

REVIEW ESSAY

How does globalization interact with higher education?-

The continuing lack of consensus

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Introduction

An increasing volume of articles, books and conference papers consider the impact of globalization on higher education. Yet, despite this proliferation of research on globalization, multiple different conceptualizations of the term, views of the effects resulting from it, and counsels on how to respond to it, persist. This review essay attempts to ascertain whether a particular meaning of globalization, and perspective on its effects and the appropriate response to them, are becoming standardized across academia. To do so, it content-analyses a representative sample of new scholarship, mapping the various approaches of current researchers towards globalization.

In order to obtain an up-to-date view of the meaning and perception of 'globalization' amongst contemporary scholars, a sample of all articles (excluding book reviews) contained within nine widely-read higher education and education journals published in the year 2005 was examined in depth¹. Overall, forty-one articles within the journals contained substantial references to globalization.

¹ The journals analyzed comprise Comparative Education (containing six relevant articles); European Journal of Education (four relevant articles); Higher Education (eight relevant articles); Higher Education Policy (fifteen relevant articles); Higher Education Quarterly (two relevant articles); Journal of Higher Education – Columbus (one relevant article);

The journals were chosen as covering (but not necessarily being limited to) higher education issues, as frequently deploying a comparative focus, and as being broadly rather than narrowly based (covering a range of issues rather than focusing on one aspects of education such as evaluation or teaching methods, and employing a variety of disciplinary approaches).

The sample was, therefore, relatively restricted, considering only a small number of non-specialist journals (albeit relatively popular ones), and not including other textual resources such as journalistic resources or monographs. Nonetheless, the journals chosen can reasonably be seen as good resources for assessing the current state of scholarship concerning globalization and higher education, since they all offer a rigorously peer-reviewed vehicle for researchers to present new work (albeit sometimes in truncated form) to a wide international audience. As a result, the analysis of this sample enables a wide-ranging assessment of whether a particular conceptualization of globalization, and view of its effects, is becoming generalized across the academy- or whether a diversity of approaches exists, with no fixed overall view of the relationship between globalization and higher education.

The first section of this review essay indicates the various salient conceptualizations of globalization used in the sampled articles. It demonstrates that whilst many contemporary researchers use ‘globalization’ to refer to the proliferation of cross-border flows and pressures, significantly more use the term to refer to specific trends (especially, to marketization), or to particular ideological positions (especially, support for the use of market mechanisms). The review essay

Minerva (three relevant articles); Research in Higher Education (no relevant articles); and the Review of Higher Education (two relevant articles).

also indicates the often conflicting views within the sample concerning the relationship between internationalization and globalization.

The second section of the review essay categorizes the manner in which different articles describe the impact of globalization on higher education. Globalization is variously described as leading to concentrations of economic and/or linguistic power; to increased competition between higher education institutions (HEIs); to the involvement of HEIs in the maintenance or development of national competitive advantage; and to changes in the nature of information and of access to it. The section concludes by noting that few of the articles sampled noted the fact that HEIs can themselves promote globalization, rather than merely be 'subjected' to it.

Finally, the review essay indicates the various approaches which academics and HEIs might take in the face of globalization, which were urged within the sample. While some proposed an 'accommodating' attitude to globalization, others emphasized the role of HEIs in criticising globalization.

Overall, the review essay indicates the persistence of very diverse views within contemporary scholarship concerning the meanings of 'globalization', its perceived effects, and the appropriate response of academics and HEIs towards it.

The meaning of 'globalization'

Amin has noted that "the more we read about globalization from the mounting volume of literature on the topic, the less clear we seem to be about what it means and what it implies" (Amin, 1997, p.123). Certainly, the proliferation of definitions of globalization could cause considerable methodological difficulties for any

assessment of its connection with higher education. The definitions of globalization articulated within the sample articles can roughly be divided into two sets. The first identifies globalization with increased ‘global flows and/or pressures’, whether in people, capital, information or culture. The second set of definitions identify globalization with particular policy trends, the most frequently cited being the proliferation of market mechanisms.

