Globalization and its Impact on Education in Developing Countries

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Abstract

The term globalization has become controversial due to its ambiguous nature. Globalization in higher education and science is inevitable. Historically, academe has always been international in scope, and it has always been characterized by inequalities. Modern technology, the Internet, the increasing ease of communication, and the flow of students and highly educated personnel across borders enhances globalization. No academic system can exist by itself in the 21st century. The challenge is to recognize the complexities and nuances of the modern context and then seek to create a global academic environment that recognizes the need to ensure that academic relationships are as equal as possible. Recognizing inequality is the first step. The second is to create a world that ameliorates these inequalities. These tasks, in the context of globalization and the pressures of mass higher education, are not easy ones. Yet, it is important to ensure that globalization does not turn into the neocolonialism of the 21st century. My intention is to reveal some of the realities of globalization and internationalization in higher education and to highlight some of the ways in which globalization affects higher education in developing countries.

Introduction

The term globalization has become so controversial due to its ambiguous nature. It has become the topic du jour of journalists, politicians and the like. Expansion of global linkages, organization of social life on a global scale, and growth of global consciousness, i.e. consolidation of world society, all come under the term globalization.

It has been said that high expectations breed deep frustrations. Perhaps the truth of that saying is attested to in recent and more sober assessments of the phenomenon called globalization. The past decade was marked by unalloyed enthusiasm and unrealistic hopes for the emergence of a global village in which the world's disparate and warring peoples would realize at last that they shared one small, vulnerable planet on which their destinies were linked. But there was no such epiphany; instead there has been a growing, if disillusioning, realization that globalization is not a panacea for the world's ills. Globalization has both advantages and disadvantages and it provides opportunities at the same time that it pose its dangers, because globalization carries with it unanticipated, often contradictory and polarizing consequences.

However, globalization, already well established in the New World economy, is fueling competition and is emerging as an important force in education and higher education in particular. Consider, in this light, this statement: "Education is an essential human right, a force for social change and the single most vital element in combating poverty, violence, empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labor and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth. Education is a path toward international peace and the security". (Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations Organization.(2000)

Have we achieved it?

Does our education help individuals and communities make use of their potential or enhance the quality of life and the productivity of the peoples in the world?

My intention is to reveal some of the realities of globalization and internationalization in higher education and to highlight some of the ways in which globalization affects higher education in developing countries.

It must be acknowledged that foreign providers have helped in increasing access to higher education in developing countries as governments in those countries are finding it difficult to provide additional resources to local universities to meet the increasing demand for higher education. The foreign providers have especially helped in promoting lifelong learning and continuing professional development. Learners have also welcomed the availability locally of programs of foreign universities at a significantly lower cost than if they were to study abroad. This has been especially beneficial to mature students who are able to study part-time while working and staying with their families. Cross-border delivery through virtual education has revolutionized higher education in the

sense that learners can now communicate directly with their tutors and other fellow-learners in real time. The fact that fewer students travel abroad to study has also a positive effect on the net foreign currency outflow.

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Equally, to be acknowledged is the fact that globalization made flow of scientists and engineers back home, as countries are increasing science and engineering employment opportunities—expanding their institutions of higher education and research capacity. In fact, two among the 10 top countries of origin, Malaysia and Turkey, had all doctoral recipients return home. Ireland is the only exception, with less than half (45 percent) returning to Ireland as their first destination after receiving a doctoral science and engineering degree. The return flow of science and engineering doctoral recipients from U.S. universities differs by country of origin. Mexico and Brazil have the highest return flow, India and China the lowest. Besides returning home for employment, there are many other options for contributing to the home-country's science infrastructure. Foreign doctoral recipients who remain abroad are contributing tó the diffusion of science and engineering knowledge from cooperative research, short-term visits, and networking of scientists. It seems that Chinese academics in education are largely optimistic. Their reasoning is based on two factors: the knowledge economy and the global network. The knowledge industry is seen as a bridge linking education and the economy, increasingly blurring their borders. Knowledge and education, particularly higher education, function as both producer and transmitter and are, therefore, motors for economic growth. Knowledge innovations—the results of education—become the capital to promote economic development, which leads to further educational development. Many Chinese education researchers hold that entry into the WTO will provide China with a number of education-related opportunities. The first lies in the distribution of new knowledge, in which intellectuals will play a major, pioneering role in the newborn Chinese knowledge economy. The second involves the application of that new knowledge. Entry into the WTO will further strengthen China's international educational exchange and help knowledge products expand in the global market. Third, with the production of new knowledge, a more equal environment for Chinese individuals and society can develop, with less of the traditional concentration on social status, gender, nationality, skin color, and age. Jean Johnson (2001)

