

GLOBALISATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract – This article sets out to analyse critically the nature of globalisation and how it is affecting higher education. The author first reviews the nature of globalisation, and then examines its international impact on higher education development. He contends that globalisation is predominantly economic, and points out that global exchanges in the economic, cultural and educational domains continue to be unequal. At the same time, education is increasingly treated as a business. By exposing the negative side of globalisation and its effects on universities, the author aims to counter the uncritical acceptance of globalisation as a positive force for higher education and society as a whole.

Zusammenfassung – Ziel dieses Artikels ist eine kritische Analyse der Natur der Globalisierung und ihrer Auswirkungen auf die höhere Bildung. Der Autor beginnt mit einem Rückblick auf die Eigenheiten der Globalisierung und untersucht dann ihren internationalen Einfluss auf die Entwicklung der höheren Bildung. Er behauptet, dass Globalisierung vorherrschend wirtschaftlicher Art sei und weist darauf hin, dass ein globaler Austausch in wirtschaftlicher, kultureller und erzieherischer Hinsicht ungleich bleibt. Gleichzeitig wird Bildung immer mehr als eine Art Geschäft behandelt. Indem der Autor die negative Seite der Globalisierung herausstellt sowie ihre Auswirkung auf die Universitäten, will er der unkritischen Akzeptanz der Globalisierung als positive Kraft für höhere Bildung und der Gesellschaft als Ganzes entgegenzutreten.

Résumé – L'auteur procède à une analyse critique de la mondialisation. Il en recense en premier lieu les caractéristiques puis examine son impact international sur l'évolution de l'enseignement supérieur. Il affirme que ce phénomène est essentiellement économique et signale que les échanges planétaires dans les domaines économique, culturel et éducatif n'ont pas cessé d'être inégaux. Parallèlement, l'éducation est de plus en plus considérée comme un commerce. En exposant l'aspect négatif de la mondialisation et ses conséquences pour les universités, l'auteur entend mettre un frein à l'acceptation sans critique de la mondialisation considérée comme force bénéfique à l'enseignement supérieur et à la société en général.

Resumen – Este artículo expone la naturaleza de la globalización y cómo está afectando la educación superior para someterla un análisis crítico. En primer lugar, el autor revisa la naturaleza de la globalización para examinar, en un segundo paso, su impacto internacional sobre el desarrollo de la educación superior. El autor sostiene que la globalización es predominantemente económica y señala que los cambios que se han producido en el mundo en la economía, la cultura y la educación siguen siendo desiguales. Al mismo tiempo, la educación está siendo tratada, de forma creciente, como si fuese un negocio. Al exponer el lado negativo de la globalización y sus efectos sobre las universidades, el autor intenta contrarrestar una aceptación sin sentido crítico de la globalización como fuerza positiva para la educación superior y la sociedad en general.



Резюме – В данной статье предпринимается попытка критически проанализировать природу глобализации, и определить, какое влияние она оказывает на высшее образование. В первую очередь автор статьи дает обзор самой природы глобализации, а затем исследует ее влияние на развитие высшего образования в международном масштабе. Автор утверждает, что глобализация является, главным образом, экономической, и указывает на тот факт, что глобальный обмен в экономической, культурной и образовательной сферах остается неравным. В то же время образование все больше рассматривается как бизнес. Раскрывая негативную сторону глобализации и ее влияние на университеты, автор статьи ставит целью воспрепятствовать некритическому отношению к глобализации как позитивной силе для высшего образования и общества в целом.

Globalisation and cultural homogenisation

At the 26th annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society (ANZCIES), the Maori guest speaker, former Chancellor of the University of Auckland, said he found globalisation frightening. Indeed, in a way, globalisation can be regarded as “the direct consequence of the expansion of European cultures across the world via settlement, colonisation and cultural mimesis” (Waters 1995: 3). It has displayed great power over “other” cultures, and is often seen as especially unfavourable to small and weak cultures/societies (Zajda 1998: 90).

This fear of homogenisation is expressed in a variety of different ways. The argument that globalisation causes homogenisation is by no means utterly groundless, or overstated, as Lingard and Rizvi (1998: 62) argue. Recent research on internationalisation of higher education in Asia Pacific countries show that there is strong concern about the potential negative impact of globalisation in leading to the homogenisation of national identities and cultures (Back et al. 1997: 42; Knight and De Wit 1997: 178). While some theoreticians suggest that it would almost “be childish” to think that globalisation would lead to the end of the plurality of historic cultures embodied for centuries in the world’s great civilisations (Braudel 1980: 212–213), in reality, the management of the local and the global is, however, a crucial (Zajda 1998), and perhaps the most difficult, exercise (Yang 2000).

