

Unraveling structural patterns between credit and degree mobility in Europe using simple correspondence analysis

Ashley Haru

Uppsala University, Sweden ashley.har@edu.uu.se

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International students have become progressively more important as a research object due to increasing study abroad participation and their decisive role in the growth of the global knowledge economy. However, research on patterns of international student mobility – student inflows and outflows – has shown these patterns of mobility to be uneven between countries. A lacuna in educational mobility research involves analysing and comparing the structural patterns of mobility between different types of study abroad: credit mobility and degree mobility - and particularly the contextual conditions that account for the power relations between nations that can be expressed by student flows. Building on the research of Börjesson (2017) on the global space of international students, this study focuses on Europe and uses correspondence analysis in tandem with a Bourdieusian theoretical framework to analyse polarities, oppositions, and hierarchies within a multidimensional conceptual ‘space’ and compare the structural patterns of credit mobility and degree mobility of Erasmus programme participating countries and the power relations that these patterned flows represent. Using data from the European Commission and UNESCO from 2014, results show that structural differences in credit and degree mobility patterns - which promote both uni-directional and regional flows of knowledge in somewhat different ways - express similar power relations and inequalities between nations, highlighting hierarchies of language and of quality and prestige through the dominance or subordination of particular nations as origin and/or destination countries, with geographical divisions and logics that both overlap and diverge between the two mobility types.