

The Development of Global Higher Education in a World of Transformation

Evan G. Mense¹, Pamela A. Lemoine², Christopher J. Garretson³ & Michael D. Richardson³

¹ Southeastern Louisiana University, USA

² Troy University, USA

³ Columbus State University, USA

Correspondence: Michael D. Richardson, Columbus State University, USA.

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Abstract

Globalization has forced higher education into a new world, a world of change, instability and ambiguity, shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, technology, an international knowledge network, and other forces beyond the control of higher education institutions. Futurists predict that the education systems of tomorrow will be drastically different from those of today. They forecast innovative approaches to teaching and learning will proliferate and will be used more effectively because of technology and telecommunications. Traditional universities historically have been producers of knowledge in the form of human capital, research, and scholarship and are now challenged to tap into the expanding need for lifelong learning. The need and desire for higher education are growing, but higher education is challenged to make significant changes driven by globalization and technology.

Keywords: higher education, globalization, technology, commodity, knowledge-based economy

1. Introduction

Globalization has driven higher education into a world of change, instability and ambiguity (Douglass, King & Feller, 2009). Globalization, a key reality in the 21st century, mandated that higher education critically examine the role and mission of each institution in the profound, changing requirements in a global society (Zhu, 2015). Globalization is defined as reality shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology, the emergence of an international knowledge network, and other forces beyond the control of higher education institutions (Altbach, 2016; Mishra, 2013).

Technological changes are occurring at such an accelerating rate that the production of knowledge makes management imperative but often inconsistent (Lemoine, Hackett & Richardson, 2016a). Futurists predict that the education systems of tomorrow will be drastically different from those of today (Kaiser, Maassen, Meek, van Vught, de Weert & Goedegebuure, 2014). They forecast that new approaches to teaching and learning will proliferate and will be used more effectively because of educational technology and telecommunications (Bernard, Borokhovski, Schmid, Tamim & Abrami, 2014). However, some warn that expansion of opportunities and programs should also include assessment and evaluation systems to answer questions of quality (Sobe, 2015).

Concepts of quality in higher education vary between countries and regions, and the programs of regional quality reflect these differences (de Wit & Hunter, 2017). But perceptions of quality are changing, and the growing emphasis on outcomes and standards heralds the possibility of more dramatic techniques for assessing and evaluating technology and education within a global context (Krokhmal & Simutina, 2018; Lemoine, Jenkins & Richardson, 2017). Traditional universities historically have been producers of knowledge in the form of human capital, research, and scholarship and are now challenged to tap into the expanding need for lifelong learning (Kemp, 2016). The need and desire for higher education are growing, but the sustainability of higher education in its present form has become a concern (Avdeeva, Kulik, Kosareva, Zhilkina & Belogurov, 2017) primarily because higher education significantly contributes to social equity and promotes economic security (Hudson, 2016; Malee-Bassett, 2015).

New university roles are essential for economic growth by the generation and application of new information and knowledge (Bates, 2010; Goodman & Gee, 2018). Colleges and universities, traditionally, were regarded as places to go, land-based institutions where students meet teachers in a face-to-face setting to become informed (Kauppi & Errkla, 2011). Students emerge from traditional universities certificated and credentialed, necessary tools for upward social and economic mobility, but at what cost (Lane, Kehr & Richardson, 2010)? Higher education institutions confront decreased funding during a time of scarce resources yet increased accountability for productivity in the development and articulation of knowledge and services (Chan, Mense, Crain-Dorough, Richardson, & Lane, 2013; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2016). However, technology has disrupted the traditional, formal processes of higher education (Bates, 2010; Hogan, 2015). Using emerging technologies as an accelerant, higher education institutions are separating from traditional brick and mortar physical spaces and venturing into a virtual mélange of educational models used in the knowledge economy (Guri-Rosenblit, 2010; Kruss, Mcgrath, Petersem & Gastrow, 2015; Youngs, 2013).