Nowadays, international contexts have to be taken into account when higher education in developing countries has begun to integrate into the world community to meet with the global demands and even conform to the international practice. As the globalisation process is transforming higher education across the world, and is expected to strongly influence the international nature of the university (Kishun 1998: 64), the concept of globalisation has indeed become increasingly important to debates about the future of higher education, and educators need to examine the forces of globalisation, the immediate background against which higher education internationalisation is imple-

mented in developing countries. It is thus high time to analyse the nature of globalisation and how it affects higher education. A good understanding of these issues can perform a valuable service to bring a critical voice to the idea of globalisation, which is all too often simply accepted as a positive force (Yang 2002).

This article adopts critical theory as a theoretical framework. This is based on a belief that critical theory offers valuable analytic insights to delineate a bigger and clearer picture of the globalisation discourse at local, national and global level. Critical theory is about unearthing changing power relationships with a view to offering voice to “the unheard” and challenging inequalities. As Capper, Hanson and Ropers Huilman (1994: 346) have pointed out, “critical theory calls into question power relationships that exist in society and views them within social, historical and economic contexts.”

The character of globalisation

Globalisation was already a buzzword of the late 20th century, and is even in danger of becoming a cliché (Held et al. 1999). Yet, it lacks precise definition (Kellner 1998: 24). There have been a variety of different discourses which have created a huge academic and popular literature on globalisation and related topics. According to figures assembled by Busch (1997), the number of articles with “globalisation/global” in the title have increased almost threefold in the past decade.

The controversy about globalisation is connected to a wider debate about modernity (Giddens 1991; Robertson 1992; Albrow 1996; Connolly 1996). For some, globalisation can be understood simply as the global diffusion of western modernity, that is, westernisation. By contrast, others draw a distinction between westernisation and globalisation (Giddens 1990). There are an increasing number of attempts to develop explanations of globalisation which highlight the complex intersection between a multiplicity of driving forces, embracing economic, technological, cultural and political change (Giddens 1990; Robertson 1992; Scholte 1993; Axford 1995; Albrow 1996; Rosenau 1990, 1997).

While many would argue that globalisation is neither a wholly novel, nor primarily modern social phenomenon, there are striking novelties in the degree of expansion in the trade and transfer of capital, labour, production, consumption, information, and technology, which might collectively be enormous enough to amount to qualitative change (Miyoshi 1998: 248), and require a rethinking of social theory and politics in the current situation as a response to new developments in society and culture (Kellner 1998: 39).

Globalisation is a highly differentiated phenomenon involving domains of activity and interaction as diverse as the political, military, economic, cultural, migratory and environmental. The concept of globalisation spans variously separate yet overlapping domains (Sklair 1998). Each of these domains

involves different patterns of relations and activities (Held et al. 1999: 12, 23). Ultimately, however, it is a process spearheaded by multinational financial and industrial conglomerates (Burbach et al. 1997: 2). The widely discussed globalisation phenomenon fundamentally results from the globalisation of economic life, which is largely a universalisation of capitalism (MacEwan 1994: 6). Today's globalisation is a market-induced, not a policy-led, process (Mittelman 1996: 3), driven by market expansion (Wallerstein 1990: 36; UNDP 1999: 2).

The triumph of global capitalism is the triumph of the transnational capitalist classes in selling the culture-ideology of consumerism, and delivering goods and services through transnational corporations and other economic institutions (Sklair 1995: 281). The market's need to expand and grow in perpetuity makes it a powerful and dynamic force in the world. Indeed, some see today's market-driven globalisation, with its push for commercial interests that protect profits, not people, as unstoppable on a world scale.

Driving global integration are policy shifts to promote economic efficiency through the liberalisation and deregulation of national markets and the retreat of the state from many economic activities (UNDP 1999: 25). On this account, the dominance of economic forces was regarded as both necessary and beneficial, with State and interstate systems serving mainly to ensure the experience of market logic (Cox 1996: 23).

Arguably, the market has gone too far in dominating social and political outcomes. The opportunities and rewards of globalisation spread unequally and inequitably – concentrating power and wealth in a select group of people, nations and corporations, while marginalising the others. When the profit motives of market players is unconstrained, they challenge people's ethics – and sacrifice respect for justice and human rights (UNDP 1999: 2). It is just here where the market falls short. It places the whims of the rich over the most elementary necessities of the poor. The market cannot safeguard the needs of those without money, which is why so many people die every day within sight of global abundance. In this sense, the market is deaf and blind. It responds only with the sensory equipment that can detect money.

With market mechanism as its core, globalisation undermines certain basic human needs. While some economists claim that the market provides conditions for creative entrepreneur, it is argued here that it does not necessarily cater to non-economic needs. The need to provide for ourselves, to give, create and invent, to do things for ourselves and one another [arguably, the market does not encourage selflessness (giving to others, doing good to others), unless it is also profitable] – all this is subverted by the market, since such profound needs cannot be expressed through the market's crude calculus. The market becomes the object of so much remorseless propaganda in the world that good governance, freedom, choice among others are all smuggled routinely into the promotion of free markets. The media tout these ideas even in the face of human misery and socio-economic exclusion that disfigure the face of the earth.