Some articles were less concise over the meaning of globalization, recognising its ambiguities. As Enders and Fulton remarked, globalization “sometimes seems like... a catalogue of more or less everything that seems different since the 1970s...” (Enders & Fulton, 2005, p.5). Others referred to the impact of globalization, but without specifying exactly what globalization might consist in (Del Favero, 2005, p.69; Huang, 2005, p.119; Pang, 2005, p.172; Mehralizadeh, 2005, p.67; Rhoads, Saenz, & Carducci, 2005, pp.193, 215). The following section, however, examines those articles within the sample which *did* assign a specific meaning to the term ‘globalization’.

Globalization as ‘global flows’ and ‘pressures’

Roger King has maintained that we “might best regard globalization as consisting of flows — of capital (financial and physical), people, information, and culture, and so on — which move along various global highways” (King (undated)). This approach coheres with that of Scholte and Giddens, who have defined globalization as the spread of transplanetary/ supraterritorial connections between people, and the facilitation of “action at a distance” through the “emergence of means of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation”, respectively (Scholte, 2005, p.59; Giddens, 1994, p.4).

In contrast to such 'global flows', involving cross-border movements of already-existing factors (such as culture and information), 'global pressures' consist of the creation and growth of entirely new factors such as new institutions and new groups of people. Globalization *qua* global pressures has generally been conceptualized as the proliferation of transnational corporations and of transnational 'classes'.

Hence, transnational corporations have been identified by some authors as new institutions which are able to operate in ways which were not possible for more 'traditional', nationally-based companies. Emphasis on the freedom of transnational corporations to relocate as the key feature of 'globalization' has been described as 'strong' globalization (Yeates, 2001, pp.9-10). Some, such as Ohmae, have made the normative claim that national barriers to TNCs, as globalizing institutions, should be removed (Ohmae, 1995).

In addition to such new institutions, Leslie Sklair has identified a new group of people 'under globalization', a 'transnational capitalist class', which might reasonably also be described as a 'globalizing pressure'. This 'class', concentrated in finance and government, is able to move location just as TNCs might, depending on local circumstances (Sklair, 1997). The transnational capitalist class might also be expanded to refer to the worldwide movement of academics, given the widespread outsourcing of teaching from 'core' to 'peripheral' countries (through outposts of western universities) (see Skeldon, 2005), and the movement of promising scholars in the opposite direction.

A number of the articles sampled refer to globalization as intensified 'global flows'. Hence, a number examine the proliferation of new flows of information: of telecommunications, communications and information technologies (Dion, 2005,

p.296; Mok, 2005a, p.217; Thune & Welle-Strand, 2005, p.503); of “knowledge” (Scott, 2005, p.302); and of “the internet” (Pritchard, 2005, p.434). Some also note the connection between information exchange and the exchange of culture. Hence, Muhammad states that “[w]ith globalization, one could say that the culture of any nation will change, as information flow quickens, and the internet reduces personal distance” (Muhammad, 2005, p.354). Equally, Rizvi notes that the intensification of communications and links between individuals lead to a situation where the “new cultural space” of globalization means that “social identities are no longer tied unambiguously to territories” (Rizvi, 2005, p.337). On the other hand, cultural exchange was also seen as leading to the growth of “global desires”, which might be decoupled from national aspirations (Nsamenang, 2005, p.278). Some of the sampled articles also identified globalization with intensified global economic flows, such as “economic transactions” (Mok, 2005a; 2005b), albeit to a lesser extent.

Perhaps surprisingly, although one of the articles sampled did identify globalization with the “freer and more large-scale mobility of capital and people between economies and societies” (Lasonen, 2005, p.397), none explicitly associated it with the cross-border movement of students. This is rather surprising, given that the intensity of such flows has greatly increased over the past two decades, to the extent that Van Vught et al. explicitly describe the recruitment of international students as “the globalization game” (Van Vught et al., 2002, p.112).

Similarly, despite the prevalence of definitions of globalization as global pressures in the wider literature, these were not extensively adopted in the articles sampled. Globalization was seen as *providing* a pressure for change (Colardyn & Gordon, 2005, 238; Dion, 2005, 296; Meister-Scheytt & Scheytt, 2005, 92), but not as itself *constituting* a pressure/ pressures.