2. What Are the Roles of Higher Education?

Historically, higher education was a requirement for the preparation of professionals and perceived as a necessity (Spring, 2014). Most recently, higher education has become a profitable business framework, an online business model, and a higher education corporate machine, presenting education as a commodity of knowledge-based products for the economic market (Bagley & Portnoi, 2014; Baumann, 2017). Embedded in all of these concepts and, it could be argued, emerging from them, is the perception that access to knowledge and learning is a universal right, one of the key rights of the global community (Kauppinen, 2012, 2014). In fact, knowledge is increasingly regarded as the solution to individual and collective social and economic problems, i.e., a new global religion (Lane, Lemoine, Tinney & Richardson, 2014a, 2014b). However, this new “religion” now faces inevitable deliberations and debates regarding knowledge imperialism and the new marginalization for those on the edge (Machin & Murphy, 2017). Those who are successful in the new global knowledge economy may harvest great wealth and exert an inordinate influence on the world’s future (Nicotra & Patel, 2016). However, those at the edges continue to be marginalized and left behind in the push for economic prosperity (Monteiro & Sharma, 2014).

3. What Is Globalization and the Knowledge Economy?

Globalization creates and encompasses markets and competition between institutions and between nations (Samier, 2015). Globalization rendered the different national systems more similar to each other in form, in mission and organizational language (Kahn, 2015). Globalized competition, performance funding and transparency transform institutions and nations more prepared for the global challenge (Jarvis, 2013; Lane, 2015).

Global higher education is more open than are national systems, with a wide range of opportunities for innovations, alliances and markets (Mok, 2015). To maximize effectiveness in the global environment it is essential for higher education institutions to retain a strong sense of identity and purpose (Stensaker, Lee, Rhoades, Ghosh, Castiello-Gutiérrez, S. Vance, Çalıkoğlu, Kramer, Liu, Marei, & O’Toole, 2018). Conversely, it is necessary to be open to and engaged with others (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014). Simultaneously, effectiveness in the global environment means being prepared to change, to modify and adapt quickly and efficiently (Lane, Lemoine, Tinney & Richardson, 2014b). Governments in many nations are debating and assessing whether competition at home improves competitiveness abroad, and which combination of competition with collaboration will deliver the best results (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Governments typically recognize that effective systems of higher education contribute to the link between knowledge and skills and long-term economic development (Lovett, 2013; Morley, Marginson & Blackmore, 2014).

Globalization with changes in the world’s economy, increasing diversity, and the ubiquitous use of technology creates unprecedented opportunities and challenges for higher education (Anderson, 2015; Slaughter, 2014; Wadhwa, 2016). Spring (2014), suggested colleges and universities are “already in the best position to benefit from, and contribute to, the increasing exchange of knowledge” (p. 93). Since the global knowledge economy requires advanced education, colleges and universities face a move from more formal traditional roles of working for the public good to redefining their institutional mission to include innovation, entrepreneurship, and marketing (Guri-Rosenblit, 2010; Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2014). The digital economy offers tremendous opportunities for higher education institutions that can adapt (Lane, Lemoine, Tinney, & Richardson, 2014b). Digital technologies are creating greater access to education, new markets for distribution, and expanded income opportunities for higher education institutions (Bano & Taylor, 2015; Weller & Anderson, 2013).

In today's evolving global educational marketplace students are accustomed to instant access, any time, any place (Jones & Skinner, 2014). Ubiquitous anytime, anywhere learning is attractive to adult learners who balance both home and career (Barton & Ryan, 2014). With technological innovations creating cross-broader access to higher education, there are increasing opportunities for higher education institutions to expand revenue sources by selling knowledge (Barrett, 2017c). Accordingly, higher education institutions are positioning themselves in the national and international market as entrepreneurial models (Barnett, 2011; Lane, Lemoine, Tinney & Richardson, 2014a).