Nothing demonstrates more clearly than the real purpose of the global economy: to conserve the wealth of the rich, to protect privilege, to maintain the advantages of the G-7 over the rest of the world. In this sense, globalisation, which sets rules for the market, is both the vehicle and the newest incarnation of economic as well as cultural imperialism that has replaced more crude forms of domination and military occupation, to plunder and dispossess the majority of the world's population.

During what Hobsbawm (1994) calls the Short Twentieth Century (1914–1991), capitalism was challenged by another potentially global force: “real socialism,” in its own terms, or “world communism,” in the perception of its capitalist opponents. By the end of the Short Twentieth Century, real socialism was a spent force, leaving capitalism as the only apparent claimant to global research.

Globalisation, therefore, never meant global equality. Indeed, in effect it makes the rich richer, guarantees the perpetuation of privilege, and maintains the caprices of the moneyed, over the very survival of those without it. Gaps between rich and poor, the haves and the have-nots, the overdeveloped and underdeveloped regions, have grown exponentially. For example, the income gap between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and the fifth in the poorest was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960 (UNDP 1999: 31).

The wealthier nations continue to exploit the people, resources and land of the poorer nations, often leaving environmental degradation behind. Rich nations and individuals have seen their wealth increase as nations and people at the end of the spectrum have become poorer. The environment has taken a heavy battering as the planet is scoured for resources (Day 2001). The debt crisis in which the poorer countries owe the richer ones astronomical sums has increased dramatically since the 1970s. For much of the world, life is still “nasty, brutish and short”, and prosperity, health, education and welfare remain distant dreams for much of the overpopulation of the earth (Kellner 1998). This is precisely where this globalisation discourse vitally connects with that of colonialism (Miyoshi 1998: 249).

Inequality has also been rising within many countries since the early 1980s. Europe and Japan, China and India are all splitting into a minority of winners and a majority of losers. In China, for example, disparities are widening between the thriving export-oriented coastal zones and the provinces, especially those in the interior (World Bank 1997): the human poverty index is just under 20% in coastal provinces, but more than 50% in inland Guizhou (UNDP 1999: 3). There is great variation across provinces according to available human, financial and material resources. In 1995–1996, while local education expenditure in China's eight western provinces was 3.37% of GDP on average, it was 1.98% in the coastal region. The average per capita education expenditure from 1988 to 1996 was 67.59 yuan in the inland, and 210.02 yuan in major cities (Yuan 2001: 199–200).

A recent study reveals that globalisation has expanded the regional divide

in Australia. From 1982 to 1996–1997, the average income of the most affluent 10 per cent Australians increased by almost A\$200 a week, three to six times more than for those at the middle and bottom of the income distribution. The gap between middle Australians and those at the top widened (Harding 2000). While 17 per cent of Australian children live in homes where one or both parents do not have a job, other homes are being plugged into interest shopping with dreams of “live” stoves and refrigerators that take emails in a future high-wired affluence (Kelly 2000).

We need to acknowledge this extremely uneven outcome. Capital, labour and goods are now moving much more rapidly across national borders, unleashing much fiercer international competition. Driven by intensified modes of competition, globalisation compresses the time and space aspects of social relations (Harvey 1989; Giddens 1990; Robertson 1992), dividing communities, nations and religions into those that are integrated, and those that are excluded. Social tensions and conflicts are ignited when there are extremes of inequality between the marginal and the powerful. This is why at the 1996 annual Davos World Economic Forum, its founder and managing director published a warning entitled “Start taking the backlash against globalisation seriously” (Kellner 1998: 36).

Globalisation goes together with a doctrine of economic salvation which a whole host of advisers are constantly bringing into politics. In simple terms, the basic thesis is that the market is good and state intervention is bad. Basing themselves on the ideas of the leading representative of this school, the American economist and Nobel prize winner Milton Friedman, most of the neo-liberal governments made this dogma their guiding policy principle. Deregulation rather than state control, liberalisation of trade and capital movements, privatisation of public enterprises – these are the strategic weapons in the arsenal of governments that place their trust in the ideology of the market, and of international economic organisations under its sway (Martin and Schumann 1997: 8).

Since the mid-1970s, economic liberalism has become the predominant ideology. The formal or semi-formal ties between states and society are unravelling even more, and are increasingly replaced by more diffuse neo-liberal arrangements. Social institutions have not just been ignored, they have been considered as obstacles to progress, and have often been dismantled. This has happened at every level. At the international level, social organisations have been overtaken by transnational corporations and international financial institutions. At a national level, many state institutions have been eroded or eliminated. And at a local level, the imperatives of market forces and globalisation have been undermining communities and families (UNDP 1999: 8).