However, the globalization of higher education can also have negative effects on developing countries and their universities. First, globalization can undermine the very purpose for which universities in the third world were created, namely to assist in the economic, social and cultural development of their respective countries. Foreign providers do not share the same national values and priorities. Their purpose is solely

to provide education in the most cost-effective way. Universities are not places where one simply goes to be educated. They are institutions where the young meet to learn, reflect and debate on their society and to develop intellectually, culturally and physically. Campus-based higher education provides a unique personal experience to the students, which helps them to become better citizens later. Universities also undertake research relevant to local needs, and interact and provide valuable service to their community by making their resources available and through advice and consultancy. Foreign institutions through their corporate delivery approach cannot effectively provide all those functions. Indeed, virtual education even raises the issue of the need to have a physical campus, as learners benefit from all the necessary facilities (laboratories, tutorials, discussion groups) virtually.

Second, globalization raises the important issue of national control and planning of higher education. While universities in developing countries need to have autonomy on their academic activities and their faculty must enjoy academic freedom; nevertheless, since they are public-funded institutions, they need to be accountable to their government and must respond to the overall national education plans. There is the real danger that once higher education has been liberalized, it is the rules of GATS and WTO that will regulate the market. (Raikhy,2002) Developing countries will be flooded with foreign and private providers delivering essentially profitable subjects. In those areas, they will pose as serious competitors to local universities, leaving the latter to deal with non-profitable subjects in arts, humanities, science and technology, so vital for a country's development. This could lead to the abandonment of some subjects in local universities for which the market demand is poor. The effect will be especially dramatic for small developing countries having a single or only a few universities. A "McDonaldlization" of higher education will then ensue. (Hayes and Wynyard, (2002)

Under the influence of profound advances in telecommunications and information technology as well as the emergence of a global economy, institutions of higher education in developing countries are progressively losing a clearly defined identity. (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000). Across the world, institutions seem less affiliated with specific geographic and cultural regions and gradually more intertwined in a borderless, market-driven system of higher education. While the components of this "system" are not yet wholly devoid of place, a global system is evolving more rapidly than most people and institutions realize.

What are the implications of this progressive loss of place in higher education? The loss of place creates opportunities to ensure the best education for all who seek it, regardless

of nationality. On the other hand, it raises difficult questions, such as given the higher cost in tertiary education, who will pay? Given the recent global expansion of higher education, who will ensure quality? As higher education institutions become global, what is the community to which they are responsible? Who is responsible for an educated global citizenry? These questions must be addressed as it is unlikely that the trend towards globalization can be reversed.

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Perhaps the greatest change that has occurred in universities in developing countries over the past decades has been the large increase in student enrolment. This is due to increased output from secondary schools, greater participation of women in higher education, a growing private sector demand for graduates, and the exorbitant costs of acquiring education in foreign countries, especially those in the developed world. As a result, universities have been under enormous pressure to increase access and have had to double or even triple their intake. Even with such increases, developing countries, especially in some African countries, have still not attained satisfactory participation rates in higher education. At a time when countries in the north are targeting at about 50% of their population in the age group 18-24 participating in higher education, some African countries have barely reached participation rates of 10%. The pressure for greater access therefore continues, as it is recognized that the knowledge gap between the rich and poor countries can only be narrowed and national development sustained, if the participation rate in higher education is of the order of 20%. It is estimated that by 2010, there will be one hundred million people in the World, all fully qualified to proceed from secondary to tertiary education, but there will be no room left on any campus. (The Futures Project, 2000)