Change is necessary for higher education institutions to remain viable (Khan, 2015; Marshall, 2010; Saarinen & Valimaa, 2012). Survival for many higher education institutions necessitates adaptation of traditional educational paradigms and generating a new model of global engagement (Kedziora, Klamut, Karri & Kraslawski, 2017). The physical university is now a combination multi-dimensional education model: physical and online, or online (Tapscott & Williams, 2010). Consequently, universities are using technology as one of the primary means for initiating and maintaining contact with a diverse and changing student population looking for anywhere, anytime learning (Bates, 2010; Lewis & Lingard, 2015; Mense, Fulwiler, Richardson & Lane, 2011; Soares, 2012; Zhao, 2012, 2015).

Globalization and technological changes, while presenting tremendous challenges, bring vast opportunities. Globalization, for example, vastly expands the pool of potential customers for products and services. Niche talents that used to be of only interest to a small fraction of people may not be of much value locally because the total population is small in a given community. In the globalized world, the potential customers could be seven billion people. Even a small fraction of seven billion can be significant. Additionally, talents that may be of little value in a given location can be very valuable in another. Globalization and technology today enable products and services to reach almost any corner of the world. (Zhoa, 2012, p. 44-45)

Thus, in the push to be globally competitive, every country, large or small, is tackling some means and methods for reforming higher education to make it more of a service to the country (Altbach, 2014; Anderson, 2015; Barrett, 2017a).

4. How Does Globalization Impact Higher Education?

Researchers predict that 80 percent of new jobs created in the global knowledge economy will require advanced education (Kauppinen, 2015). However, colleges and universities are deliberately altering their traditional roles and redefining their institutional mission to include innovation and entrepreneurship (Balán, 2015). Universities are now battling borderless, global competitors moving into the business of higher education (Ball, 2010; Teichler, 2017). To stay viable in the knowledge economy, higher education institutions need to become business-like entrepreneurs by marketing themselves (Judson & Taylor, 2014), building collaborative alliances (Tadaki & Tremewan, 2013), and preparing for newer, emerging disruptive technologies and an expanded student base which is more diverse and specialized (Bickerstaff & Cormier, 2015; Cheng, 2016).

Higher education, the right to be educated, to acquire knowledge to overcome poverty, and to increase social position has been called the great equalizer in society (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011); however, traditional higher education was not equally accessible by all (Feenstra & Hanson, 2014). Is higher education still the great equalizer, the opportunity to overcome poverty, increase social class, and to become a functional societal member or has that message been subverted (Tannock, 2013)? Is higher education a platform to address racial inequality and the rights of the marginalized to be educated? In 1948, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights established education as entitlement for all children; however, changing politics, demographics, and economics have changed educational paradigms and subverted the value attributed to higher education (McClure, 2016; Zajda, 2015).

Globalization forced higher education institutions to critically examine their participation in the international environment and to assess their involvement in a changing world (Allais, 2017; Marginson, 2006). Technology created a vast new expanse of potential markets for higher education in a global market place (Moreira, 2016). The potential for pluralization of power in global higher education; the mobility of people, information and the expanded influence of technology, globalization and higher education all play a vital role in the knowledge economy (de Wit, 2015; Ornstein & Eng, 2015; Siddiqui, 2014).

Higher education is increasingly viewed as a major stimulus for both economic and social development (Barrett, 2017b). However, in most countries government revenues are not keeping pace with rapidly rising costs of higher education, hence the dramatic increase in student tuition and fees. The expansion of student numbers presents a major challenge to provide access to quality higher education (Ball, 2012). In financial terms, this has become an unsustainable model, placing pressure on systems to fundamentally restructure the 'social contract'

between higher education and society at large where parents and/or students are increasingly responsible for tuition and other fees (Demange, Fenge & Uebelmesser, 2014). What is the tipping point; the point at which society perceives that the cost of higher education outweighs the potential benefits?

