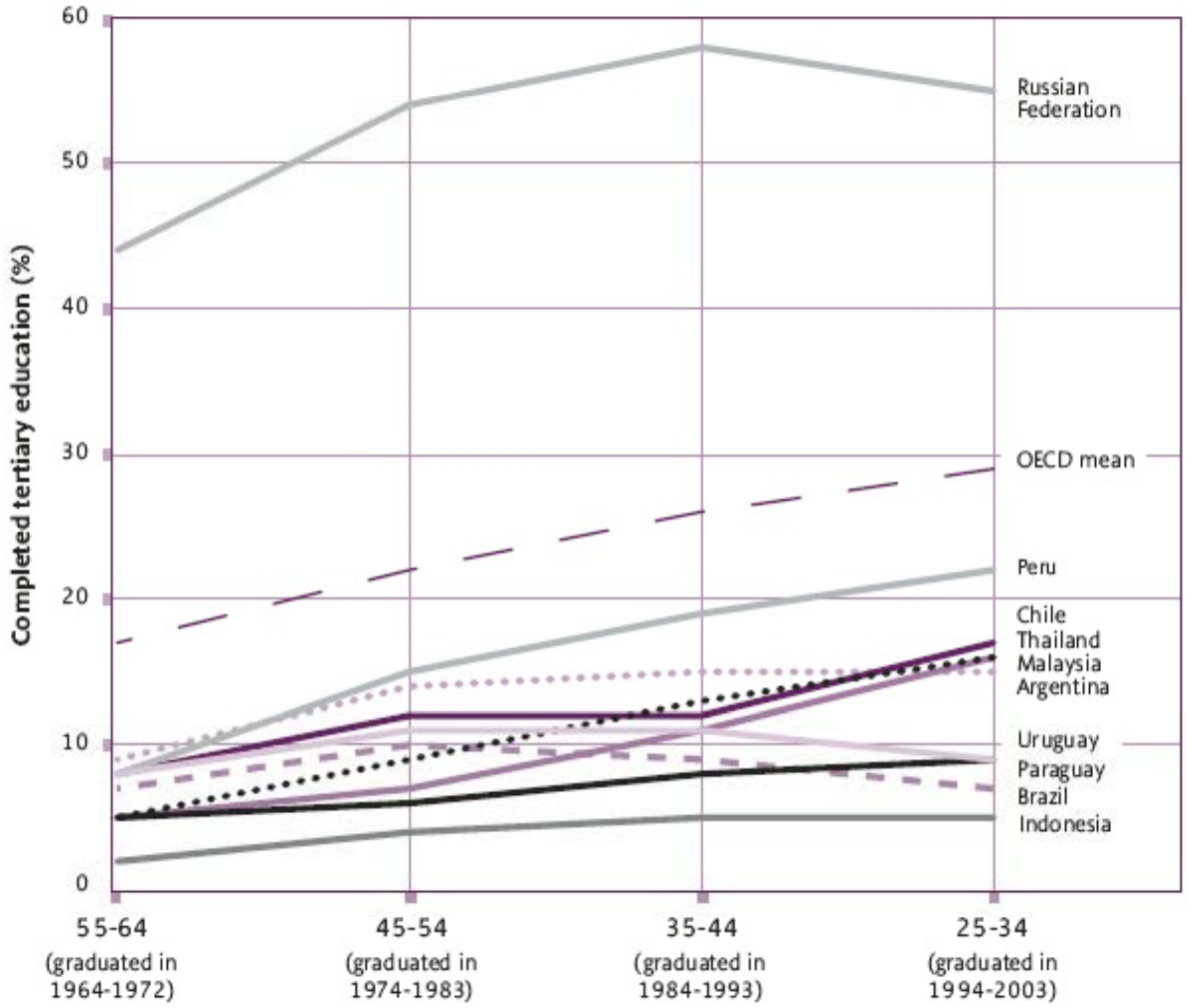


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database.

Percentage of college educated population

What share of the adult population attained at least some tertiary qualification?

Percentage of the adult population that completed tertiary (ISCED 5A or 5B) education, 2003



Source: UNESCO/OECD, 2005.

private higher education

- The growing demand for student access and specialized courses in particular fields such as ICT, management and business.
- private sector offers an important opportunity for student access and helps governments to meet funding demands of public higher education.
- Variety of forms of private education:
  - churches or philanthropic foundations vs professional associations or profit making companies.
  - major comprehensive institutions vs institutions operating in highly specialized fields with a limited range of course offerings.
  - universities offering doctoral degrees vs junior colleges.
  - public sector corporations established their own specialized universities