However, the increased enrolment in universities in developing countries, most of which are public-funded, has not been matched by a proportionate increase in public funding, and the universities now find themselves almost stretched to the limit. The ground in developing countries was therefore fertile and the conditions favorable for enterprising foreign providers of higher education from developed countries to move in. In addition, they have, in some countries in a significant way. In addition to for-profit institutions, many foreign universities, also hard-cashed and pressed for increasing enrolment (especially of foreign students), have seized the opportunity to capture the market in developing countries. The developing countries have generally welcomed the foreign providers, in some cases even facilitated their entry, as a means of making higher education more accessible to their population without any increase in public funding. This has given rise to what is now termed 'transnational education' or the provision of education to learners in a country different from the provider.

One important outcome of the transitional forces being experienced by higher education everywhere is a global environment of increased competition. Worldwide, education is being treated increasingly as a commodity, and students are treated increasingly like customers. Leaders of academic institutions in countries such as Australia and New Zealand have argued that they are already in the grip of a market system. Numerous well-established university presidents speak of "wanting to capture the higher education market abroad," usually referring to the markets of less-developed countries. The new competition between institutions of higher education—for students, for scarce resources, for recognition—is central to today's higher education landscape. (Jane 2002)

The Commercialization of Knowledge and Higher Education

With the growing commercialization of higher education, the values of the marketplace have intruded onto the campus. One of the main factors is the change in society's attitude toward higher education—, which is now seen as a "private good" benefiting those who study or do research. In this view, it seems justified that the users should pay for this service as they would for any other service. The provision of knowledge becomes just another commercial transaction. The main provider of public funds, the state, is increasingly unwilling or unable to provide the resources needed for an expanding higher education sector. Universities and other postsecondary institutions are expected to generate more of their funding. They have had to think more like businesses and less like educational institutions.(Altbach, 2002) In this context a logical development is the privatization of public universities—the selling of knowledge products, collaborating with corporations, as well as an increase in student fees. The proliferation of private academic institutions of all kinds, especially in the for-profit sector, is another by-product of commercialization. Education companies, some of which call themselves universities, sell skills and training, awarding degrees or certificates to customers (students). Research is seen as a fungible product rather than an inquiry conducted to advance the frontiers of science.

The questions raised by this initiative relate to the very idea of higher education and to the future of academe especially in the developing nations and in smaller countries. How would countries, or individual universities, maintain their academic independence in a world in which they had minimal practical and legal control over the import or export of higher education? How would accreditation or quality control be carried out? Would there be a distinction made between public or private nonprofit higher education—the "gold standard" for centuries—and the new and aggressive for-profit

sector? Would wealthy profit-driven multinationals force other higher education institutions out of business? Would a full-time professoriate with claims to academic freedom survive? One thing is very clear—once the universities are part of the WTO jurisdiction, autonomy would be severely compromised and advanced education and research would become just another product subject to international treaties and bureaucratic regulations.

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The world of globalized higher education breeds inequality and put quality under threat. Concentrating on developing countries and on smaller academic systems immediately raises the specter of inequality. Record shows that the export of educational institutions and the linking of institutions from different countries generally represents a union of unequals. In almost all cases, the institution from the outside dominated the local institution, or the new institution was based on foreign ideas and no indigenous values. The same is true in the 21st century. When institutions or initiatives are exported from one country to another, academic models, curricula, and programs from the more powerful academic system prevail. Thus, Australian institutions always design linkages between Australian and Malaysian institutions aimed at setting up new academic institutions in Malaysia. Rarely, if ever, do academic innovations emanate from the periphery to the center.