Government is ultimately responsible for the development of higher education in every country, but the trends are obvious: those countries with the most vibrant higher education systems are those that are most productive (Hazelkorn, 2015). Both the social and economic futures of countries depend heavily on the educational attainment of their population and the quality of their higher education institutions (Sharma, 2014). However, citizens and governments are beginning to examine their return on investment in higher education (McGowan & Skendel, 2015). At what point do governments decide that the cost of higher education is greater than the cost to maintain higher education programs and services? Will they increasingly turn to for-profit institutions to provide the same services and programs at no cost except to the parents and/or students? Will they abdicate their responsibility for preparing citizens for the global knowledge economy?

5. What Are the Interpretations of Globalization in Higher Education?

In this era of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) a term coined for the military world also describes today's higher education environment. VUCA describes the chaotic, turbulent, and rapidly changing education atmosphere, which some have suggested as the new normal for higher education and indeed for society (Lemoine, Hackett, & Richardson, 2016b). Globalization has also created many VUCA factors because it entails the formation of world-wide markets operating in real time in common financial systems with unprecedented levels of foreign direct investment and cross-border mobility of production and people (Bosire & Amimo, 2017). Conversely, globalization is founded on the first world-wide systems of communications, information, knowledge and culture, tending towards a single world community (Carnoy, 2014).

The continuously extending networks based on travel, mobile phones, broad-band Internet and other information and communications technologies (ICTs), are creating new techniques for human association, of unprecedented scale and flexibility while spanning cities and nations with varied cultures and levels of economic development (Demange, Fenge & Uebelmesser, 2014; Deschamps & Lee, 2015). The networks enable the complex data transfers essential to knowledge-intensive production (Feigenbaum & Iqani, 2015). The processes of communication and information, where the economic and cultural aspects are drawn together, constitute what is new about globalization; and inclusion/exclusion. ICT networks and knowledge have created key dividing lines in shaping relations of power and inequality (Ferreira, Haddad & Faria, 2014; Knight, 2015).

6. Is Higher Education a Public Good?

The movement or trade in goods and services, including educational services, across international borders is viewed as the crucial economic outcome of globalization (Torres, 2015). Important international decision makers, policy-makers and politicians consider higher education to be a tradable commodity as well as a social service and often a privilege (Qureshi & Nair, 2015).

Historically higher education was regarded as a public good producing enormous benefit not only to individuals but also the entire society (Kauppinen, 2014). By most interpretations higher education constitutes a public good in itself that produces public goods, benefiting simultaneously citizens and society (Carnoy, Froumin, Loyalka, & Tila, 2014). Higher education, as a public good should spread benefits to the citizenry. In addition, higher education institutions have multiple objectives, not just economic. They produce multiple, varied types of outputs, some tangible and many not. Because of these special features, public goods like higher education cannot be provided by countries in a manner that always satisfies social demand or on the timelines desired (Shakar & Plater, 2016).

The public good nature of higher education is well understood in reference to the traditional functions of higher education and the social benefits provided (Lodge & Bonsaquet, 2014). However, higher education is facing two severe impediments; growth and sustainability (Walker, 2015). First, governments around the world have steadily minimized their support for public higher education, and expenses have increased constantly over the last decade (Feigebaum & Iqani, 2015). Second, governments are increasing pressure on universities to demonstrate the value of their degrees in short-term, quantitative and market-related measures (Blanco-Ramirez & Berger, 2014).

Most universities are now forced to adopt a unique form of corporate restructuring creating a corrosive influence of commoditizing education related to the standardization of degree production in institutions asked to make a profit from large numbers of student-consumers (Altbach, 2015; Ball, 2012). In a time when ecological, social, cultural and economic challenges require innovative solutions and new concepts, higher education must deliver

both creativity for sustainability and resilience for accountability (Balán, 2015). This dilemma forces universities to pursue both excellence and equity in a climate of accountability and competition, an almost impossible dilemma (Koyama & Kania, 2014; Teichler, 2017).