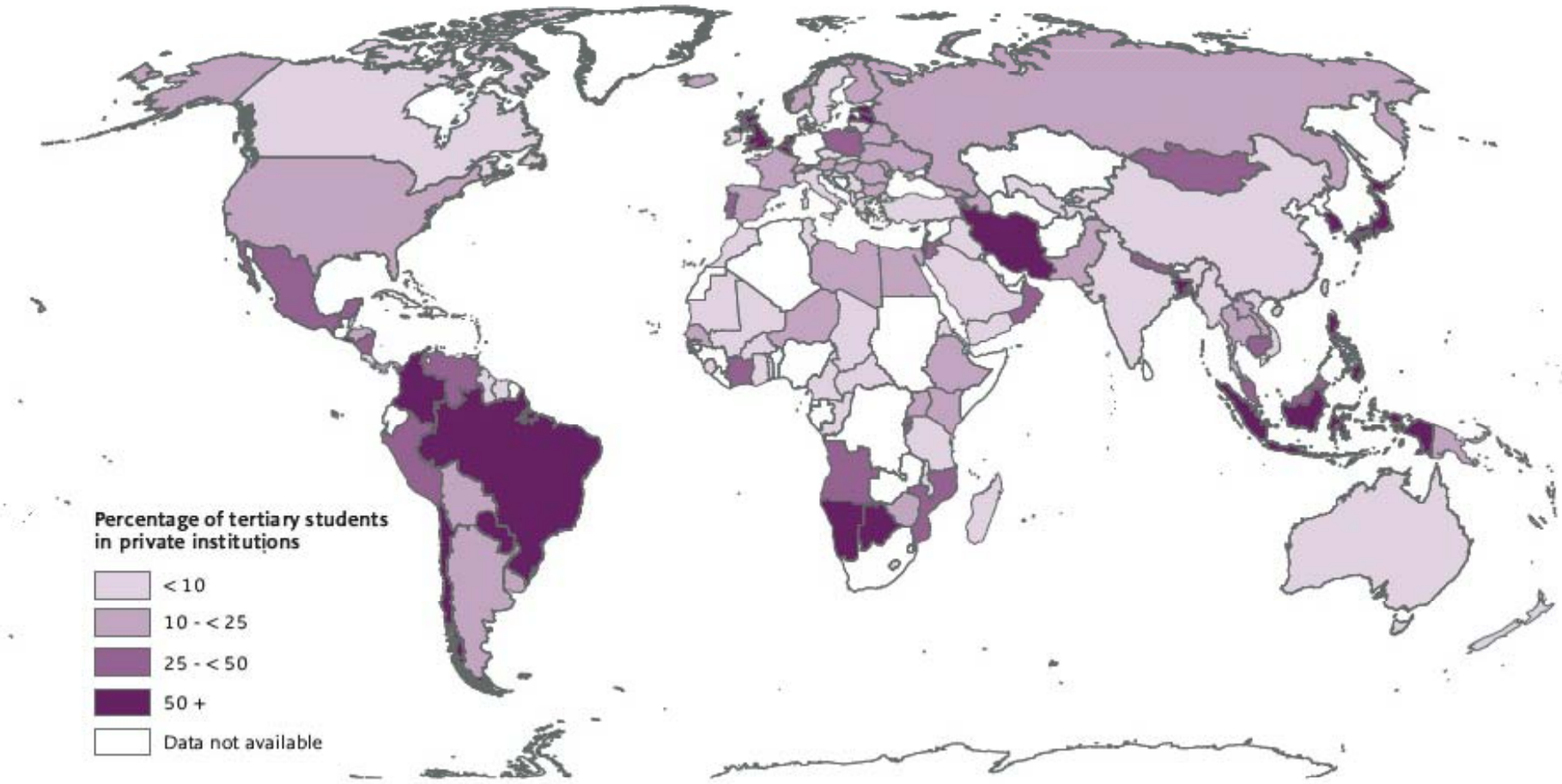
private higher education (cont-d)

- private higher education as a new phenomenon for some countries
- expansion of private education requires increased government responsibility in providing legislative and policy frameworks and effective quality assurance, monitoring and accreditation arrangements.
- governments recognize the need in attracting private investment and the need for private sectors to generate financial returns on investments. In some cases, governments have provided incentives, subsidies and tax benefits as inducements to private investment.
- quality provision in private higher education become a major concern: In some cases, this has been an important factor in establishment of new quality assurance mechanisms across both private and public sectors

Private higher education

How prevalent is the private sector in tertiary education systems throughout the world?