Globalization as trends: marketization

In addition to constituting global flows or pressures, globalization has also been identified with particular global “trends” (Altbach, 2001). Not all contemporary trends in higher education are necessarily international, nor indeed global; this is especially the case with massification. Nonetheless, one particular global trend has frequently been identified with globalization: the extension of market-based principles to govern formerly public services.

Perhaps the most extensive use of this definition of globalization in an analysis of changes to higher education is provided by Currie and Newson. Currie develops a “conception of globalization that combines a market ideology with a corresponding material set of practices drawn from the world of business”: managerialism, accountability, and privatization (Currie, 1998, pp.1, 5). Such ‘marketization’ has also been identified by Bruch and Barty with the sale of educational services to paying customers (Bruch & Barty, 1998, 32).

Globalization-as-marketization can be divided into two strands. The first concerns the promotion of competition between domestic HEIs and those from other countries (Mok & Tan, 2004, 6-7). Globalization-as-marketization can also, however, apply to the promotion of national economic effectiveness through the medium of national higher education systems. Hence, Roger King notes that recent UK government reforms to higher education have been motivated by the view that universities are “the key” to the maintenance and enhancement of “national comparative advantage in an increasingly economically competitive world”, in the “language of globalization” (King, undated).

A number of the articles sampled identified globalization with particular economic trends, and specifically with marketization. Hence, Enders and Fulton maintained that “globalization refers primarily to the processes of increasing interdependence, and ultimately convergence, of economies, and...the liberalization of trade in markets” (Enders & Fulton, 2005, p.6), and Pritchard maintained that “[g]lobalization implies deregulation”, with “[m]arket forces” constituting “an essential feature of globalization” (Pritchard, 2005, p.434-4; see also Douglass, 2005b, p.445). Finally, Rhoads and Rhoades noted that the view of globalization-as-marketization was deeply ingrained amongst at least one part of the academy, that of graduate union organizers. Hence, such organizers primarily understood globalization as “global competition”, with this particular “strain of globalization” being described by Rhoads and Rhoades as “corporate globalism” (Rhoads and Rhoades, 2005, p.261-2).

Globalization as ideology

A final conceptualization of globalization identifies it with a particular ideology. Such globalization-as-ideology has been described as a cover for political reforms, coming from governments, international organizations or business. Such actors may use “globalization discourse” tactically, in order to push forward their own objectives. Hence, Mok and Tan claim that the Singapore government was able to justify marketizations within higher education by claiming these were linked to globalizing forces (Mok & Tan, 2004).

Some scholars of globalization have been concerned to emphasize the role of transnational institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in propagating particular ideological conceptualizations of globalization. The precise relationship

between such organizations and globalization is sometimes rather obscure. Many authors claim that they are most important as conduits for globalizing processes, such as the creation of “an integrated global economy underpinned by the ideology of market liberalism” (Lingard & Rizvi, 1998, p.271) or of the extension of private-sector principles into the public sector, including education (Mok & Tan, 2004, p.23). For others, however, the existence of global institutions in and of themselves constitute a pressure for globalization (Yeates, 2001, p.8).

A large number, indeed the majority, of the articles sampled adopted this ‘ideological’ conceptualization of globalization. Hence, Enders and Fulton noted that globalization-as-ideology was often “constructed as an impersonal and inevitable force- in order to justify certain policies” (Enders & Fulton, 2005, p.6); Rhoads and Rhoades described globalization as “discourse”, which could help to compel “entrepreneurialism in the academy” (Rhoads & Rhoades, 2005, p.249), and Narsee maintained that globalization constituted a policy goal which had led “to an erosion of human values” (Narsee, 2005, p.342).

A number of the articles sampled provided useful case-studies of such globalization-as-ideology. Hence, Mok examined the Chinese government’s use of globalization as a justification for “higher education restructuring” (Mok, 2005a, p.236; 200b, p.82); Dingu-Kyrklund maintained that globalization was a key element in Swedish government policy motivating change in the domestic higher education system; Pritchard noted differences in the conceptualizations of globalization by German and British governments, as justifications for reform; and Imam claimed that globalization was being used as an ideological justification for neo-imperialist language policies in Bangladesh (Dingu-Kyrklund, 2005, p.125; Pritchard, 2005, p.449-450; Imam, 2005, p.472). Finally, Cussó and D’Amico maintained that globalization (or the promotion of it) had led to a greater

acceptance of normative assessments of educational systems by international bodies. The authors coined the term “globalization comparativism” to refer to those assessments of education systems which adopted such a normative position, as opposed to “development comparatism”, whose judgements on national education systems were not value-laden (Cussó & D’Amico, 2005).

