

GABRIELE SIMONCINI

Mobility and Current Trends in Global Education

Mobility in higher education has become a fundamental principle in acquiring the competence needed for the global society. Mobility is no longer an option, but has become a strategic success factor shaping the future of young generations. Career success and contribution to society are made possible by the possession of experience education, multicultural competence, and flexibility. All this, and even more, has become necessary to navigate the mutant, and fluid scenarios in national, European, and global society.

It is imperative that mobility be understood as a crucial feature of the global society. National communities are often still resisting this perception. European states and public institutions are slow in perceiving, promoting, and practicing mobility in general. This is understandable: mobility implies de-nationalization of self in becoming globalized. Mobility means to leave the village and enter the global village. The European Union instances are facing a complex task in practicing mobility, and even more (under the current times of crisis) in advancing the Union's integration.

In spite of their efforts, European public institutions, are facing serious objective limitations coming from national fronts. In today's Europe, the nation-state apparatus is hardly an innovative instance, national bureaucracy is mostly unprepared for innovation. Furthermore, the national state university monopoly systems, like in the Italian case, are engaged in a deadly resistance to change. Their Ministries have come to manifest the views of narrow interest groups (the parasitic professorial caste), surviving at the expense of the new generations.

In parallel to the public sector, the private sector needs to be considered in the light of its growing weight. Non-state higher education, the business community, the corporate environment are the fundamental stakeholders and strategic players in mobility development. It is therefore auspicious for there to be a more articulated conjugation of different public/private priorities, missions, and interests. It seems there is a trend for a general over-comprehensive effort and desire by the public sector to manage mobility in all its different ramifications.

Such a general approach probably sees the private sector as a subordinate subject, not as a primary entity and player in globalization. It seems that experience learning, multilingual competence, transnational mobility, innovation, excellence, and much more, will only be achieved within institutional frameworks. A hard task, when in reality these instances are at local-national level, and in the hands of unprepared, unqualified, and unwilling (if not even purely parasitic) subjects and lobbies.

An effort should be made to increase the role of the private sector in mobility. Non-state higher-education institutions are a growing reality worldwide. They are managing mobility on account of the simple fact that they themselves are expressions and results of mobility. Network Universities, Multi-campus Universities, Corporate Universities, For-Profit Universities, Study abroad programs, Multi-semester study abroad programs, have become a powerful reality, quantitatively and qualitatively. This is happening on the global scale, in China, the USA, the Gulf region, India, and almost everywhere.

Mobility within the European Union could gain remarkably when contextualized globally. European mobility could do more if designed first of all to deliver; here and now. Furthermore, mobility could deliver when designed and practised exclusively as global mobility from the very outset. A new way of thinking is needed urgently.

The fundamental essence of Western liberal democracy is constituted by its openness, by being an open society. Openness is paralleled by fluidity, accompanied by uncertainty, and risk. The global open society provides remarkable opportunities for developing higher education and research throughout the world. Colleges and universities, mostly private ones, have sprung up on all continents since the end of the last century.

Attempts to define global education, or better global higher education, can be confusing to traditional thinking. Education has always been conceived and defined as *national* in nature. Consequently, international education meant simply an interaction among national education systems. We define here higher global education first of all, as the mutated and continuously mutating education process based on innovation and excellence. We believe we are dealing here with a process, not a system.

Originated within the global village, the structural part of the knowledge economy – global higher education – has become a major motor of development and security across the world. Framed within the global context, higher education cannot prosper if constrained by each country's distinct national borders. The knowledge economy does not necessarily need, and hardly tolerates, national borders. Perhaps we could dare to think about global higher education in similar terms to those we apply to multinational corporations. This certainly implies risk, and complex risk management, but further exploration in this direction might bring about revealing, if not always pleasant, new horizons.

There are multiple ways through which global education can contribute to an improvement and enhancement of both international and national security. Global education, when made a priority by a state and its institutions, can contribute not only to a long perspective growth of society. It can also contribute to the achievement of security by becoming an asset in the fight against poverty, inequality and insecurity. Global education brings to society an innovative cultural approach and a pluralistic way of thinking, resulting in human improvement and strengthened security. Global education is the place where the encounter of diversities favours growth, promotes respect, and facilitates security.

Global education in itself does not possess a civilizing mission, nor express a preferential scale of ethics and values. It operates on plurality, liquidity, always approaching complexity from different perspectives. It is based on an open mind, on tolerance, leading to the prevention of friction, exclusion or alienation. If such considerations are correct, it might be opportune to adopt new ways of thinking and different strategies for higher-education reform. It might be necessary to redesign the systemic components of educational environments in order for the goal of a world community that is well-educated, capable, tolerant and peaceful to be pursued.

Put in perspective, sustainable global security is more realistically achievable through an articulated and wide development of global education, than through repetitive deployment of military force. Global higher education means the formation of a globalized individual, capable of navigating efficiently the globalized society for his or her own benefit, and for the benefit of the community. This individual is characterized by the possession of analytical skills and critical thinking, by an understanding of the general environment and his/her own, and by a tendency to work against ignorance and intolerance.