Privatisation is accepted as a given, even a *fait accompli* in most sectors of industrialised countries, often leading to worse social services (Day 2001). Instead of previous disagreements regarding public responsibility, especially the role of the government, unanimity now increasingly prevails among politicians as to the inefficiency and waste of “big government.” The federal deficit

suddenly has become an urgent issue everywhere. And entrepreneurship is an unrivalled virtue for practically everyone. That means, in a world no longer on the brink of nuclear holocaust, that few public expenditures – except those for defence – are recognised as legitimate. Profit and production are now the universal goals, and nothing is exempted from the push to maximise personal and private gains (Miyoshi 1998: 254).

Debtor countries are subject to the “conditionalities” of the international financial institutions. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank now insist that these countries “adjust” their economies. This means not just generating an export surplus to pay their debts, but also fundamentally restructuring their economies along neo-liberal lines: deregulating economic activity, privatising public enterprises and cutting back on state expenditure (UNRISD 1995: 10–11). The societies of indebted Third World countries have consequently become more highly polarised: a few people have been able to take advantage of new market opportunities, but the mass of the poor are worse off – disparities that have made it difficult to create a well-integrated society on which to base future human development (see also Jones 1996).

Most of the social effects of globalisation are, however, not inevitable (Gereffi 1996). A plethora of recent vociferous studies cast serious doubt on the idea that globalisation effectively “immobilises” national governments in the conduct of economic policy (Scharpf 1991; Jones 1995; Ruigrok and Tulder 1995; Hirst and Thompson 1996). As Milner and Keohane observe, “the impact of the world economy on countries that are open to its influences does not appear to be uniform” (1996: 14). Such studies have delivered significant insights into how the social and political impact of globalisation is mediated by domestic institutional structures, state strategies and a country’s location in the global pecking order (Frieden and Rogowski 1996; Garrett and Lange 1996). National and global governance can, and must, be reinvented – with human development and equity as their core.

Social policies – and national governance – are even more relevant today to make globalisation work for human development and to protect people against its new threats (UNDP 1999: 9). Therefore, rather than globalisation bringing about the “end of the state”, it has encouraged a spectrum of adjustment strategies and, in certain respects, a more activist state. Accordingly, the responsibilities and power of national governments are not necessarily diminished by globalisation but on the contrary are being reconstituted and restructured in response to the growing complexity of processes of governance in a more interconnected world (Rosenau 1997).

Nevertheless, the governments of the world’s richest and most powerful nations appear to be prisoners of a policy that no longer allows for any change of course. Global competition is increasingly being used as a rationale for governmental policy options. The politicians in charge often have no choice but to cut spending in areas where no powerful interest groups prevent it. Among such areas are cultural facilities, schools and universities.

Accordingly, academics in poorer countries attempt to emulate their

prestigious cousins in affluent nations. Based on the Western model of cultural imperialism, knowledge production is dominated by the research-producing nations. It is estimated that only about 3,000 of the 100,000 scientific journals worldwide are indexed by the Institute for Scientific Information (Altbach 1998: 193). The overwhelming majority of them are edited by scholars in major Western countries, who act as the “gatekeepers” of science (Coser 1975). Thus norms and paradigms that are influential in the academic and scientific systems of the large industrialised countries dominate the world. The most recent innovations in scientific communications, databases, and information networks are also located in the industrialised nations, especially in the United States. Scholars travel from North to South to lecture, and from South to North to learn. In higher education, there is an increasing resultant standardisation of the curriculum in response to the market forces.

It is still, however, the key task for the future to win back a capacity for political action and to restore the primacy of politics over economics. Politics in the age of globalisation should not be seen as a practice of noble hopelessness (Wiseman 1997; Thrift 1995). For it is already clear that things cannot go on like this for much longer. Blind adaptation to world market forces is something to be overcome, painstakingly. Globalisation does not correspond either to a law of nature or to linear technological progress that admits of no alternatives. Rather, it is the result of a government policy consciously pursued there today (Martin and Schumann 1997).

The impact of globalisation on higher education

The aforementioned conditions of globalisation have seen a rapid expansion of a global higher education market, based on the discourse of global competition. This phenomenon is principally economically motivated and commercial. Its process has been greatly fuelled by the same neo-liberal economics that have become the dominant paradigm for so much of the world over the last decades of the 20th century.

According to neo-liberal economics, the provision of education as a “public good” paid for through taxation is unjustified. It is replaced by an argument for placing education on a user-pays basis, and deregulating educational institutions so that they can vie for the educational dollar of students (or “clients”). This trend is especially manifest in tertiary education (Tiffin and Rajasingham 1995: 164), in which a global market is taking shape. Too often university leaders believe that, to survive and prosper in a rapidly changing world, they must embrace the market place and become customer-focused, business enterprises (Currie 1998: 15). Very few people within higher education have clearly identified the differences between the effects of globalisation and those of internationalisation on universities. The two terms are largely used interchangeably. It is unclear where one starts and the other stops.

