

# THE IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION\*

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## Abstract

This paper explores the changing contexts of a globalized world, international development and their impact on educational practices focused on higher education institutions. Globalization has influenced the educational philosophy and classroom practices all over the world. Over the past two decades, significant economic and political changes have affected education. The forces associated with globalization have altered the context in which educators operate, and profoundly changed ones experience in both formal and informal education. Schools, colleges and universities have, for example, become sites for branding and the targets of corporate expansion. Many policymakers automatically look to market solutions. The impact and pervasiveness of these forces of globalization means traditional universities are in a period of marked transition.



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## 1 The Practices and Theories of Globalization

Globalization as “the seemingly relentless integration of economies, societies and cultures into a borderless worldwide communications [technology] and supply network [is] a world-transforming process. . .not all which

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is pleasant,” (Morrison, 2010, p. 32). Although globalization is, and will probably remain for some time, one of “the most nebulous and misunderstood” concepts (Beck, 2001, p. 19), there is some common ground to be found among all the confusion. That is the idea of connections and relationships that go beyond the immediate, local environment (Gray, 1999). “Globalization is the process by which all peoples and communities come to experience an increasingly common economic, social and cultural environment; but globalization as a theory, deals with the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992, p. 8).

However, while the theory of globalization is relatively new, the process is not (Epstein, 2002). Robertson (1992) further states that globalization was initially discussed from economic perspectives, but soon after it became a topic for discussions among intellectuals from cultural perspectives as well. Therefore, it is essential to interpret globalization from both economic and cultural perspectives simultaneously to grasp its impact in every walk of life. According to Giddens “globalization is the dialectic of homogenization and heterogenization” (1991, p. 22). In other words, globalization, by intensifying the interconnectedness among different people, things, and ideas, homogenizes the world and yet at the same time, the world becomes heterogenized as people are more aware of differences due to the increasing proximity with differences under a globalized world (Giddens, 1991).

The notion of the world community being transformed into a global village, as introduced in 1960 by Marshall McLuhan in an influential book about the newly shared experience of mass media, was likely to be the first expression of the contemporary concept of globalization (cited in Epstein, 2002). Despite its entry into the common lexicon in the 1960s, globalization was not recognized as a significant concept until the 1980s, when the complexity and multidimensionality of the process began to be examined. Prior to the 1980s, accounts of globalization focused on a professed tendency of societies to converge in becoming modern, described initially by Clark Kerr and colleagues as the emergence of industrial man (cited in Robertson, 1992).

One critical issue that emerges from all of these restructuring processes is the central role of knowledge, education and learning for the success of the Global Information Society (GIS) and global information economy.

Globalization impacts all aspects of society. Higher education may be one of the most affected by global trends, and economics and business contents seem particularly influenced by them. Otherwise, these fields, as social sciences, are framed by the culture of each region.

## 1.1 The Increasing Role for the English Language

A second critical issue is the consequences for languages. To view globalization from a language perspective, we therefore need to consider the use and status of languages in a global context, or what Maurais calls “their relationships and their competition on the world’s checkerboard” (2003, p. 13). This approach might be called a sociolinguistic perspective on globalization. The organization of languages and their relationships in a global context are outlined by de Swaan (2001):

### 1.1.1

The human species is divided into more than five thousand groups each of which speaks a different language and does not understand any of the others. With this multitude of languages, humankind has brought upon itself a great confusion of tongues. But nevertheless, the entire human species remains connected: the division is overcome by people who speak more than one language and thus ensure communication between different groups. It is multilingualism that has kept humanity, separated by so many languages, together. The multilingual connections between language groups do not occur haphazardly, but, on the contrary, they constitute a surprisingly strong and efficient network that ties together—directly or indirectly—the six billion inhabitants of earth. It is this ingenious pattern of connections between language groups that constitutes the global language system (p. 1).

The epic center of the world’s languages is English. English is the one language that “connects the supercentral languages with one another and that therefore constitutes the pivot of the world language

system” (de Swaan, 2001, p. 6). English obtained this position at the core of the global language system due to a variety of historical reasons, namely “large scale migration and settlement of native language speakers, military imposition (colonialism), commercial or political power and prestige derived from scientific, cultural or other achievements” (Leitner, 1992, p. 186). Additionally, the brightest students from almost every country in the world come to study in U.S. universities rendering English as the main language of books, newspapers, academic conferences, science, international business, medicine and especially the internet now has official or special status in over 70 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific (Crystal, 1997, p. 3).