A small number of prestigious American universities are establishing campuses worldwide, usually in popular professional fields such as business administration. The University of Chicago's business school now has a campus in Spain. The program offers Chicago degrees to students from Spain and other European countries, using the standard Chicago curriculum—taught mostly by Chicago faculty members—with an international focus. It includes a period of study at the home campus as well. Some other U.S. universities have developed similar programs. An unusual but interesting model of multi-nationalization is undertaken by Singapore, which is inviting a number of prestigious foreign universities, such as the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, to start programs in Singapore. The institutions, which are carefully selected by the Singapore government, are given incentives to come to Singapore. In a related trend, a number of U.S.-sponsored universities have been established in Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, and Bulgaria, among other places. These schools typically originate through local initiative, with strong links to American universities, and are generally supervised by the U.S. collaborates and accredited in the United States. The language of instruction is English and the curriculum U.S. based.

In keeping with the more standard export model, a university in an industrialized country will set up a program abroad, often but not always in a developing country, at the invitation of a host institution. The host may be a corporation without any link to education, an educational institution, or some combination of the two. Malaysia provides many examples of such arrangements, set up to satisfy the demand by local students. Universities from Australia and the United Kingdom is most active in Malaysia, and the new programs have generated complaints of low quality, poor supervision, or inadequate communication between the providers and the hosts. Some are even referred to as "diploma mills". (Altbach, 2001)

Foreign providers will draw most of their faculty from the host country. They will be in a position to offer enticing salaries and may attract the best-qualified but poorly paid faculty away from local universities. As it is, most universities in developing countries are already facing a serious problem of recruiting or even retaining good faculty, and the situation will worsen with the arrival of foreign providers, thus affecting the quality of delivery of their courses. Foreign providers could also outsource faculty from local universities on a part-time basis. Those faculties, overburdened with teaching, will then not be in a position to undertake research and development activities in their expert areas, to the detriment of their professional development, their university and their country.

To add to all these large number of foreign providers could further increase the social divide in developing countries. Affluent students and those from the middle class will opt for enrolment in private, foreign institutions, leaving the public institutions, which are already poorly funded and which cannot afford to offer the best academic environment, to cater for the poorer students. Local employers, especially those in the private sector, may prefer employing graduates with foreign qualifications, so that the best jobs will go to the latter, again widening the social gap.

Sometimes foreign academic degree programs are simply "franchised" by local institutions. The foreign university lends its name and curriculum, providing some (often quite limited) supervision and quality control to a local academic institution or perhaps business firm. The new institution is given the right to grant a degree of the foreign institution to local students. These franchising arrangements have led to many abuses and much criticism. Many highly critical articles have appeared in the British press charging that U.K. institutions, mostly the less prestigious ones, involved in overseas programs are damaging the "good name" of British higher education. Meanwhile, "buyers"—fee-paying students—overseas think that they are getting a standard British

degree, when in reality they are receiving the degree but not the level of education provided in the United Kingdom. There are a large number of "twinning" programs worldwide. This concept links an academic institution in one country with a partner school in another country. Typically, the links are between North and South, with the university in the North providing the basic curriculum and orientation. In such arrangements, academic degrees are often jointly awarded. Twinning has the advantage of aiding institutions in the South in developing new curricular offerings, with the stamp of approval of a foreign university.

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English is the Latin of the 21st century and is a factor in globalization that deserves analysis as well. As the country with the world's largest academic system and most important user of English, the United States has a double advantage. For example, not surprisingly, many scientific journals are edited in the United States. This gives an advantage to American authors—not only are they writing in their mother tongue but the peer review system is dominated by people accustomed to both the language and methodology of U.S. scholars. Others must communicate in a foreign language and conform to unfamiliar academic norms. (Crystal 1997)

English-language products of all kinds dominate the international academic marketplace. This is especially true for journals and books. For example, textbooks written from a U.S. or U.K. perspective are sold worldwide, influencing students and academics in many countries and providing profits for publishers who function in English. The English-language databases in the various disciplines are the most widely used internationally. Universities must pay for these resources, which are priced to sell to American or European buyers and are thus extraordinarily expensive to users in developing or middle-income countries. Nevertheless, English-language programs, testing materials, and all the other products find a ready market in these countries. In Countries where collaborative degree programs are offered, such as in Malaysia, the language of instruction is always English and not the language of the country in which the joint degree is being offered.