The relationship between globalization and internationalization

A final conceptual ambiguity concerns the relationship between ‘globalization’ and ‘internationalization’. Some theorists have been happy to use the concepts of globalization and internationalization almost interchangeably (see for example Moran & Wood, 1996). Others have described globalization as a particularly “intense” form of internationalization (Hirst & Thompson, 1999). However, ‘internationalization’ is generally seen as a less critical concept within academia than is ‘globalization’. As Bruch and Barty note, there “are many staff in UK Higher Education Institutions at all levels who believe and argue that internationalization is good in its own right” (Bruch & Barty, 1998, p.21); but there may, perhaps, be fewer who would welcome globalization in the same way. For Scholte, “international” exchanges can occur only “between country units, while ‘global’ transactions occur within a planetary unit” (Scholte, 2005, p.65). The elision of internationalization and globalization is, he maintains, normatively objectionable, as this suggests that “world social relations are- and can only be- organized in terms of country units, state governments, and national communities” (Scholte, 2005, p.56). In a similar but subtly different vein, Scott has noted the “neo-imperialist” tones of “internationalism” which can potentially conflict with the ‘non-national’ processes of globalization (Scott, 1998, p.124).

Most articles in the sample which explicitly differentiated between globalization and internationalization followed Scott and Scholte's approach, by maintaining that globalization referred to denationalized transactions, whereas internationalization referred to transactions occurring between countries (see for example Van Vught et al., 2005, p.106; Smeby & Trondal, 2005, p.452). Dale suggested that unlike internationalization, globalization rendered the whole process of "comparing" educational systems, and thus the intellectual enterprise of comparative education, highly problematic. This was due to the fact that globalization made intractable what he claimed were the latent problems entailed by "methodological nationalism" (Dale, 2005, p.123).

In addition, other articles within the sample suggested that the interrelationship between globalization and internationalization may be more complex than at first appears. Scott suggested in his article within the sample that globalization should not be regarded "simply as a higher form of internationalization", but that the relationship between the two concepts may be dialectical, especially if internationalization was identified with neoimperialism (Scott, 2005, p.124). Some sampled articles directly contradicted Scott on this point, with, for example, Lasonen maintaining that "internationalization is both a process parallel to globalization *and, on the other hand, a step towards it*" (Lasonen, 2005, p.397, italics added). Other authors suggested that internationalization may actually be a strategy adopted by HEIs in the face of globalization. Hence, Van Vught et al. maintained that "many European university leaders" felt that "internationalization" could be "interpreted as the policy-based internal response to globalization" (Van Vught et al., 2005, p.106), a claim repeated by Thune and Welle-Strand (Thune and Welle-Strand, 2005, p.595). Overall, the relationship between internationalization and globalization appears to remain highly contested amongst contemporary researchers.

The perceived impacts of globalization

The sampled articles discerned a wide variety of different consequences arising from globalization, however it was conceptualized. As Douglass noted, “all globalization is local” (Douglass, 2005b, p.447) to the extent that any effects would be felt by different academics and HEIs in different countries and regions.

Nonetheless, four broad views concerning the impact of globalization recurred within the articles sampled: globalization as leading to a concentration of linguistic and/or economic power; to increased competition between HEIs; to HEIs being viewed as a means of stimulating national competitive advantage; and to changes in the nature of information and, relatedly, culture.