However, some interpret globalization as a form of colonization. As Holly (1990) writes:

### 1.1.2

English is not simply a language like any other language. In the contemporary world it can also act as a means of politico-cultural colonization serving the interests of the most powerful concentrations of economic power the world has ever known. (p. 18)

English speaking countries such the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand can attribute their economic gains to the global spread of English language facilitated by the internet. It is English language education and education using English as the language of instruction are a big business for English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia (Kaplan, 2001). In the academic year 2000-2001, 548,000 international students in the United States contributed 11 billion dollars to U.S. economy (Economist Global Agenda, 2002, May 21).

## 2 The Impacts of Globalization

The globalization of the economy and its concomitant demands on the workforce requires a different education that enhances the ability of learners to access, assess, adopt, and apply knowledge, to think independently to exercise appropriate judgment and to collaborate with others to make sense of new situations. Globalization is not the only factor behind the changes that are affecting education, and likewise it is not the only factor that motivates the local interest groups that formulate policy. Nevertheless globalization has posed challenges of a hitherto unknown nature to nation states, and much of the seemingly recent, never-ending change in education is a corollary of these challenges. The nature and complexity of the forces involved in globalization that any discussion of its impact upon education raises fundamental issues and should be a matter of considerable debate among educationists, researchers, and policy makers.

### 2.1 Schooling

As the major formal agency for conveying knowledge, schooling features prominently in the process and theory of globalization. Early examples of educational globalization include the spread of global religions, especially Islam and Christianity, and colonialism, which often disrupted and displaced indigenous forms of schooling. Recent postcolonial globalizing influences of education, over the last 200 years, have taken on more subtle shapes. In globalization, it is not merely the business transaction and political agreement, but also the shared consciousness of being part of a global system that bring nations and societies together. That consciousness is developed through transnational movements of people and most recently over the last twenty years the spread of computer technology and media. The unalterable transformation of consciousness brought on by globalization impacts the content and delivery of education, as schools play a significant role in the process.

A policy of using schools as part of the democratization process often accompanies structural adjustment measures. However, encouraging user fees to help finance schooling has meant a reduced ability of people in some impoverished areas of the world to buy books and school materials and even attend school, thus enlarging the gap between rich and poor and impeding democracy. Even in areas displaying a rise in educational participation, observers have reported a reduction in civic participation. Increased emphasis on formalism in schooling could plausibly contribute to this result. An expansion of school civics programs

could, for example, draw energy and resources away from active engagement in political affairs by youths, whether within or outside of schools.

By mid-twentieth century, missionaries and colonialism had brought core Western ideas and practices to many parts of the world. With contemporary globalization, penetration of the world periphery by means of education has been accomplished mainly in other ways, especially as contingent on structural adjustment and democratization projects. Some scholars, including Howard R. Woodhouse, have claimed that people on the periphery are "mystified" by dominant ideologies, and willingly, even enthusiastically and without conscious awareness of implications, accept core Western learning and thereby subordinate themselves to the world system.

The shift of the focus on the role of education in globalization has changed in terms of the structural adjustment in policies of the World Bank and other international lending organizations for underdeveloped and low-income countries. These organizations push their hidden agenda such as cuts in government expenditures, market liberalization, currency devaluations, reductions of government subsidies, price controls, and most importantly the privatization of public services such as health and education.

In regard to education, structural adjustment in policies presumably reduces public bureaucracies that hinder the delivery of more and better education. By cutting wasteful expenditures and increasing responsiveness among concerned agencies, these policies promote schooling more efficiently. However, Samoff (1994) noted that observers have reported structural adjustment policies often encourage an emphasis on inappropriate skills and reproduce existing social and economic inequalities, leading actually to lowered enrollment rates, degradation in the quality of education, and a gap between educational needs and provisions.