Brain drain

Not since the medieval period has such a large proportion of the world's students been studying outside their home countries—more than 1.5 million students at any one time. The flow of academic talent at all levels is directed largely from South to North—from

the developing countries to the large metropolitan academic systems. Perhaps 80 percent of the world's international students come from developing countries, and virtually all of them study in the developed world. Most of these students pursue master's, doctoral, and professional degrees. Many do not return to their countries of origin. Some 80 percent of students from China and India, two of the largest sending countries to the United States, do not return after obtaining their degrees and take jobs in the United States.

A much larger number of academics migrate in order to take jobs in other countries. Again, the flow is predominantly from developing to the developed. As noted, significant numbers of international students do not return home, taking jobs in the countries in which they have obtained their degrees. Others compete for positions abroad from home. Although accurate international statistics are unavailable, the impact on many developing countries is quite substantial. For example, more Ethiopian holders of doctoral degrees work outside of Ethiopia than at home, and 30 percent of all highly educated Ghanaians and Sierra Leoneans live and work abroad. (Outward Bound, 2002) This phenomenon is common for many African countries. South Africa is losing many of its most talented academics to the North, while at the same time it is recruiting from elsewhere in Africa. This migration has seriously weakened the academic institutions of many developing countries.

Migration is not limited to developing countries. Academics will take jobs in countries with more attractive opportunities, salaries, and working conditions. At present, a small but significant exodus continues from the United Kingdom to the United States and Canada because of the low salaries and deteriorating working conditions at home. To combat this trend, U.K. authorities have provided funds to entice their best professors to remain at home. Scholars from small but well-endowed academic systems, such as in Denmark or Finland, are sometimes lured to the metropoles by the prospect of being at the centre of research activity and having access to the latest scientific equipment. In some fields, such as engineering specialties and computer science, the percentage of professors from other countries working in U.S. universities is very high—reflecting the fact that almost half the doctoral enrollments in these fields are foreign. Academic migration takes place at all levels of the academic system, especially in the sciences, engineering, information technology, and some management areas. Such migration may occur more at the top of the system, with some world-famous scholars being attracted abroad by high salaries at top universities, and at the bottom, where modest salaries are able to lure foreigners but are unappealing to local applicants.

Academic migration follows complex routes. Many Egyptian, Jordanian, and Palestinian academics work at Arabian Gulf universities, attracted by higher salaries and better working conditions than are available at home. Indians and Pakistanis are similarly drawn to the Gulf as well as to Southeast Asia. Singapore and Hong Kong attract academics worldwide. Mexico and Brazil employ scholars from elsewhere in Latin America. South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana currently recruit Africans from elsewhere on the continent. Some of the best scholars and scientists from Russia and a number of Central European countries have taken positions in Western Europe and North America. The existing traffic among European Union member states will likely grow significantly as EU policies to harmonize academic systems are implemented.

The most significant factors include better salaries and working conditions and the opportunity to be at the centers of world science and scholarship. The discrepancies in salaries and conditions between developed and developing countries mean that in most developing countries academics cannot aspire to live in a middle-class lifestyle or expect to have access to the necessary tools of research and scholarship—including the ability to obtain the most current knowledge and to connect with the international community of scholars.

However the recent trend shows that many academics who have migrated keep in close contact with their countries of origin, often maintaining scientific and academic relationships with colleagues and institutions at home. Some have even returned after establishing careers abroad as academic conditions at home have improved—some academics from South Korea and Taiwan, for example, returned from the United States or other countries to accept senior academic appointments in their home countries once academic working conditions, salaries and respect for academic freedom had improved. More commonly, academics return home for lectures or consulting, collaborate on research with colleagues in their country of origin, or accept visiting professorships. Facilitated by the Internet, these links are increasingly accepted as appropriate and useful. Such trends are especially strong in countries with well developed academic systems, such as China, India, and South Africa, among others.