The author’s investigation in 1998 in China, for example, suggests that,

with historical lessons in mind, a majority of Chinese scholars applaud globalisation as an inevitable world trend. They seem to overlook the possible negative impacts of globalisation on China's higher education. When asked whether there could be a harmonious relationship between internationalisation and localisation, 47.27% questionnaire respondents answered positively. Only 9.09% respondents clearly said "no". There were as many as 43.63% respondents who did not answer this question indicating a lack of knowledge of globalisation. At the same time, nearly all the interviewees in mainland China (who held senior academic and/or administrative posts in institutions of various types) warmly welcomed globalisation (many of them, in fact, confused globalisation with internationalisation), without paying sufficient attention to make it more relevant to local environment (Yang 2002; Yang and Welch 2001).

The discourse of today – skills used in employment, technically useful knowledge, "competence," "enterprise" – has often been argued to have deleterious effect on higher education development, with national planning, industries and the professions extending their influence on higher education (Barnett 1990). In order to become internationally competitive, national policies in developing countries tends to use key projects to drive reform processes, and establish priorities, and is focusing investment on a few universities. While the result of such strategies remains to be seen, dissension among higher education institutions, and tensions between departments and groups of different professional ranks within those universities have already become palpable.

Economic pragmatism

The first reflection of the impact of globalisation on higher education is to employ economic standards as benchmarks. This has led to an international tendency to overemphasise the practical, technical value of higher education. University achievements have been increasingly simplified to be deemed equivalent to applied research outputs. Number (of publications, research grants, graduates, among others), and number alone, counts increasingly in universities, leaving educational values far behind. Such a tendency causes tensions between the more profitable applied subjects of science and technology, and those of basic theoretical enquiry, particularly arts and humanities subjects. It also creates institutional winners and losers, with a widening gap between the relatively few elite research universities and those more numerous middle-of-the-road, mediocre or even sub-standard institutions.

Miyoshi (1998: 264) provides an example. When Robert C. Dynes, vice-chancellor for Academic Affairs, the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), was designated to assume chancellorship in April 1996, he proposed seven goals for UCSD on the occasion. Of these, two objectives were concerned with the students, one with the faculty, one with the campus com-

munity, one with the regional community, and two with partnerships between the university and business locally, nationally, and internationally (University of California, San Diego 11 April 1996). He was especially proud of having had an unusual corporate background for a professor of physics (he moved in 1991 from “AT&T Bell Laboratories, one of the nation’s pre-eminent corporate research organisations,” as he announced). In his emphasis on the active collaboration between research institutions and the business community, he, an academic administrator of considerable status and influence, said nothing in the speech about the humanities or social sciences.

According to such philosophies, partnerships of universities with industry are a key to building successful economies of the 21st century. Industry’s growing interest in university research is regarded as more an opportunity than a threat. The need to re-think the symbiotic relationship between higher education and the imperatives of the labour market has been often ignored. Possible – or, some might say, actual – contradictions and adversarial relations between university and business are brushed aside by ignoring a whole range of thorny issues. At the same time, uncertainty prevails inside the university. The principle of corporate economy is in control of universities. There is very little consensus as to what should be taught. Courses are often now cancelled unless enough students enrol. Conversely, if a good many students are interested, any vacuous course can be taught. The division and fragmentation of higher education diagnosed by Clark Kerr in the early 1960s, are now quite conspicuous on every campus (Kerr 1982: 101).

Accommodation and pragmatism are aggressively promoted as if they were the only viable strategies in the postmodern reality of the capitalist world. The university classroom as a talk show that promises to entertain, rather than analyse, seems to be more and more the typical undergraduate expectation. Students want to have been, but not be, in the classroom. Hence the classroom is in danger of becoming a sadly vacuous place that has little to offer except for licensing and professionalism without the substantive knowledge and ethics of profession. Once professors professed; now according to critics, they are merely professionals, entrepreneurs, careerists, and opportunists, as in the corporate world (Readings 1996).

As Guy Neave (1988: 274) puts it, “education is less part of social policy but is increasingly viewed as a subsector of economic policy.” The recent World Bank review of education holds fast to a clearly economic view of education based squarely on human capital theory (World Bank 1995, 1994). The dominant rationale for education is economic (Welch 2000: 17). “It is largely concerned with finance, economic returns, human resource development, efficiency, effectiveness, costings, private funding and the like” (Watson 1996: 49).

Education as investment in human capital has become a key plank of official educational policy platforms in many countries. This reductive and functionalist view has never been successful in promoting educational achievement. The influence of human capital theories, and the structural adjustment

policies they license, have a greater impact on the poorer countries (Jones 1996: 14).