Some researchers suggest the policy reforms of the last several decades, which have introduced greater “privatization” and market competition into higher education systems, have also lessened the “public goods” provided by higher education institutions and are compromising academic integrity within universities (Brown, 2015). Although global higher education has a potential to increase access to higher education, deep concerns have been raised about the equity of access (King, 2013).

As learning becomes increasingly borderless, higher education policy is likely to rank increasingly high on national agendas (Temple, 2011; Youngs, 2013). Developing countries view increasing higher education participation as crucial to their transition to developed country standing and to providing opportunities for their citizens in the knowledge economy (Hall, 2013). The argument that higher education is a major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly global knowledge economy is now widely accepted, but does it contribute to the public good (Li & Lowe, 2016; Tekleselessie, Roberts & Richardson, 2014)?

7. What Is the Influence of Technology in Higher Education?

Technology has created a new higher education, particularly in the international marketplace (Cantwell & Kauppinen, 2014; Van Nyhuis, 2018). Understanding new information and communication technologies are essential for administrators of higher education systems in both a local and global perspective (Chapleo & O’Sullivan, 2017). Higher education institutions are more important than ever in building a wide range of relationships and a continuous flow of resources (Zhu, 2015). Technology is transforming higher education by providing a global focus, thereby intensifying the global interconnectedness (Audretsch, Lehmann & Wright, 2014). Technology has now become central to the global changes: reshaping social, economic and cultural life as well as higher education (Richardson, Jenkins & Lemoine, 2017). Technology has not created international universities, but all are impacted by the conceptual and realistic impact of globalism, both in terms of education (instruction) (Audretsch, 2014) and resources (students) (Devi, Bimol & Saikia, 2014).

The first world-wide systems of communications, information, knowledge and culture binds the world together and creates a global interrelated state (Cheng, Cheung & Ng, 2016). During the past decade, technical innovations have altered the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workplace and society (de Wit, 2017). Preparing technically educated and skilled individuals is of great economic importance to countries and requires significant attention from both educators and employers (Woodard, Shepherd, Crain-Dorough & Richardson, 2011). Higher education institutions around the world provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to function in society both personally and at work (Miller, 2010). Now that society has assumed a global focus, supported by technology, higher education institutions are asked to offer the highest quality education, especially technology literacy, to a widely diverse audience at a cost that can be supported by society (Lemoine & Richardson, 2019; Li & Zhao, 2015).

8. What Are the Economic and Financial Considerations of Globalization for Higher Education?

Economic and technological changes are occurring at an accelerating rate in the knowledge society, making life-long learning for everyone a necessity for success in the work place (Peters, 2010). This is particularly the case in the transition period from industrial production to a knowledge-based economy. Today’s college graduates will change careers multiple times, each change requiring access to lifelong learning with additional education being required at each career change (Bickerstaff & Cormier, 2015). Therefore, access to higher education is a necessity for job mobility and economic success (Orstein & Eng, 2015; Wangenge-Ouma, 2014).

Most of the elements of society, particularly higher education, are struggling with globalization across cultures and around the world (Morley, Marginson & Blackmore, 2014). The globalization of higher education places a new emphasis on both the content and process of education coupled with global and economic ramifications for delivery (Yeoh, Foong & Ho, 2014). Consequently, higher education is increasingly viewed as a major engine of economic development throughout the world (Lane, Kehr & Richardson, 2010).

Globally, universities are being forced to reconsider their missions and goals (Taylor & Morphew, 2015). Society no longer grants privilege and financial commitment to higher education because tax dollars are scarce (Elbasir & Siddiqui, 2018; Molesworth, Scullion & Nixon, 2011). Many perceive that those receiving the most from higher education institutions should pay for the privilege, thereby dramatically increasing tuition and fees (Allen & Withey, 2017; Amy, 2016). Many perceive higher education to be very costly, yet it is also widely seen as highly beneficial to a country’s economy and cultural vibrancy (Bergh & Nilsson, 2010). For many in

underserved regions of the world, higher education has become necessary for social mobility and economic success although cost remains an enormous barrier (Castro, 2015; Dewi, 2018; Hackett, Lemoine & Richardson, 2016). As a result, higher education has also experienced a new demand for financial accountability (Guerrero, Cunningham & Urbano, 2015). With increasing demands regarding healthcare, public safety, and quality of life issues taking priority, many, particularly policy makers and politicians perceive that those benefiting from higher education should pay the cost (Bolli, Olivares, Bonaccorsi, Daraio, Aracil, & Lepori, 2016; Heyneman & Lee, 2013; Krucken, 2014).