Percentage of tertiary students enrolled in private institutions, 2004



Coverage: 156 out of 207 countries, 90% of the world population.
Notes: Data for 3 countries refer to 2005. Data for 43 countries refer to 2003. Data for 20 countries refer to 2002. Data for 18 countries refer to previous years.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Statistical Table 8.

credit transfer and the mutual recognition of qualifications

- increased mobility of students, academics and professional labor depends on enhanced credit transfer and mutual recognition
- need for concerted efforts not only to foster quality assurance but also to promote its successful outcomes to promote trade between nations in educational services.
- Drivers:
  - the economic globalisation process
  - rapid progress in ICT
- Response:
- qualifications that are portable as well as relevant cultural and linguistics skills.
- the main leadership has come from IGOs and NGOs, including UNESCO, AUN and UMAP.
- UNESCO: the regional convention for recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in Asia and the Pacific adopted in December 1983 and ratified by 19 Member States

credit transfer and the mutual recognition of qualifications (cont-d)

- The University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) scheme founded in 1991:
  - to achieve increased mobility of students and staff within the region
  - to improve the quality of higher education in the region.
- in countries where recognition of academic qualification is part of **university autonomy** need multilateral negotiations with political and practical compromises, on a bilateral basis by individual universities or national organizations of universities.
- **Government's role:**
  - remove procedural bottlenecks
  - provide a favorable climate and funding support for exchange of scholars and professionals
  - encourage integrating international experiences as a part of the regular local program,
- **Higher education institutions:**
  - websites providing information on qualifications to facilitate student exchange,
  - develop international programs,
  - give a high priority to quality assurance, and
  - mobilize government and private support to fund academic mobility.

quality assurance

- Quality assurance is aimed to
  - protect student and employer interests,
  - achieve international recognition of the standards of awards and public accountability.
  - inform student choice of courses,
  - enhance teaching practice and student outcomes, and
  - disseminate good practice.
- driven pressures for increased quality concerns:
  - the need to safeguard academic standards in expanded and diverse HE systems,
  - growing demands from employers and the professions for improved quality of graduates, and
  - pressures from governments for improved national competitiveness.
- conflicts and paradoxes:
  - Conflict between the provision of equal access and opportunity, and the financial constraints upon the mass extension of higher education;
  - between the pressures for increased institutional autonomy versus those for growing public accountability.

quality assurance (cont-d)

- Increased collaboration in quality assurance at sub-regional and regional levels: a strong commitment from a number of countries to strengthen national data collections, achieve a higher degree of compatibility between collections, and link this to new forms of quality indicators.
- collaboration between quality assurance agencies within the region and between governments. regular meetings of senior staff, bilateral agreements with regard to quality assurance.
- Increased use of performance indicators and benchmarking:
  - performance indicators used by Australia, India and Indonesia.
  - experiments with benchmarking as a tool for self-evaluation and self-improvement, enabling institutions and systems to monitor performance on a range of dimensions, and to compare performance either with their past performance or with the performance of other institutions with similar characteristics.

trade in education services

- GATS: to promote freer trade in services by removing many of the existing barriers:
  - Critics: threat to the role and responsibilities of government, the 'public good' aspect, and the need to safeguard high quality;
  - Supporters: innovations through new providers and delivery modes, greater student access, and increased economic gain for providers and their countries.
- different responses to GATS
  - commitments in relation to education: the provision of distance education, the provision of education to overseas students and the presence of foreign providers
  - partial commitments in education services trade excluding some subsectors
  - views influenced by traditions about the role of public and private sectors in higher education, the extent of involvement in export education and future ambitions, past experience with foreign education providers, and the extent to which students already study abroad and foreign students enter local universities.