Even in China, the largest country that declares its adherence to socialism, higher education is increasingly affected by global economic forces. As the implementation of the market economy proceeds, Chinese academics, for example, are becoming less and less satisfied with their low income and modest working conditions, and are consequently likely to engage in paid consultancy work. In turn, these external undertakings become a major factor in reducing their commitment to the academy (Yang 2000).

Meanwhile the dominance of economics over educational policy continues. For instance, in September 1999, China increased first-year enrolments by 48 percent, from 1.08 to 1.53 million students. In fact, the major aim of this expansion was to stimulate the economy, since the Chinese government thought Chinese parents were more than willing to spend what is, for many, a considerable amount, for their child's higher education (Postiglione and Jiang 1999).

Financial crisis

Under the impact of globalising market forces, there has been a general trend towards the reduction of per capita public funding to higher education, despite the continuing increase in student enrolments, leading to the current fiscal crisis of higher education. The burden of funding higher education is being shifted more and more on to the shoulders of the individual. Even public universities are increasingly funded by non-governmental sources, especially via student tuition and other fees, donations raised from alumni and others, and direct payment from business for services provided by the universities. Higher education is being asked to be more accountable for how its diminishing portion of public financial support is spent (Altbach 1997: 17).

The ideology underpinning this transformation has been summarised as the assumption that education is a private matter of individual choices and personal benefits gained by graduates for the employment market (Boumelha 1998: 37). Behind this view stands the model of education that devolves the responsibility for the common good to the aggregate of atomised individual choices. This approach breeds a spirit of competition among the different higher education sectors, driving institutions towards the supposed rewards and incentives of the market place and away from the traditional concept of an academic community of scholars dedicated to the pursuit of learning (Smolicz 2000).

A major change has occurred in the evaluation of university performance, with a government initiative towards a more competitive allocation of operation funds. Such allocations have demonstrated increasing inequalities within higher educational institutions (see, for example, Taylor et al. 1998; Richardson 1998).

Under the conditions of globalisation, the effect of government frugality in cutting back university funding, accompanied by the often indiscriminate expansion of student numbers, has been deleterious. Across a range of countries, the quality of academic teaching has suffered in diminishing student contact, especially with senior staff, who often appear intermittently and whose lecturing standards may lose much through constant repetition and lack of updated material. The recent “downsizing” perpetrated on academics has cut deeply into the heart of higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences.

Parallel to financial cuts is the move to privatisation which tends to favour those who can afford the fees involved. The defects revealed in the functioning of the privatisation measures, especially in relation to the calibre of graduates produced and the research quality and output of academic staff, demonstrate the danger of placing the fate of universities at the mercy of the market-driven forces of globalisation (Smolicz 2000: 122).

China’s higher education, for example, cannot immunise itself against the international context. While investment still relies heavily on national funds, diversification via donations from society, enterprises, public institutions and individuals is being encouraged. Students are now required to pay some of their tuition fees (Yin and White 1993). Universities are increasingly asked to raise funds from various income producing sources (Cleverley 1987; Hayhoe 1996; Bray 2002) and to generate their revenues (Min 1999; World Bank 1997). As the professoriate is increasingly seen as a means to raise income for academic institutions (Altbach 1998: 128), the need to operate profit-making enterprises distracts the staff from their legitimate academic functions. Engagement of faculty in moonlighting activities is a common event in China (Ch’i 1997).

Global(ised) learning and teaching

There is today an international tendency to plunge headlong into the surging market for electronic delivery of education without sorting out the hype from the reality. The language used today to promote technology-delivered instruction – convenient, self-paced, individualised and interactive, faster and cheaper, flexible as to time and space – echoes that of fads and movements throughout the 20th century. Early in the century motion pictures were speculated to replace textbooks as the principal medium of instruction. The radio revolution sparked a drive to hook up rural areas to universities and allow course taking over airwaves. Several decades ago, many heralded instructional television as the salvation of the classroom. Video, satellite, and cable communications followed. In each case technology enhanced and expanded learning opportunities for people who might not otherwise have had them. But history suggests that the impact of cutting-edge technologies consistently fell far short of the claims made by their proponents (Gladieux 2000: 3).

The net can either enhance communities by enabling a new kind of local public space, or it can undermine communities by pulling people away from local enclaves and towards global, virtual ones (Doheny-Farina 1996: 54). There is, however, an acute shortage of thorough and realistic analyses of the intersection of these areas (Cunningham et al. 1997: xiii), while scholarly, journalistic, governmental or institution-specific material on the impact of communications and information technology, media influence, the global economy, or the future of higher education proliferates.