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The question that arises is whether globalization and the wave of liberalization of higher education can be contained, and if not, what steps should countries and universities in the third world take to minimize its negative effects. It must be accepted that transnational education is now a reality. In any case, as mentioned earlier, it is unlikely that developing

countries will be in a position to significantly increase access to higher education and achieve the desired participation rate without the contribution of private and foreign providers. And globaliztion can have beneficial effects. What is important is to ensure that the contribution of those providers is sufficiently controlled, so that it does not hamper the development objectives of the country.

Therefore it is essential for governments of developing countries to acknowledge that there is a "public good" aspect to universities, that universities play a central role in the development of a nation, that they benefit the society at large in addition to individual recipients and that they therefore need to be supported to fulfill their mission. It is accepted by all stakeholders that universities must operate more efficiently, must be managed more professionally, must try to supplement their public grants with self-generated funds, must be accountable and must respond to the needs of the world of work. But governments must realize that national universities will never be in a position to be completely independent of public funds, because they need to be provided with adequate resources to recruit and retain good faculty, and to have satisfactory academic facilities for teaching and research. Only a strong and well-performing local university, appreciated locally and recognized internationally, will be in a position to compete with and stand up to foreign, private providers.

In order to control the operation of foreign providers and protect students from bogus institutions, there must be a national regulatory framework. Very few developing countries, have such a framework in place. At best they might have a quality assurance and/or an accreditation system in operation but these generally cover the national higher education sector. Setting up a regulatory framework is a complex task, although some countries, for example Hong Kong and Malaysia, have succeeded in laying down regulations for transnational education. What is perhaps required is a regional or even international approach to the problem. The Association of African Universities, for example, could help in formulating guidelines for a regulatory system, after examining existing systems which have been operating successfully in different countries. The regulation of cross-border delivery of higher education, especially virtual education, is even more complex, and requires special attention.

So far most of the foreign providers have avoided collaboration with existing local universities. This could be partly due to the understandable reluctance of a local university to be associated with the delivery of a course of another foreign university. And yet, such collaboration could be beneficial to both institutions and the country. They could pool their resources and run courses leading to joint awards by the two institutions.

Funding and donor agencies in developed countries should promote such collaborative ventures between universities in the developed and developing World.

Finally there is an urgent need for research and country studies to be carried out to determine the effect of globaliztion on higher education in developing countries. Some of the issues to be examined are: What proportion of tertiary sector students take courses delivered by foreign providers? What are the views of students on the quality of courses of these providers? What are the local resources used by foreign providers? Is there any quality control mechanism for foreign providers? What have been the effects felt by local universities? What are the views of local employers on graduates of foreign providers as compared to those of local universities?

Conclusion

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Globalization in higher education is inevitable. Modern technology, the internet, the increasing ease of communication and the flow of students and highly educated personnel across borders enhances globalization. No academic system can exist by itself in the World today.

Sustained global development can only take place when there is sustained development in all individual countries, as globalization has created a situation where all countries of the world are inter-dependent. Universities have an important role to play in promoting sustainable national development.

However the negative effects of globalization depend on each country's ability to make the existing resources work to the benefit of their population. To close down the country to foreign influences and opportunities for international cooperation would not only be foolish, but also impossible to do. It is also naïve to expect that the private sector, national or international, would be able to replace national governments in the provision of high quality higher education and research, and in the attention to the problems of social equity and access.

It is up to each country to decide how regulated or unregulated their education and professional markets will be, and how much space they should open to internationalization. Higher education is likely to remain, in the years to come, an area in which different sectors, public and private, national and international, philanthropic and for profit, will have to coexist, learning from each other, and, hopefully, improving by mutual fertilization and emulation.

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