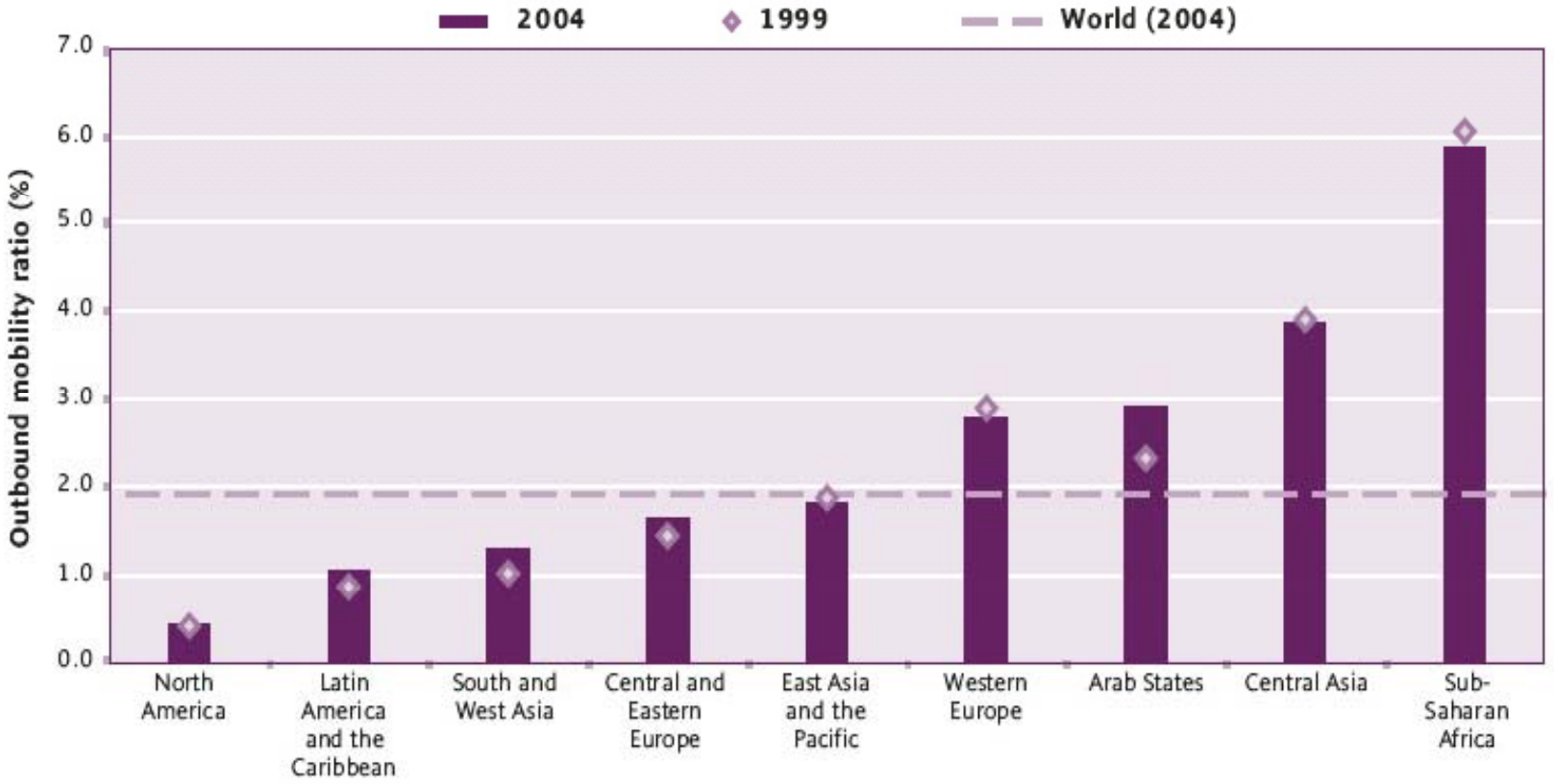
trade in education services (cont-d)

- exporters of education services (Malaysia, Singapore and India) will influence any decisions on GATS
  - different providers from other countries offer programs, mainly at the masters level, in partnership with local
- total numbers of both foreign students and those pursuing studies abroad are increased
- GATS potential impact on smaller developing countries:
  - enhanced access to educational services
  - weak regulation of the trade to safeguard quality and protect consumers
  - although long traditions of sending students abroad, lack of strategies or policies with regard to GATS
  - fear of increased job competition from better qualified foreign workers

Share of students studying abroad

What share of students study abroad?