If we understand the global education model as an educational process serving the global citizen in his/her relationship with the knowledge-based economy, then we have to recognize that this educational model still to a large extent needs building. This is because, I repeat, higher education is still commonly perceived and understood by major state policy makers (which are the sources of public funding) as national, not global, in essence. This is understandable, given the way that education was a primary factor in the nation-state building process. However, today we are no longer experiencing that historical process, therefore a national perception of higher education is essentially useless to the global citizenry.

In this respect, on the world scale, the case of US education appears uniquely to be facing the challenge. While US institutions are certainly not free from innovations in some areas, they do constitute the major visible player of international higher education. American higher-education institutions constitute about 25% of the world total. Also, the US contains all the most valuable academic and scientific graduate programs. Development of technology is most advanced there. The impact factor is strong, resulting in the continuous creation of new clusters of problems, but also finding solutions.

From this advanced reality are emerging the most recent trends which reveal and define future challenges in education. The diffusion of ICT in society and in life has also created an impellent *life crisis* in higher education. This crisis has multiple and dangerous ramifications. It is changing the very nature of college, the experience of being a student, and the terms by which success is defined both for the higher education institutions and their graduates. Also, it has raised expectations for the *educational experience* by college graduates. Finally, it has been responsible for an escalation of costs.

Global higher education demands vision and mission, in addition to innovation, quality, and excellence. Moreover, it requires ambitious action, and courageous reforms geared towards the long term: unfortunate when politicians' terms are focused on short-term results, always keeping re-election in mind. Input and impact by the public sector on higher education are destined to remain limited. The other possible input, the one coming from the market, also presents limitations. Often, the market-sector influence might result in outcomes as devastating as such public policies of inaction, protectionism and clientelism.

All players and stakeholders in higher education (from students to states) are currently facing clusters of complicated issues. First among these are matters of a financial nature: costs. Tuition fees are rising ever faster, this despite economic conditions. Parents are under increasing financial stress. Students have to borrow more and more money that they will be less and less capable of paying back.

The second issue is related to the practical outcome of education. The college degree often no longer guarantees a good position on the job market, or even a job itself. Conversely, employers are disappointed to find that college graduates lack the skills required by the marketplace. Newly-employed college graduates are not productive from day one. They find themselves in the embarrassing situation of needing additional training or even retraining, in order to be able to deliver.

The third issue is *pedagogical*. College professors educate students in a general sense, that means not for a specific job. They educate students in the same way they were educated themselves, half a century ago – in an ancient era. Especially in a state university (as with the notorious case of the Italian state university monopoly), professors have often become detached from education and even from reality itself. They drag on in their careers as state employees, mummified into a self-referential caste, and engaged in a deadly battle against change. On an international stage, they often bring disgrace to their institution and to its students, while failing to enlighten society at all.

Today, college students usually need a job-related education; they need at least some of their instructors to be able to transfer value-related knowledge. Do we not live in the era of the knowledge society? Students are demanding that kind of knowledge. A knowledge that must be: valuable, measurable, and most of all, spendable, here and now.

The fourth issue deals precisely with the very nature of the knowledge economy: an economy and a social structure more based on process than a static system. This means a scenario in which innovation, technology and science are proceeding at an incredible pace. A context characterized by extreme dynamics, uncertainty, and liquidity is producing at the same time, order (integration) and chaos (disintegration).

The very nature of knowledge work now demands skills which are usable currently and ubiquitously usable. Skills acquired 20, 10 or even 2 years ago may quickly become either obsolete or in need of an update. Therefore, higher education has, first of all, to deliver adequate skills for the market and society. Furthermore, another futuristic challenge exists, as education is required to deliver skills adequate to jobs that do not even exist yet!

The fifth issue is of an institutional nature, and is apparent in both the public and private sectors. This is the capacity of educational institutions to cope with the requested demand for change, given the fast-paced operating environment and future uncertainties. Within the institutional walls, there is usually insufficient background knowledge (being kept up-to-date) and uncertain financial or political support from the public sector. In addition, their most dramatic problem is often represented by the educators themselves. The professorial category is often no longer capable of renovating itself as quickly as society demands, and may even lack initiative to address the future.

Higher education worldwide has become one of the core strategic factors of globalization. It promotes exchange, transfers knowledge, and facilitates brain migration. It reaffirms and further strengthens openness. Within the global scenario, an increasing number of new players are gaining in visibility and power. Established players, after the American ones, are extending their reach.

As a consequence, the management capabilities of traditional players such as the nation-states, with their governments, institutions and bureaucracies find their role in shaping higher education eroded at an increasing pace. New, unusual players are now in the game, in addition to international organisations and NGOs. Multinational corporations, private business, private education, research institutions, and in a sense even terrorist organisations, are now global players with growing influence. On the security front, higher education can play an increasing crucial strategic role, in making the open society much safer than it is today.