## 2.2 Capitalism

Levin (2001) contends that open capitalism and global multi-national corporations projects a perception that the world is becoming a shared social place by technological and economic advances. The world has become so interlinked that there is a common consensus among educationists and policy makers that it is having a lasting impact on our educational missions and goals. In his own words:

### 2.2.1

It may be that consciousness of a global society, culture, and economy and global interdependence are the cornerstones of globalization, and these consciousness and interdependency have saliency in knowledge based enterprises . . . there is certain inevitability that higher education institutions, because of their cultural, social, and economic roles, are caught up in and affected by globalization. (Levin, 2001, p. 9)

## 2.3 Educational Innovations

Similarly, Burbules and Torres (2000) have emphasized the need for educational innovations in light of changing contexts and emerging new circumstances globally. Some believe that capitalist interests of First-World countries are in dire need of skilled labor forces to increase their economic gains. Thus they seek to meet their human resources supply and demand by increasing the educational level of marginalized Third-World countries. They argue that the false perception is that these peoples' socio-economic conditions are being improved due to the process of globalization. However, in reality, the market-driven agenda of First-World countries may not be to empower the people and improve their living conditions but to fulfill their need to continue economic gains in terms of abundant work-forces from poor countries. In this regard, it is worthwhile to refer to Bigelow and Peterson (2002) who state that "It is impossible to separate our teaching about wretched conditions of workers around the world from all the factors that produced the desperation that forces people to seek work in those conditions" (p. 3). White (2008) states:

### 2.3.1

Neo-liberalism is a self-serving socio-economic ideology advanced by an elitist class of First-World international power brokers in order to advance their specific capitalist interests. These interests do not seek authentic global cooperation and collaboration for the good of all humankind but use globalist's language as a linguistic camouflage to conceal their real motives. (p. 133)

## 2.4 The Spread of Democratization

As part of the globalization process, the spread of education is widely viewed as contributing to democratization throughout the world. Schools prepare people for participation in the economy, giving them the knowledge to make responsible judgments, the motivation to make appropriate contributions to the well being of society, and a consciousness about the consequences of their behavior. National and international assistance organizations, such as the U. S. Agency for International Development and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), embrace these objectives. Four key elements of globalization are described in the UNESCO education position paper (2004) as follows: 1) the growing importance of the knowledge society/economy; 2) the development of new trade agreements which cover trade in education services; 3) the innovations related to ICT; and 4) the emphasis on the role of the market and the market economy.

These factors are catalysts to new developments, namely:

1. The emergence of new education providers such as multi-national companies, corporate universities, and media companies;
2. New forms of delivering education including distance, virtual, and new face-to-face;
3. Greater diversification of qualifications and certificates;
4. Increasing mobility of students, program, providers, and projects across national borders;
5. More emphasis on lifelong learning which in turn increases demand for post-secondary education; and
6. Increasing amount of private investment in the provision of higher education.

The global market in educational services is estimated by Merrill Lynch to be worth outside of the United States \$ 111 billion a year with a "potential consumer base of 32 million students" (cited in Spring, 2009. p. 84). The data of the U.S. Department of Commerce indicate that higher education is the fifth-largest service sector "export" for the United States (Economist Global Agenda, 2002, May 21). Of the almost 2.8 million international tertiary students studying worldwide, the United States of America and the United Kingdom host the largest numbers of foreign students, accounting for 21.2% and 12.0% of total international students, respectively, in 2006. Education services ranks as the third largest export category earner for the year 2007-08. Overall, international students, and the associated visitation from friends and family contributed \$12.6 billion in value-added to the Australian economy and generates 0.29 in full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (Access Economics, 2009).

Along with mass provision of schools, technological advances have permitted distance education to convey Western concepts to the extreme margins of society, exposing new regions and populations to knowledge generated by culturally dominant groups and helping to absorb them into the consumer society.

Increased privatization of education in the name of capitalist democratization could invite greater participation of corporate entities, with the prospect of commercializing schools and reducing their service in behalf of the public interest.

In this regard, it is important to note that Joel Spring (2009) has speculated that the three major consequences of the growth of the multinational corporations in educational sectors, first, the creation of a level of uniformity in global education culture as the result of marketing of for-profit schools, the international use of testing products, global databases, and most importantly, the publishing of textbooks for global markets. Second, exertion of corporate control of the ideologies disseminated through schools around the world. Third, globally marketed schools and worldwide information and publishing corporations might transform and displace local cultures (p. 88).