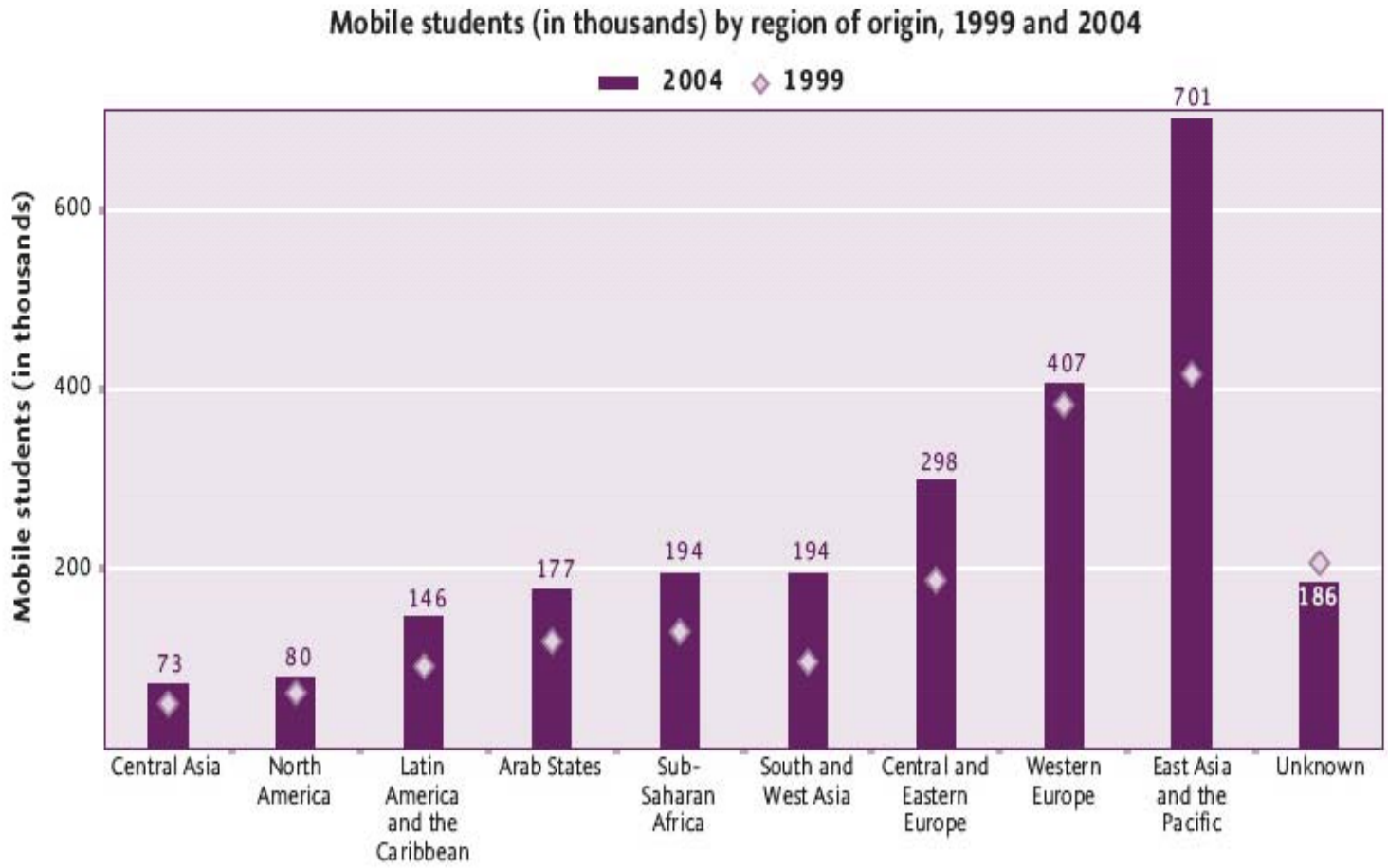
Mobile students from a given region as a percentage of tertiary students enrolled in that region (outbound mobility ratio), 1999 and 2004



Coverage: See Figure 13. Mobile students not classified by country of origin are excluded. They account for 12% of mobile students in 1999 and 10% in 2004.
Note: Data partially imputed from other years. See note on *Figure 13*.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; reference year 2004: Statistical Table 10; previous years: UIS database.

Student mobility: origin

Where do mobile students come from? How has this changed from 1999 to 2004?



Coverage: See Figure 13. Data for 1999 are imputed by data for later years for 7% of the total. Data for 2004 are imputed by 2003 data for 14% of the total and by earlier years for 4% of the total.