Globalization leading to a concentration of linguistic and economic power

A number of theorists have claimed that the most important consequence of globalization is an increase in the power imbalance between central and peripheral nations, institutions and languages. The latter issue is described by Pennycook, who has detailed the spread of English as the “global lingua franca” (Pennycook, 1994). Altbach has drawn attention to the growing strength of the “traditional academic center” of the English-speaking countries of the North and the larger countries of the EU (Altbach, 2001). Certain HEIs have even earned the epithet of ‘mega-universities’; universities with a student enrolment of over one hundred thousand. This point has been linked by some authors to the concentration of economic power in trans-national corporations. Hence, Scholte claims that “the past half-century of intense globalization has yielded conditions of considerable oligopoly in the world economy” (Scholte, 2005, p.183), and Altbach maintains that the consolidation of “norms, values, language, scientific innovations, and

knowledge products” in central countries is linked with the dominance of particular multinational corporations, with key roles in the “new global knowledge system” (Altbach, 2001).

The potential ‘concentrating’ influence of globalization was picked up by a number of authors in the sample. Hence, Mazawi suggests that higher education is ‘converging’ towards a western model, Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt that it is converging towards a “mixed” model, involving Anglo-Saxon and German-influenced elements, and Duke that higher education is increasingly affected by “universal” trends and influences, all due to globalization (Mazawi, 2005, p.221; Meister-Scheytt & Scheytt, 2005, p.80; Duke, 2005, p.243). Arocena and Sutz maintain that globalization has resulted in a deepening of existing knowledge asymmetries between Latin America and western countries, Bandawe suggests that globalization can lead to “alienation” from existing cultural anchors, and Heffernan and Poole describe the emergence of a “generic business culture” (Arocena & Sutz, 2005, p.584; Bandawe, 2005, p.297; Heffernan & Poole, 2005, p.240). Imam perhaps pushed the link between globalization and concentration of power the furthest in the sample, describing globalization as “Anglo-American” and “imperialist”, at least concerning its effects on indigeneous languages (Imam, 2005, p.474, 484). Nonetheless, Durie was keen to stress the janus-faced profile of globalization; whilst it was likely to undermine “indigeneous cultures and economies”, at the same time it allowed “greater opportunities for indigeneous communities to enter a worldwide scene and to engage with each other” (Durie, 2005, p.301).

Globalization leading to increased competition between HEIs

Where globalization is seen as increasing competition between HEIs on the global stage, two consequences can be discerned. The first consists in a growing differentiation of HEIs in order to build a market profile and for product differentiation. The institution of deregulated fee regimes, as experienced in British HEIs for international students, has indeed resulted in a greater stratification of HEIs in terms of fees paid and resources available. A second consequence of competition between HEIs is the development of transnational higher education consortia (Davies & Guppy, 1997, p.438; Denman, 2003).

A number of the articles sampled maintained that globalization had increased pressures upon HEIs to compete against each other. Thune and Welle-Strand, for instance, described a “globalization of markets for business education”, and Douglass maintained that globalization could be linked to the increased numbers of private providers of higher education, which were increasingly competing against public HEIs (Thune & Welle-Strand, 2005, p.602; Douglass, 2005a, p.113). Rhoads and Rhoades maintained that their research subjects (graduate employee union organizers) felt that globalization was leading to the “corporatization” of the university, whereby HEIs changed their structure and ethos in order to compete more effectively in the global marketplace (Rhoads & Rhoades, 2005, p.258).

The development of consortia amongst HEIs was less frequently mentioned within the sample as a consequence of globalization. Nonetheless, Guri-Rosenblit suggested that globalization was encouraging the development of collaborative ventures, as well as of e-learning, whilst Douglass maintained that the importance of consortia may have been overplayed, especially since many of these had been commercially unsuccessful (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005b, p.26; Douglass, 2005b, p.468).

Globalization leading to HEIs being involved in the maintenance/ development of national competitive advantage

As Scott notes, “[r]ightly or wrongly politicians believe investment in higher education can be translated into comparative economic advantage” (Scott, 1998, p.110). Similarly, Guy Neave has suggested that during recent times, “education is less part of social policy but is increasingly viewed as a subsector of economic policy” (Neave, 1988, p.274). This emphasis on higher education’s new economic role suggests that HEIs have become increasingly involved in two interconnected areas; the direct production of technology, often in combination with business; and the training of workers for the new global economy.

The new role of HEIs as technology producers has had two consequences. Firstly, HEIs have increasingly come to collaborate with business to create knowledge-based goods. Such joint production is often located in the institution, as business and industry “increasingly are entering into partnerships with academic researchers and institutions of higher education for the development of new products and processes” (Morey, 2003, p.71). Secondly, this new role of HEIs has had an impact on the nature of their scientific education and research (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1997). As Sporn maintains, trends “show an increased demand for technology transfer” and “for a combination of basic and applied research” rather than basic research only (Sporn, 2003, p.120).