Currently, the new sensation is on-line learning and teaching. The “virtual university” has arrived (Rossman 1992; Tiffin and Rajasingham 1995), and management pundit Peter Drucker has predicted that the residential university campus will be defunct within 30 years (see Gladieux 2000: 3). There are a good many economic, socio-political and technological reasons underpinning current plans for, and the practice of, the globalised education. They relate to the supposed benefits of a global student body, enhanced access, and flexibilities which are believed to overcome various structural rigidities of traditional universities: constraints on what constitutes the academic year, on where credits can be accumulated, and on how courses can be modularised (Edwards 1995).

The visionaries and marketers of on-line education, however, often gloss over major complexities, including barriers of technological capacity and literacy, as well as culture, language, and learning style. The virtual campus may widen opportunities for some, but not generally for those at the low end of the economic scale. Virtual space is infinite, but it does not promise universality or equality. In fact, the latest data show that gaps in Internet access have actually widened, creating a “digital divide” between information haves and have-nots, which is liable to deepen disparities between rich and poor within countries. On an international level, the digital divide may be more like a digital chasm, leaving Third World countries and regions, where a radio is a luxury and telephone and electrical service unreliable, even further behind in the global economy (Gladieux 2000: 3). According to the UNDP (1999: 5–6), to purchase a computer would cost the average Bangladeshi more than eight years’ income, the average American, just one month’s wage.

Even in the industrialised countries, the equity and cost of distance of education can be serious issues. A substantial proportion of Australian distance education students, for example, fail to complete their program of study. It is a concern that many Australian universities are overlooking students needs in their rush to embrace new technology. In fact, only half of Australian households have computers (which is already one of the highest rates in the world), and only one-quarter of those have Internet access. As the Chair of the National Council for Open and Distance Education and director of the Centre for Flexible Learning at Macquarie University, David Rich, says, distance education faces serious equity problems (Brown 2000).

There are some reasons to cry halt to the headlong expansion of the globalised education on the information superhighway. Cognitively, the new

delivery mechanisms are electronic and rely largely on the digitisation and computerisation of knowledge. Many people decry the cognitive effects of learning from screen-based information and the resulting fragmentation and superficiality induced by the hyperlinked structures of the Web and multimedia CD-ROMs (Birkerts 1994: 27).

Educationally, the globalisation of education is increasingly centring on consumerism, wherein learning ceases to be about analysis, discussion and examination, and largely becomes a product to be bought and sold, to be packed, advertised and marketed. This growing competition, and spirit of consumerism amongst educators is detrimental to learning outcomes (Moore 1996), and is particularly associated with distance education.

Socially, globalisation is related to the breakdown of community, a phenomenon that is part of the much larger, more complex web of changes associated with post-modern society. Education has long been a net contributor to the positive benefits of physical communities. Nonetheless, technology-delivered education is undermining still further the physical experience of community and offering instead a much less substantial substitute in the form of virtual communities. Community is something to be salvaged from information technology, not furthered by it (Talbot 1995: 74; Spender 1995: xxiii).

Culturally, the globalised education causes concerns about imperialist attitudes, the loss of indigenous cultures and the relentless imposition of Western values. It is seen as the new coloniser, insensitively spreading its providers' views of the world on to developing nations in the mistaken belief that they are actually helping people. Too often, consumers of these educational packages, largely from Asia, either fail to recognise or decide to ignore the colonial assumption.

Evans (1995) argues that despite the value of the globalised education in offering diversity of choices, this comes at the expense of encouraging local initiatives which value local culture and promote national beliefs, skills and knowledge. The potential power of globalised teaching to spread dominant ideologies and to crush emerging structures, whether wittingly or unwittingly, is the main cause for concern.

Moore (1996: 189) also expresses concern about the cultural implications of the globalised education. According to him, true international distance education courses would involve all participants in a re-examination of their educational philosophies, their views of the subject being taught and their cultural perspective of the content of the course. In practice, however, Westerners tend to be arrogantly uncritical of the assumptions underlying their teaching and unreflective of their fitness for teaching across cultures.

Indeed, there has been little real engagement with the cultural issues of the globalised education. Few strategies have been developed for tackling the fundamental issues – how to give equal voice to local cultures, institutions and educational approaches. Local cultural values are further annihilated when the English language becomes the dominant language in the globalised learning and teaching and that English language providers dominate the field,

and English-speaking countries have dominated the development of the technologies which support global communications (Mason 1998: 139–140).

While many motives are fuelling the global market for distance learning, the most fundamental one is the lure of profit. Venture capital has discovered distance education. It is now big business. Wall Street, for example, is betting huge sums on the convergence of education and the Internet. The marketplace by itself will not ensure social and moral values of technology. While the Internet has great power and potential for good, it calls for special attention not to let information technology become a new engine of global inequality (Gladieux 2000: 4).