In addition, demographic changes also pose direct, long-term challenges to universities (Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman & Paleari, 2016). An aging population shapes spending priorities for many in the global market. Many countries are being forced to compete for talent with each other, striving not only to keep their own students at home, but also to recruit and retain talented students and workers from other countries (Beech, 2011; Horta, 2010; Teichler, 2017). In addition, an ever-expanding diverse society, including growing minority populations and high rates of immigration (Charles, 2018; Percy & Svenson, 2016), assures that colleges and universities will need additional resources to meet the needs of these diverse students (Brown, Bull & Pendlebury, 2013; Mohsin & Zaman, 2014; Shin & Kehm, 2013).

Colleges and universities are important incubators for finance, talent and innovation (Guerrero, Cunningham & Urbano, 2015; Proenza, 2010). They attract top students, resourceful faculty, prestigious research grants, business and jobs and are a huge revenue generator when used effectively and efficiently (Goodman & Gee, 2018; Mok, 2015). They generate revenue and resources and are uniquely positioned to provide leadership for future innovation, development and change (Lane, Kehr & Richardson, 2009).

Economic considerations related to international competitiveness have become a significant driving strength behind the globalization of teaching and learning (Stafford & Taylor, 2016). Along with the movement of goods and general services, the movement of educational services and products has improved significantly in the last decade (Dubina, Carayannis & Campbell, 2012). Higher education is increasingly seen not only as an export commodity, but also as a key national brand for a nation's knowledge proficiency (Bano & Taylor, 2015; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011). Knowledge institutions, whether private or public, are regarded as significant stakeholders in a country's global and local competitiveness (Foss & Gibson, 2015; Haapalorpi & Saaren 2014).

9. Concluding Thoughts

Historically, education was viewed as a basic human need, and by some as a right, and a key factor in social and economic development. Investment in education was perceived to raise the well-being of individuals while elevating their 'human capital' and economic capacity. Education was also viewed as a means of reducing inequality and a venue for social development. The capacities for countries to adopt, disseminate, and maximize rapid technological and educational improvements were reliant on adequate systems of education. The marketing and selling of education at the international level has had both positive and negative effects on the global knowledge economy because stakeholders are increasingly asking whether students are learning and whether institutions are providing a quality of service that justifies their cost.

Governments across the world have steadily minimized their support for public higher education, and costs associated with gaining a degree have increased constantly over the last decade. Most universities are forced to adopt a restructuring model for commoditizing education to make a profit from large numbers of students. The road ahead for higher education is filled with challenges, risks and uncertainties that begin with education being valued as more than a simple commodity: education becomes a public good. Higher education is increasingly viewed as a major instrument of economic development. In order to hold universities accountable despite limited governmental budgets, many nations have adopted performance-based university research funding strategies for targeted programs. Citizens and politicians in many countries are asking more frequently what tangible benefits the society is receiving for the tax revenues being spent on higher education.

Higher education is implicated in all these economic and global changes. Higher education is a key element in the formation of an international environment that is swept up in global marketization. Consequently, is higher education a commodity to be bought and sold or is it a service in the creation of economic globalism? Regardless, higher education is essential to the creation, exchange and implementation of knowledge in a global marketplace with many unintended consequences, like accountability. Globalization creates an atmosphere in higher education where knowledge and information are highly prized for their capability of increasing integration. Thus, under the influence of globalization, changes in higher education offer significant opportunities for most universities to succeed in the market of higher education services.

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