### 3 Higher Education Challenges in a Globalized World

Globalization is interdependence. Globalization is neither good nor bad. It is exactly what we do that decides the ethical decisions made in higher education from both a macro and micro approach that decides our course of actions. Just as universities purged their holdings that were found to support transnational crimes, we now must continue to review our policies and implementation practices that impact the global humankind. Multiple voices must be present on our leadership teams to ensure all aspects are critically analyzed. The conflicting aspects of market forces and our fundamental mission to educate is our most pressing issue.

Globalization is a growing challenge to higher education institutions worldwide since it brings not only opportunities but also concerns to higher institutions and universities. Duderstadt, Taggart and Weber (2008) go so far that they argue that there is a serious imbalance between educational need and educational capacity-many of our universities are in the wrong place, where populations are aging and perhaps even declining rather than young and growing, driving major population migration and all too frequently the clash of cultures and ethnicity (p. 274). They further argue that current estimates suggest that the number of students seeking university degrees will roughly double over the next two decades to as high as 250 million, with most of this growth in the developing world (p. 277).

And, there is no doubt that higher education institutions, especially research universities, are among the main agents of global convergence. Globalization breaks down barriers and connects institutions across the world making universities in every country visible to each other, facilitating knowledge flows, values on global learning, and creation of new opportunities for advanced graduates. The president of NYU, John Sexton developed the concept of “idea capitals” for research universities. Regarding the global spread of research universities, Sexton stated, “the evolving global dynamic will bring about the emergence of a set of world centers of intellectual, cultural, and educational strength; and recognition that research universities will be key to these “idea capitals” (cited in Spring, 2009, pp. 107-108).

#### 3.1 American Universities

As might be expected, such marketization and commoditization have led to a significant privatization of education in a number of countries, in the United States, for example, schooling, higher education and training have been seen as lucrative markets to be in. Giroux (2000) reports that education markets represented around \$600 billion in revenue for corporate interests. Over 1000 state schools have been contracted out to private companies. However, we need to understand the nature of the forces that have pushed governments into adopting such policies and it is here that we can see the process of globalization directly at work (Monbiot 2001, p. 331).

Likewise, Duderstadt, Taggart and Weber (2008) argue that in a knowledge-driven economy, many governments are increasingly viewing higher education basically as a private benefit to students and other patrons of the university rather than a public good benefiting all of society. This is really a major shift in the value position from that of government responsibility for supporting the educational needs of society to university responsibility for addressing the economic needs of government-an interesting reversal of traditional responsibilities and roles (Duderstadt, Taggart & Weber, 2008, p. 274). In the words of Spring (2009) who states “What is strikingly new is the conceptualization of trade in educational services as a source of income to be included in the financial planning of nations, educational institutions, and for-profit multinational corporations” (p. 83).

On the other hand, in his book “Post American World,” Fareed Zakaria (2009) argues that higher education is America’s best industry. Eight of the top ten universities in the world are in the United States. By 2010, foreign students will get more than 50 percent of all Ph.D.’s awarded in every subject, and in the sciences, that figure will be closer to 75 percent. He further argues that the United States invests 2.6 percent of its GDP in higher education, compared with 1.2 percent in Europe and 1.1 percent in Japan (pp.190-191).

It is not surprising that all the above given assertions and claims seem to be true. According to the latest report on enrollments in academic year 2008-09 based on a comprehensive survey of approximately 3,000 accredited U.S higher education institutions of all types and sizes: International students all time high

in numbers 671,616 contributed \$17.8 billion to the U.S. economy, 65% of all international students receive the majority of their funds from personal and family sources and 70% of all international students' primary funding comes from sources outside of the United States. (Open Doors Report, 2009, November 16)

In a more global setting higher education institutions have more plural sources of finance and they need autonomy and academic freedom to be both intra and inter global effective. American universities, though now severely challenged, are still perceived as being in the top rung of the higher education ladder.

### 3.2 Australian and European Universities

Australian universities currently have the perception of being strong contenders with their blend of relevant programs and high quality research. European universities are regrouping to capture a better place in the global market. In the Task Force report (2000) of the World Bank on higher education in developing countries, it is stated that "The task force believes that, in the knowledge economy, highly trained specialists and broadly educated generalists will be at a premium, and both will need to be educated more flexibly so that they continue to learn as their environment develops" (p. 14). However, in the report it is also stated that Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise does not offer a universal blueprint for reforming higher education systems, but it does provide a starting point for action. While the benefits of higher education continue to rise, the costs of being left behind are also growing. Higher education is no longer a luxury: it is essential to national social and economic development (p. 14).