HEIs are also increasingly expected to tailor education to the needs of the new knowledge economy. This is especially clear in the increased importance placed on international education, especially within business schools. As Bruch and Barty maintain, “[i]n an increasingly interdependent world, where communications networks are expanding rapidly, cultural isolation becomes untenable”, and HEIs

are increasingly required to provide individuals with the ‘global skills’ required by global business (Bruch & Barty, 1998, p.18).

Some of the sampled articles maintained that globalization had led to an increasing pressure on HEIs to become involved in the quest to maintain national competitive advantage (Huang, 2005, p.163; Mok, 2005b, p.59; Schoole, 2005, p.164). Rhoads and Rhoades suggest that this process is so highly developed that the university’s role is increasingly restricted to serving the “generation of capital” (Rhoads and Rhoades, 2005, p.251). Overall, however, this was not an area that was intensively investigated by the articles within the sample.

Globalization leading to changes in the nature of information and of access to it

Globalization can be seen as challenging the existing status of information in three ways: by increasing access to information, commodifying information, and contesting previously privileged information.

HEIs are particularly implicated in the globalization of information through their role in the creation of the internet and in distance learning, both of which have clearly increased access to information (Evans, 1995, p.260). The vast amount of information available through the internet has of course greatly increased access to previously spatially-bound sources, although some might question the quality of all the additional information thus provided.

Globalization is also sometimes linked with the commodification of information.

Scholte and Morey have noted that content, once passed through electronic processing systems, has become increasingly controlled by business and by for-profit organizations such as the Fathom company which includes a number of

universities as members (Scholte, 2005, p.171; Morey, 2003, p.74). Rather than information comprising a factor of production, i.e. one element of the infrastructure facilitating other processes of accumulation, under globalization, information and communications have themselves become commodities (Mosco, 1988).

Finally, despite trends towards standardization, some analysts have maintained that globalization has resulted in challenges to traditional 'rationalist' conceptions of knowledge. Martin Albrow in particular has maintained that globalization has resulted in a decline in the status of 'modern' rationality, in favour of non-rationalist knowledges such as religious revivalism, ecocentrism and postmodernist thought (Albrow, 1996). Whether or not globalization has led to such radical consequences is debatable, but increased global flows of both people and information may have led to the adoption of an increasing reflexive attitude towards gaining and producing knowledge, as intercultural encounters intensify.

A number of the articles sampled noted the effects of globalization on information, although generally only in terms of increased access to information. Hence, Smeby and Trondal (2005, p.453), Guri-Rosenblit (2005a, p.467), and Marks (2005, p.624) draw attention to developments in information and communication technologies, especially the development of 'virtual' courses, which they see as increasing access to information and thus altering academics' practices and traditional higher education systems. Abdulkari and Sinlarat refer to globalization as leading to information flows which "ignore" "national borders...space and time", and "have made the transfer of knowledge seemingly limitless, countless, and timeless" (Abdulkari, 2005, p.149; Sinlarat, 2005, p.266). However, none of the articles examined referred to globalization leading to a contestation of previously privileged information, nor to the commodification of information.

An overlooked element: The role of higher education institutions in promoting globalization

Virtually all of the articles sampled, when referring to the effects of globalization, assumed that causality ran mainly in one direction, *from* global flows, pressures or trends *towards* changes in HEIs or in matters closely connected with HEIs. Only Smeby and Trondal and Rhoads and Rhoades appear to explicitly acknowledge that HEIs can constitute the “engines of globalisation” (Smeby & Trondal, 2005, p.450), such as through becoming “corporate” or “global” universities in order to “compete in a global environment” (Rhoads and Rhoades, 2005, p.263). It therefore appears that current scholarship has mainly examined the effects of globalization on HEIs, rather than vice-versa. This is despite the existence of a number of works which have maintained that HEIs have played a key role in fostering globalization.