Lack of regulation

Lack of regulation is another effect of the global marketplace on higher education. With support of the latest technologies, higher education is no longer provided solely within national borders. There has been substantial growth in the number, nature and type of education opportunities being offered abroad (external to host countries). These opportunities are offered through a variety of means including: distance education courses through mail, broadcast or electronic means, twinning programs, satellite campuses among others (Knight and De Wit 1999: 209–210).

Tensions between academic and commercial based motives are increasing. During a time of substantial decline in levels of public funding, internationally, the major players in the education trade need to export their higher education. The current globalisation of higher education is, therefore, essentially motivated by profits rather than by either government policy or goodwill. Its goals are to meet market demand and to create a market niche for a variety of educational products. Perhaps the largest market is overseas student education, which is now a multi-billion dollar business, but also of great importance are related ancillary industries such as teaching English, preparing students for a myriad of entrance examinations and other tests, assisting students with university applications and related formalities, and others. Many of these are largely unregulated (Altbach 1999).

The financial impact of international students has become so important, that these costs are increasingly considered in overall university financial management, and the international students market is becoming a major force in designing educational programs. An Australian example is the creation of the world's first Centre for Rugby Studies at Queensland University of Technology. One major reason is the predicted lucrative market for overseas students, as there has been a rapid growth in rugby union in Asia and China in particular (Newman 2000).

At the same time, universities from the industrialised nations are increasingly active in offering “offshore” degrees. The emphasis on marketing universities through the media with glossy brochures is the first major salvo in

the new battle for student dollars (Fisher and Rubenson 1998: 94). Newspapers worldwide are full of advertisements for education programs offered by foreign universities, as well as other educational providers increasingly. While some offshore programs are offered by renowned institutions, worthless and unrecognised certificates are sold by a range of low-prestige schools or even “degree mills.” Quality is hard to control (Woodhouse 1999). This is often the case with twinning programs in which a university in non-western societies links with a Western institution, and in-country programs in other parts of the world established by a few major educational providers.

Conclusions

What has been argued in this article is that globalisation is a fundamentally market-driven process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. It is a highly differentiated process, and finds expression in all the key domains of social activity. It pulls and pushes societies in opposing directions: universalises while particularises, fragments and integrates, and engenders cooperation as well as conflict. The trajectory of global change is largely indeterminate and uncertain (Rosenau 1997). The origins of globalisation are, however, it is argued, largely Western, and Western political and economic institutions are reproduced as part of the process. The existing and often profound inequalities within societies are deepened in the course of their reproduction in other cultures.

The effects of globalisation may not be all bad (Marcuse 1995; Seabrook 1993), nor may they be all the same (homogenising and diversifying, unifying while dividing). As a primary economic phenomenon, however, it represents the triumph of an oppressive global capitalism (Greider 1997), imposing a neo-liberal economic discipline on all governments such that politics is no longer the “art of the possible” but rather the practice of “sound economic management”. Determinedly critical and disinterested, high culture is especially vulnerable to it (Miyoshi 1998: 260).

Despite some positive aspects, the globalisation of higher education is ultimately based on the market-driven fundamentals of globalisation. Thus it creates more challenges than opportunities, particularly for the non-western developing countries. The most prominent challenges include quality control, information management, its fitness for local societies, and costs and benefits. When all of these aspects accompany each other, it brings the dangers of total lack of the genuine educational values, quality control and regulation. It is a bad idea, as Altbach (1999: 5) reminds us, to permit caveat emptor to dominate in higher education.

Contemporary higher education reform and development needs to be viewed from the perspectives of international contexts of devolution and

marketisation, under which national governments cease direct control of the educational system, and move to more of a steering role (Hirsch 1996); and education comes to be characterised increasingly as a commodity (Apple 1982; Lyotard 1984; Welch 1988; Peters 1992). Taking China as an example again, competition, rationality and efficiency have been the keywords used in many description of the changes in Chinese practice (Rai 1991). What seems to be dangerously neglected is that the Chinese higher education cycle has not adequately realised that market forces do not necessarily produce positive results, that decentralisation does not necessarily lead to more local autonomy (Broadfoot 1985), and that globalisation has a darker side.

While it is true that under the influence of globalisation, the future of the university as a place where society can examine itself critically is at stake, all hope is not lost. The impact of globalisation is at least partly determined by people's response, which always mirrors local conditions and contexts. The reflexive aspect of the relationship between the individual and the global must be of crucial interest in contemporary debate over educational reform. The individual reproduces the global in day-to-day life but does so actively, not passively and in a context of local cultural influences (Spybey 1996: 10). Globalisation theory is itself an active indicator of the response that theory must make to the new conditions.

The globalisation process, then, encounters a response that reflects each culture's unique forms of adaptation to change. Alternative responses to the globalisation of higher education must be built up on the educational character of universities. Such responses are an essential part of the internationalisation of higher education, a discussion topic for another article of the author.

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