### 3.3 Chinese Universities

The changing trends of higher education are visible as many countries have set ambitious targets, for example, China had a goal of expanding vocational education so that at least 50 percent of the enrolments in secondary education would be in vocational education in the near future; India has a similar target of reaching 25 percent; and Bangladesh 20 percent (Tilak 2002). The impact of globalization is also evident in China's current push in higher education.

Recognizing that the country needs a better-trained workforce in order to move up the economic value chain, the central government of China has committed itself to boosting scholarship and other types of aid in 2008 to \$2.7 billion, up from \$240 million in 2006. Officials have plans to expand overall government spending on education, which was a merely 2.8 percent of GDP in 2006 to 4 percent by 2010, a large portion of which will be devoted to small number of globally competitive elite institutions. (Zakaria, 2009, pp. 95-96)

### 3.4 Indian Universities

India is one of the largest higher education system in the world facing the crisis of, university of the poor, with continued expansion, deteriorating standards, limited resources, and political involvement (Swar & Panday, 2008). In this regard, it is important to note that recently, the Indian government has approved the Foreign Education Providers (Regulatory) Bill (2010) that will allow foreign universities to open branches in India. When this bill becomes a law after approval in the parliament, foreign universities will be able to enter the education market. However, this raises some concerns among Indian politicians as many believe that there would be no control, over export and import of higher education, and the private institutions, from overseas would open branches in India, exchange of degrees and certificates that would go on without any restrictions. Some of politicians argue that Indian Universities are already at loss as more than 50,000 students of our country are studying abroad in U.S., Australia and U.K., where as a very small number of foreign students are seeking admissions in Indian Universities.

On the other hand, some politicians argue that the presence of foreign universities, within India would also undermine task of creation of knowledge and services for the community and for nation building, as Indian Universities have their special mission to provide traditional educational values, which perpetuate the caste system which severely impacts women along with teaching, learning and research. The vedic values of gurukul, are embedded in the higher education of India, to preserve the cultural heritage to keep our customs, rituals and spiritual touch of divinity alive (Swar & Pandey, 2008).

## 4 Concluding Thoughts

We suggest that for higher education faculty and administrators, our university policies can greatly impact our international and national students to help them explore innovative perspectives to educate humankind for future global citizenship. Education toward a future where global cooperation is the social norm and the notion of universal citizenship is the foundation of a globalized world. Universities, though pressured by market forces can and must lead in framing education policies to ensure that the common good of the world is our focus.

The objective of education is no longer simply to convey a body of knowledge, but to teach how to learn, problem-solve and synthesize the old with the new. The emphasis is less on community and equity, and rather more on individual advancement and the need to satisfy investors and influential consumers. Education has come to resemble a private, rather than public, good. Only focused aware actions by those in higher education can ensure the role of universities in the promise of a better life. Thus, there is an urgent need for setting up new agendas and curricula issues to address the challenges of higher education in a globalized world. It is important to note that global processes are putting immense pressure on educational practices world-wide. Spring (2009) not only underscores the emergence of the global superstructures and multi-national corporations in the education sectors but also reminds us that that we cannot simply ignore global processes in the evaluations of educational (including higher education) policies, practices, discourses, and curriculum in local contexts.

We propose that higher education institutions consider in their strategic planning the world-wide forces from economic and social perspectives.

### 4.1

First, the challenge that most global educators are facing is to design visionary and new agendas to cultivate a re-vision of humankind with the view of generating the learners' intellect necessary to cope with the complexity of globalization as an evolving new reality. The emergence of globalization is making educators' task more challenging than ever it was.

Second, it must be the utmost priority of the higher institutes to cater the needs and demands of diverse population of the global world.

Third, higher education institutions need to look for all possible avenues and to foster their quality of education.

Finally, in this evolving global context, American higher education institutions need to creatively operate out-of-the-box attitudes and prepare themselves for new challenges of the 21st century and establish more networking, collaboration, cooperation and more importantly to embrace developing multidimensional scholarship.

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