Higher Education Systems and Institutions in their Contexts

The context of the EduArc project is HE; therefore, the start point is the presentation of the different HE contexts of the countries involved in the study.

As an overview of the higher education context of each of the countries, a summary table is included as follows (Table 1), considering population in the country, number of university students (ranked from more to fewer students) and number of HEI [1]:

Table 1

Summary of data regarding HE systems and population data, ranked on number of students.

Country	Population	Number of university students	Number of HEI
China	1,404 Million	37.8 Million	2,914 HEIs (2,631 universities)
US	327 Million	20.2 Million	4,298 HEIs (2,818 universities)
Turkey	83 Million	7.5 Million	205 HEIs (200 universities)
Germany	83 Million	2.8 Million	396 HEIs (121 universities & 218 universities of applied sciences)
Spain	47 Million	2.2 Million	3,375 HEIs (84 universities)
Australia	25 Million	1.5 Million	176 HEIs (40 universities)
Canada	38 Million	1.4 Million	234 HEIs (72 universities)
South Africa	58 Million	1 Million (public sector) [2]	143 HEIs (43 universities)
South Korea	52 Million	0.7 Million	359 HEIs (191 universities)
Japan	127 Million	0.7 Million	1,200 HEIs (778 universities)

Within the countries under investigation in this project, China has both the largest population and the largest number of university students, but it is the United States that has the largest number of higher education institutions (HEIs), including twice the number of universities. Countries such as Japan and South Korea are experiencing a decrease in the number of HE students due to their ageing populations, whereas in Turkey a demand for HE is growing, given that a large majority of the population are young citizens.

The differentiation between private and public HE systems is also relevant in understanding the differences between these countries (Figure 1):

Figure 1

Spectrum Private HE system-Public HE system

On the extreme left of the spectrum, approximately 80% of HEIs in South Korea and Japan are private, and so are too around 62% of HEIs in the US, both non-profit and for profit[3]. Students have to pay for the complete cost of their studies (or ask for different types of loans/scholarships). In South Africa, only 23 out of the 143 HEIs are state-funded and the rest are private (84%). On the other extreme of the spectrum, the majority of German and 75% Chinese HEIs are state funded[4], with HEIs in China affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, with other ministries or with provincial governments. Students in Germany can study their undergraduate studies without paying for them. Turkey and Spain have a higher number of public HEIs than private ones: Turkey has 129 public universities, 71 non-profit foundation universities and 5 foundation vocational schools, whereas Spain has 2,230 public HEIs, 50 of which are universities[5], and 34% of the HEIs are private (n = 1,145, 34 universities). Even if students have to pay for their studies, they are partly subsidized by the state and there is the possibility to apply for state scholarships, if familiar incomes are not higher than specific sums.

It can be observed that countries with a higher number of private universities (e.g. Japan, South Korea, US) leave the responsibility for (own) digital transformation to the HEIs (instead to the national or province government). However, support from government greatly varies, as we will see in the next section (e.g. South Korea vs. Japan).

[1] Some countries mention the existence of different kind of HEI and universities are one of them.

[2] It has to be noted the "decreased public spending on HE as a percentage of GDP".

[3] Only public institutions in the US receive operational funding from the national government.

[4] China has 747 private HEI, which represent the 17% of the total HE student population in China.

[5] In Spain, HE includes university education, advanced vocational training and specialised education (artistic education, professional Plastic Arts and Design studies, and advanced Sports education).

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