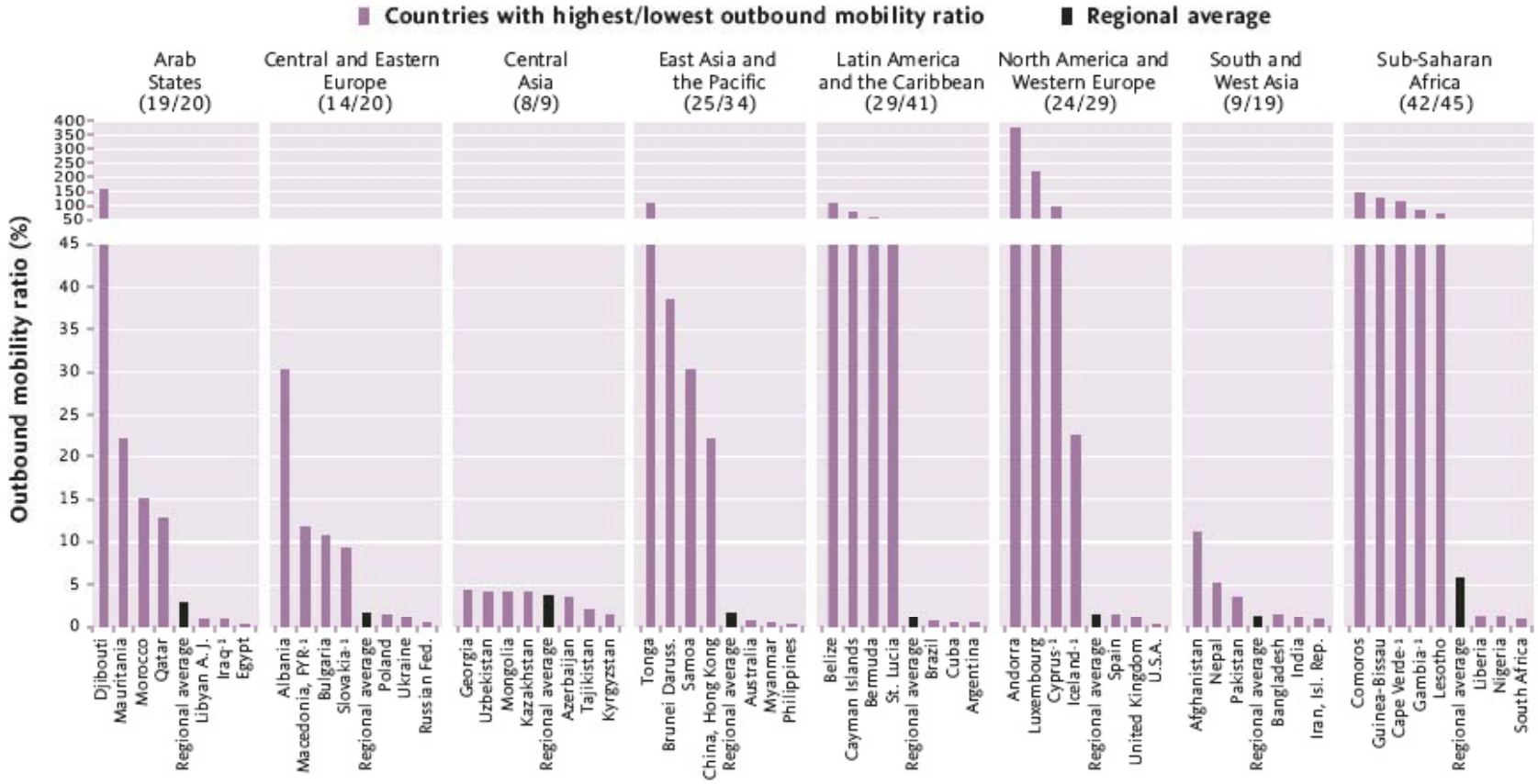
Note: For selected countries, data for 1999 are adjusted for the change in reporting of mobile students based on citizenship or country of residence.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database.

Student mobility: sending countries

Which countries have the most or least students studying abroad?

Mobile students from a given country as a percentage of tertiary students enrolled in that country (outbound mobility ratio), 2004