Peter Scott in particular has noted that universities can be “key agents of globalization” (Scott, 1998, p.122). This is particularly clear from the growing proliferation of international, often ‘for-profit’ subsidiaries. As Philip Altbach claims, the “academic community itself is in considerable part responsible for the changes” arising from globalization, as with the Universities of New York, Columbia and Monash Universities, all of which have established profit-making branches (Altbach, 2001). A number of British universities have also extended their profit-making activities, especially overseas.

Such new ventures often involve the creation of international networks of for-profit subsidiaries. To the extent that these are seen as analogous to transnational corporations, it can also be claimed that HEIs themselves are playing a part in the increasing consolidation and concentration of global economic activity and

ownership. Hence, Eggins has highlighted the similarities between the increasing number of mergers and takeovers in industries such as banking, with the growth in strategic alliances between US and European universities (Eggins, 2003, p.120).

HEIs can also be seen as facilitating globalization through their role in the production process. Hence, firstly, Sklair has claimed that HEIs, and especially business schools, have been crucial in creating the international business and governmental elite which he describes as the “transnational capitalist class” (Sklair, 1997, p.20; see also Marceau, 1989).

Furthermore, if one conceptualizes the spread of globalization as synonymous with the spread of marketization, it is clear that many of the pressures leading to the marketization of HEIs have originated within the institutions themselves. This has occurred either through policy transfer from other countries (as with Rhoades and Sporn’s description of an “Americanization” of European higher education (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002)) or through the conscious adoption of industry-based models of management (as with the British Jarratt Committee’s emphasis on ‘enterprise culture’ and specific managerial styles and structures (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, 1985)).

Recognition of the role of HEIs in themselves pushing forward globalization was, however, largely absent from the articles sampled.

The role of academics in the face of globalization

How did the sampled articles suggest that HEIs and academics should approach globalization? The first possible response to globalization, however it is conceptualized, is accommodation. Most national governments have promoted this

approach to globalization. Of itself, however, accommodation need not imply stasis; it may be necessary to significantly reform higher education systems before they can be deemed compatible with the current globalized economy.

Two of the articles sampled noted accommodation as a possible approach towards globalization. Lasonen suggested that globalization could be met through an emphasis on “competence across the whole range of educational provision and forms of knowledge production and application from basic education to higher education and to research and product development of a high standard” (Lasonen, 2005, p.397). Similarly, Nsamenang stressed the development of skills appropriate to the “global village” as well as to national and local contexts, as a means of facing up to globalization (Nsamenang, 2005, p.278).

Another, contrasting approach towards globalization relates to HEIs’ role in creating and disseminating information. Such an approach could be adopted critically, as a method of stimulating an independent but well-informed response from students to globalizing processes. Henry et al., for example, note the need for universities not only to provide students with “a set of facts about the ‘new realities’ of globalization”, but also with the “skills of inquiry and analysis” which might enable a more critical engagement with a globalized world (Henry et al., 2001, p.152).

A number of the articles sampled endorsed this view towards the role of HEIs in the context of globalization. Hence, Sadlak advocates that HEIs should “try to reflect on how globalization affects our society and its institutions”; Carr and McLachlan maintain that the “complexity of socio-economic change consequent from globalization” increases the demands on universities to provide answers to global challenges; and Rivzi calls for an internationalization of university curricula

as a means of facing up to globalization (Sadlak, 1998, p.107; Carr & McLachlan, 2005, p.200; Rizvi, 2005, p.339). From this perspective, HEIs have an important role to play in debating globalization, whether this leads to eventual accommodation or to resistance.

Conclusion

Globalization remains a contested concept, within studies of higher education as in many other fields. Rather than globalization being taken to refer unambiguously to global flows, pressures, or trends, its meaning continues to depend on the particular perspective adopted by contemporary researchers. The same conflict is apparent concerning the impacts which are reputed to globalization, and with regards the appropriate response to globalization amongst academics and HEIs more generally. Perhaps the only apparent point of consensus amongst contemporary researchers is the claim that globalization affects HEIs, rather than HEIs themselves being implicated in the promotion of globalization. As noted above, however, this position underplays the often important role of HEIs in encouraging cross-border flows and pressures, and global trends such as marketization.

References

(Articles which formed part of the sample are underlined).

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