Bibliography

1. Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., Rumbley, L. E. (2009) *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution*. UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, Paris.
2. Al-Rodhan, N. (2007) *The Role of Education in Global Security*. Genève: Éditions Slatkine.

3. Batson, T. (2011) Is Higher Education Ready for 'The Education Bubble'? *Campus Technology*. (June 1).
4. Bokova, I. (2011) *Education and Security*. UNESCO Director General, Editorial. (March 1).
5. Bjarnason, S. et al. (2009) *A New Dynamic: Private Higher Education*. UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, Paris.
6. Douglass, J. A., Edelstein, R. (2009) *The Global Competition for Talent*. Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California.
7. Gordon, E. E. (2009) The Future of Jobs and Careers. *Techniques*. (September).
8. Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) (2009) *The Space between Numbers: Getting International Data on Higher Education Straight*. Washington D.C.
9. Marginson, S. (2006) Dynamics of National and Global Competition in Higher Education. *Higher Education*, Vol. 52, 1–39.
10. Van der Wende, M. (2009) *European Responses to Global Competitiveness in Higher Education*. Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California.

Redaktorzy naukowci Editors

prof. dr hab. Maria Mendel, Anna Atlas

Redaktor prowadzący Managing editor

Anna Pokrzywnicka

Recenzja naukowa Reviewer

prof. dr hab. Mirosław Patalon

Współpraca wydawnicza Editing cooperation

Jan Andrzej Nicał

Redakcja językowa Editing

Elżbieta Hoffman, Anna Pokrzywnicka (język polski/The Polish language)
dr James R.A. Richards (język angielski/The English language)

Korekta Proof reading

Agnieszka Pawłowiec, Weronika Walasek (język polski/The Polish language)
dr James R.A. Richards (język angielski/The English language)

Tłumaczenie Translation

Anna Podoracka, Biuro Tłumaczeń „Poliglota”

Redakcja i fotoedycja reportażu Photoediting and reportage

Malwina Górecka

Opracowanie graficzne i projekt okładki Graphic and cover design

Justyna Marciniak

Skład i łamanie Typesetting and composition

Piotr Konopka

Druk Printing

Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia w Sandomierzu

Wydawca Publisher

Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji
Narodowa Agencja Programu „Uczenie się przez całe życie”
Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE)
National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme
ul. Mokotowska 43
00-551 Warszawa
e-mail: kontakt@frse.org.pl
www.frse.org.pl

© Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, Warszawa 2012

ISBN 978-83-64032-02-8

Publikacja sfinansowana z funduszy Komisji Europejskiej w ramach programu „Uczenie się przez całe życie”. Komisja Europejska nie ponosi odpowiedzialności za treść umieszczoną w publikacji.

The publication was funded with the support from the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Publikacja bezpłatna

Free copy

Redaktorzy naukowci Editors

prof. dr hab. Maria Mendel, Anna Atlas

Redaktor prowadzący Managing editor

Anna Pokrzywnicka

Recenzja naukowa Reviewer

prof. dr hab. Mirosław Patalon

Współpraca wydawnicza Editing cooperation

Jan Andrzej Nicał

Redakcja językowa Editing

Elżbieta Hoffman, Anna Pokrzywnicka (język polski/The Polish language)
dr James R.A. Richards (język angielski/The English language)

Korekta Proof reading

Agnieszka Pawłowiec, Weronika Walasek (język polski/The Polish language)
dr James R.A. Richards (język angielski/The English language)

Tłumaczenie Translation

Anna Podoracka, Biuro Tłumaczeń „Poliglota”

Redakcja i fotoedycja reportażu Photoediting and reportage

Malwina Górecka

Opracowanie graficzne i projekt okładki Graphic and cover design

Justyna Marciniak

Skład i łamanie Typesetting and composition

Piotr Konopka

Druk Printing

Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia w Sandomierzu

Wydawca Publisher

Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji
Narodowa Agencja Programu „Uczenie się przez całe życie”
Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE)
National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme
ul. Mokotowska 43
00-551 Warszawa
e-mail: kontakt@frse.org.pl
www.frse.org.pl

© Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, Warszawa 2012

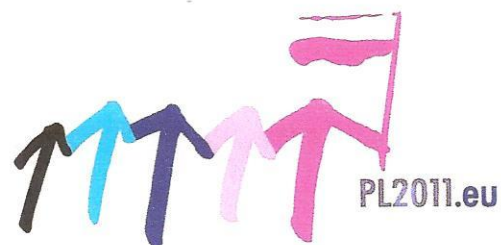
ISBN 978-83-64032-02-8

Publikacja sfinansowana z funduszy Komisji Europejskiej w ramach programu „Uczenie się przez całe życie”. Komisja Europejska nie ponosi odpowiedzialności za treść umieszczoną w publikacji.

The publication was funded with the support from the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Publikacja bezpłatna

Free copy



Mobilność

sposobem zdobywania
i rozwijania kompetencji
– od juniora do seniora

Mobility
as a Tool to Acquire
and Develop Competences
from Childhood to Seniority