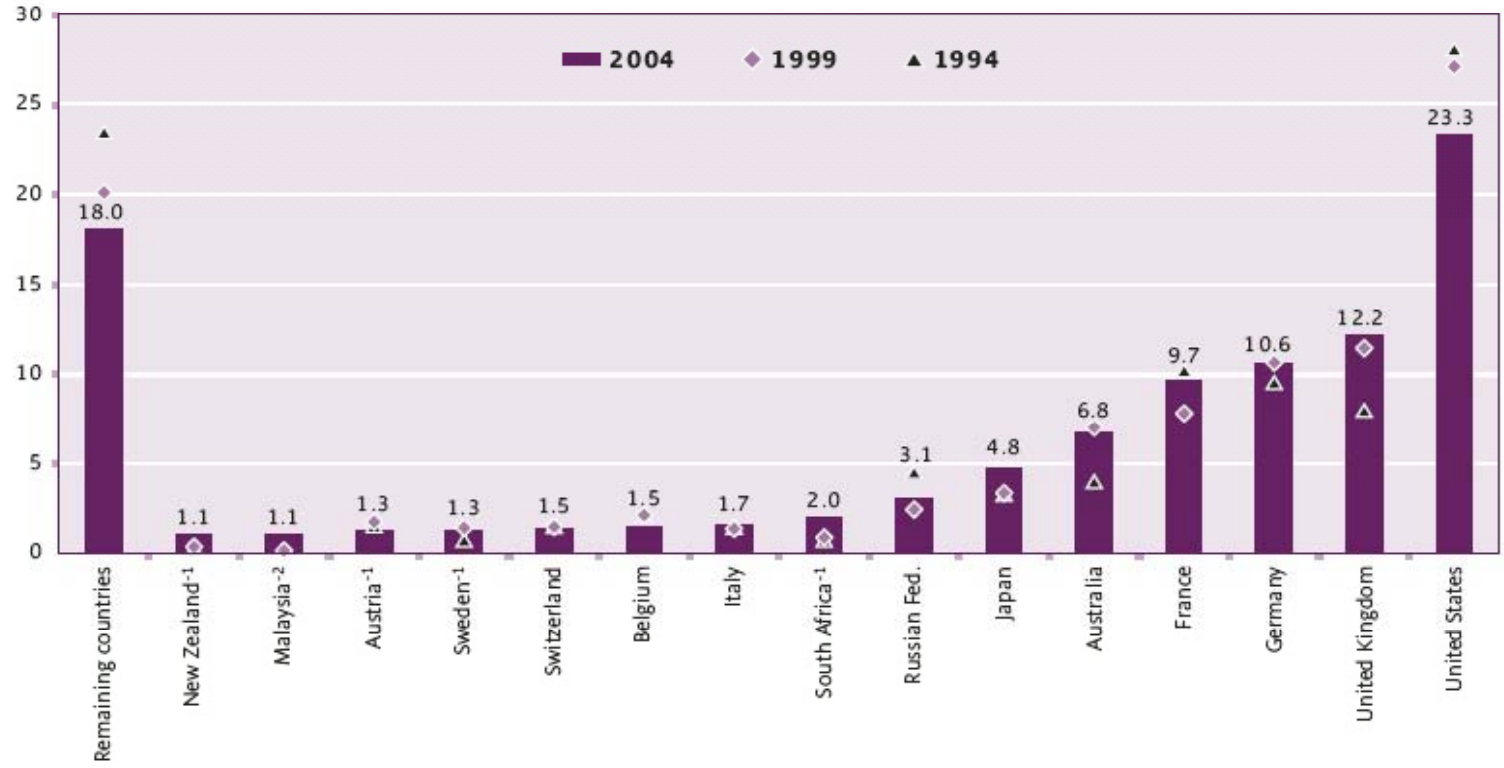


Coverage: See Figure 13.
Notes: Data on mobile students from a given country are compiled using data from multiple host countries. Therefore data from different reference periods may be combined.
-1 Data refer mainly to 2003.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Statistical Table 10.

Student mobility: destination

Where do mobile students go?

Distribution of the world's total mobile students by country of destination, 1994, 1999 and 2004



Coverage: See Figure 13.

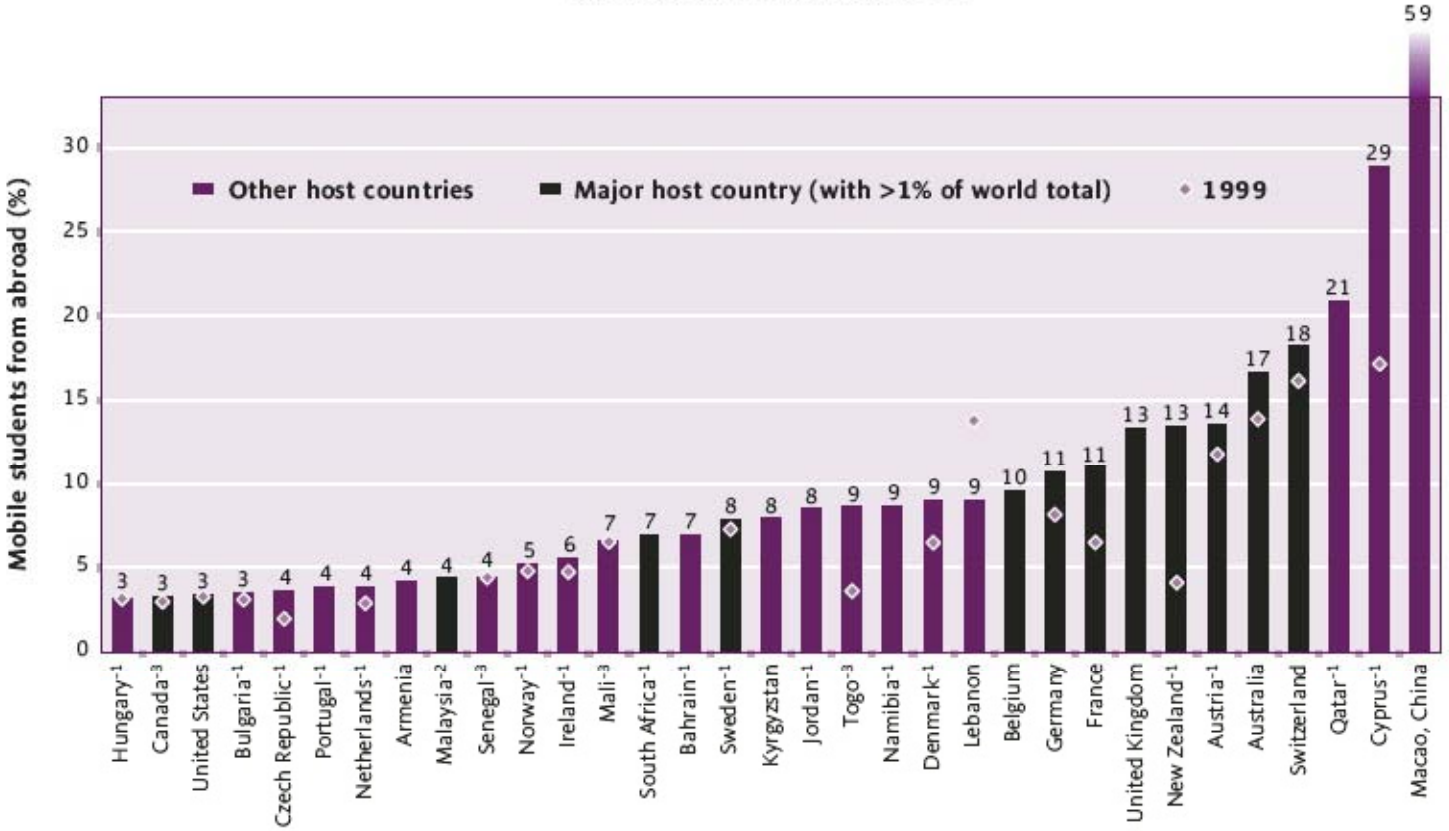
Notes: -1 Data refer to 2003.
-2 Data refer to 2002.
For countries not reporting in 2004, the most recent number of mobile students reported is expressed as a percentage of the world total of mobile students in 2004.
Canada is not presented because the most recent year of available data is 2001 and trends cannot be compared. The trend for the United Kingdom is based on reporting on citizenship and adjusted to reporting of students by residence in 2004.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; reference year 2004: Statistical Table 9; previous years: UIS database.

Student mobility: receiving countries

Which countries receive the highest share of mobile students?

Mobile students studying in a given country as percentage of total enrolment in that country (inbound mobility ratio), 2004



Coverage: See Figure 13.
Notes: -1 Data refer to 2003.
-2 Data refer to 2002.
-3 Data refer to 2001.
Fiji is not presented because its mobile students are at the multinational University of the South Pacific.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Statistical Table 9.

funding resources

- substantial reforms aiming at diversifying funding sources through a range of means:
  - the policy of corporatization and making universities fully autonomous
  - through university owned corporations
  - charging substantial tuition fees
  - income generation through sale of services and use of university facilities.
- decreased government support as a proportion of total revenue for public higher education
- fundamental issue: equity, the social and private benefits of higher education and the extent of beneficiaries' contributions
- supplying educational services internationally (Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and India) in campuses both in and outside, in joint programs with overseas partner institutions, in institutions who offer courses on a franchised basis and as independent distance education

funding resources (cont-d)

- **Facilitators of international students growth:**
  - a suitable government policy and legislative framework and marketing support services;
  - entrepreneurial activities of individual universities;
  - high rates of course satisfaction among overseas students;
  - high graduation rates;
  - diversity of culture;
  - the dominance of the English language as the main language of trade
  - relative proximity to student markets
  - relative price advantages .
- **Benefits from expansion of higher education services internationally:**
  - increased income
  - impetus to internationalization of curriculum
  - increased sensitivity of academic staff to labor market needs and professional registration requirements in different countries.
- **source of funding for particular developing countries:**
  - loan funds from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank
  - aid programs from donor nations.

Summary: concluding remarks

- Rapid rise of demand on higher education resulted from increased globalization: new and growing private sectors in the majority of countries in the region
- The major focus is on Improving quality and relevance of teaching and research: in particular, expansion of private education and increase in cross-border delivery of education services lead to increased government responsibility, especially in providing legislative and policy frameworks for the establishment and operation of private higher education institutions, and in effective quality assurance, monitoring and accreditation arrangements.
- Adoption of a common credit currency, similar assessment criteria and setting equivalent achievement standards across universities within countries can make an important contribution to student mobility and enhanced mutual recognition of qualifications.

Summary: concluding remarks (cont-d)

- IGOs and international financial organizations play major role in reforming HE system in the region and attracting overseas expertise and providing networking opportunities.
- The main responsibility of governments is to ensure support at a reasonable level without necessarily providing all such support from public sources. The ongoing rapid expansion in student enrolments provides a particular challenge for governments, requiring major efforts and creative solutions.

References

UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (2003) *Higher education in Asia and the Pacific 1998-2003*

Rick Hopper (2003) *Capacity Building in Higher Education and QA* (retrieved from http://www.apqn.org/about/development_gf/261,1,Capacity Building in Higher Education and QA)

UNESCO (2006) Global Education Digest 2006, p.37. (retrieved from http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=6019_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC