

Rozdział 3

Margaret Kneller, Gabriele Simoncini

Higher Education: the Challenge to Link Global and Local

Introduction

Worldwide, the rate at which higher education is mutating from its past centuries of „state” (or national) identity, to an institution with a „global” identity, is increasing. The path of this mutating identity, likely follows the increasing globalized identity of the so-called Knowledge Economy; and places higher education squarely within the globalization of society, culture and economies. While higher education, in the past century, was already open to the transfer of people (students, professors), and knowledge (scholarly works)—what is unique now is how the institution itself is moving towards an institution with a global identity, as its very base. The globalization trend does have local articulations. The overall trend is unfolding in four directions: from local to global; from national to international; from monopoly to plurality; and from public to private.

In addition, the various integrating-into-the-global processes can be marked by external phenomena to the local context, and of extraordinary phenomena relative to the local *status quo*. Now, one could say a crisis situation has been reached within many higher education systems—systems essentially built from the 19th to 20th century—and structural fractures within the national systems are a manifestation of this crisis.

Because higher education creates an „intangible good”, measuring the quantity and quality of this intangible good is difficult—is the „created knowledge” measured at the national level, the institutional level, or some unspecified combination thereof? In addition, the question remains—when is the full value of the university degree achieved? When is the value of the educated cohort within a state, measured—at the end of each academic year, at the end of distinct generational cycles (e.g. the baby boom generation, the post-WW2 generation), in decadal increments? How does one determine the value of the university de-

gree—individual income over a lifetime, average income for an entire state, or a more amorphous concept of cultural development? Without measurements and data, can one state that the state university system is in crisis?

The crisis is that the traditional university system, struggles to make itself relevant to the global economy, and more importantly to the global culture. Evidence of this struggle includes: budget deficits of state-funded institutions; changed composition of teaching faculty to include many non-tenured professors; rapid changes in disciplines offered for study; increased use of institutional resources for purposes not directly academic; increasing use of „experts” defending the „value” of a college education; and the increasing use of private funds to support the still public-labeled education system.

From Local to Global

We look at two specific aspects in the struggle to globalize higher education: maintaining an institutional identity, and redefining the role of professors. Institutional identity, in successful cases in the past, always contained a strong connection from the local reality to the state; and, location and the institution mutually reinforced each other's identity over time. The professor, the most obvious personal manifestation of the university to its students, has been for centuries one of the most clear emblems of any single university, to the outlying academic world. Both local institutional identities, and the figure of the professor, are under severe strain.

Institutional identity is both a concrete and amorphous concept. Yet in either case, in the European nations of the last two centuries, the institutional identity of any single higher education campus, was most frequently linked to the state; and if not the state, then the church. Other identities are rare. Creation of new university campuses, or expansions of existing universities, rapidly increased from the 1800s onwards—concomitant with the growth of other important state institutions. In continental Europe, from the nineteenth century onwards, public higher education institutions increased in number and enrollment. Importantly, research and *instruction, was conducted in the relevant state language*; students and professors were drawn from within national boundaries. For public universities, *funds came from state treasuries*.

State funding is critical to a university's teaching and research activities and for public universities in Europe; the state is the primary funding source. Admittedly, third-party direct financing now exists for public university research and development projects. Also, the form of this funding has changed in the last decade, from itemized to lump-sum or block grant budgets (see OECD reviews). Yet reviews of public universities show that for almost all, the state remains the major funding source by large margins.

The connection of institutional identity to the state, beyond this vital financial link, is anchored with the crucial legal link. Both the university as physical

edifices, and the degrees conferred, are bound to a legal structure—a state legal structure, usually a Ministry of Education. The institution itself, whether state or privately-funded, must be legally identified (certainly also for fiscal reasons), and accredited by the state. The higher education degrees, or „degree programs,” must also be given legal status by a state ministry. The rational purpose of the accreditation schemes is to ensure quality standards. Thus, both institution and degree programs are concatenated to the state.

Therefore, in practice today, changing the degree programs offered, or changing the location of study (i.e. joint ventures with foreign institutions); will require some amount of state bureaucratic oversight. In the most provocative case—creating a new university—the accreditation of the institution and the degrees will require state ministry involvement at high levels. Hence, moderate to major changes in the public university system, from conceptualization to legal approval, is on the order of years to decades. And only in very few cases will legislative-administrative decisions focus first on the students, and their needs to thrive in the 21st century globalized knowledge society.

Over the past two centuries, a university system could encompass peaks of intellectual and cultural knowledge, for each European state. Beaux-Arts and Paris, Semiotics and Bologna, theoretical Physics and Heidelberg—these are all examples of the successful support, by a state university system, of a vibrant amalgam of knowledge and culture. Today, it is harder to find continental European campuses and faculty that have reached and sustained international status. The rise of university ranking scales at the global level (Jiao Tong University, Shanghai and the Times Higher Education Supplement being the two most cited) shows the strength of US universities in combining research and teaching activities. In the sciences the continental disparity is stark: professors at US universities dominate the winners and more importantly, a significant number of these winners were foreign-born. Since WW2, and even up to today, the US continues to attract foreign scholars to both its public and private universities. Thus, seventy years after WW2, approximately 3 generations, the EU and its separate nations, has not produced any power house universities to rival those of North America. Could this weak showing by the Europeans, have anything to do with the strong state support of large public universities?

Many state educational ministries may have ignored the importance of global competition in, and global measurements of, in higher education. However, students had not. By the late 20th century, even first-degree degree programs at European public universities were showing increased non-national enrollment (sometimes related to former colonies). New legislation (again at the state level) altered admissions policies (more open admissions). However, in broad perspective, the public university system has remained largely unchanged, despite important policy statements (e.g. Sorbonne Joint Declaration, Bologna Declaration) and re-organizations.

With great administrative efforts, frameworks for comparing class credits and degrees amongst EU universities, have been established—an aid to student mobility. In Italy, institutional bodies which govern higher education have been

created, merged, and re-shuffled, but the state still remains the supreme funding source. Governance of all major research and teaching resides with the Rome ministry. Despite re-organizations, important hierarchies remain in place, and opaque jockeying for power between powerful academic organizations, rectorates and the ministry continues. Similarly, for many continental university systems. Thus in 2013, for universities, most of which are still public, the critical point of reference for important legal status, remains the state ministry.

The visible „protagonist” of the entire public university system remains the professor teaching „*ex cathedra*”. The growth in number of academic and administrative staff in the last decades, reflects the overall economic growth of Europe. The university professor as state contracted employee, for life (until retirement), was the dominant model in these growth decades. After robust growth of the late 20th century, even proceeding into the first decade of the 21st, most public universities host a hefty number of tenured professors and related support staff—with lifetime guarantees of employment, and often minimal requirements for actual presence on-campus for either teaching or conducting research. The lifetime contracts guarantee that the professor is protected, on a personal and professional level, from the strong forces of global competition. In Italy, commentators will refer to a „caste” of professors (think caste system of India), with „*baroni*” professors effectively controlling the dispersal of state funds. Are these funds being distributed to professors and research projects which are preparing students (the original justification of higher education) for the global economy, the 21st century multi-cultural environment? Are professors using their secure positions to create curriculum which will actually be necessary for today’s young adults? Instead, in many departments, elite and highly education professionals who theoretically should be dedicated to the transfer of knowledge, in practice often behave as an interest group of overly protected state-employees, resisting the „globalization” of knowledge.

The fact is that now the status of university professors is more defined by state contract type, rather than research or teaching quality! Higher status professors have long-term state contracts, lower status professors do not. The link between contract status and research and/or teaching quality is weak. In fact, many departments contain a clearly senior group of fully tenured professors with extensive privileges, logistically supported by younger, better educated non-tenured professors. The non-tenured professors though have more formal degrees, more international publications, and a greater capacity to conduct work in more than the local language. Discussions regarding new approaches to higher education at the state or EU level, in the local reality frequently devolve into issues of labor—employment status and ranking of the professorial ranks assumes first priority.

Professors of public educational institutions (as government workers, or well-organized labor union members) are large in number, and a strong political force during their country’s elections—and this force is often near uniform in its voting preferences. Thus, well into the 21st century, most key decisions relevant to European public universities are still being made at the state level: university budget

amount and allocation, tuition fees, number and discipline of professors, pay promotion and tenure, and admissions policies! And, elected representatives (usually with little background in higher education), advised by non-elected government bureaucrats and political party functionaries, determine the crucial financial and legal support structure of the institution of higher education. Changes are excruciatingly slow, privileged employment positions are protected, alterations to the standard flow of money through castes and academic hierarchies resisted—even while globalization pushes against the walls of academia.

Two basic challenges to the university system are: adaption to the Information Age and the pressure on state budgets due to six years now of global recession (OECD terminology). Past reports and analyses by experts may not have considered these two challenges—they are relatively new. But these two challenges are exerting pressure on public universities now, and thus their transformative power remains uncertain.

The Information Age brings these changes relevant to universities: increased information quantity, increased access to information outside of formalized channels gradually constructed in last two centuries. The digitalization of texts, and the easy access from a student's portable electronic device to a huge range of „knowledge bases“ has effectively broken the monopolization of knowledge by the state-supported brick-and-mortar institutions. Knowledge from experts that can be accessed via digital libraries and databases has effectively ended the monopolization of knowledge, by a state-sponsored professorial caste.

Information does not entail knowledge. Nevertheless, the disciplinary knowledge cannot not be sustained, at 21st century developed country standards, unless the knowledge base is accessible. Increasingly, the knowledge bases refer to archives and research in electronic formats, which do not respect state boundaries. The global language is English. State universities, with administrative and academic structures (soft and hard) built over generations, simply cannot now quickly accept and process the electronic (and in English language) tidal wave of information. The content, and its format are ever changing; providers of costly software platforms and databases have short life spans. The role of (state) universities as gatekeepers to academic knowledge, is effectively ending. Since the knowledge itself is accessed over global information networks, then the state fiscal and legal certifications of knowledge (e.g. the diploma, the degree) also risk to become irrelevant in economic and cultural terms.

Possibly ten years ago, one could have believed that state legislators would rise to the challenge of creating national policies that would allow their public universities to boldly enter into the digitized and globalized 21st century. Now, six years into the global recession (OECD terminology) and the related disarray in state legislatures, this hope has evaporated. Thus, the primary focal point for public higher education, the state, is largely ineffective in motivating public universities to thrive in the Knowledge Economy (again, hope not withstanding). Certainly there are professors and departments throughout the public university sector of Europe, which are adapting to globalized knowledge-flow—there are centers of excellence. But one could almost without qualification say that such

centers are developing despite involvement of the state administrative apparatus, and without qualification one could say that state support is not being provided efficiently. Whether viewed in terms of currency or human capital, there is much waste.

Higher education as a local entity, is historically defined with respect to a „national university system.“ This implies a focus on „national“ significance as a cultural priority, which results now in a monopolistic entity exercising its monopoly power at the institutional level, through the power of a dedicated ministry and the creation over decades of formidable legal hurdles to any alternative to the state. The national character of higher education did have positive functions—national identity is developed, sometimes the state economy is served, policy and general development can have a state point-of-reference. Independent of the past positive aspects of a state monopoly, today’s reality is a national system of higher education offering stagnant management models, resistance to change, and evidence of being in need for urgent re-examination.

The real challenge is to elevate local values into the global context, and to insert the global context into a local reality. The intangible and hard to measure benefits of higher education, must be brought into a local reality. The state as intermediary is not necessary, although leaving the structure provided by state status may seem too provocative. Development in higher education now, requires that knowledge economy assets are linked directly to local culture and realities.

Conclusion

In the past, the emphasis of higher education institutions was teaching, in the future the emphasis is on learning. Learning implies education which is a process, rather than a system. The clearest example of an outdated educational system is the monopolistic model of public universities in which campuses and professors were required to develop relationships with the state for their legal, fiscal and hence cultural legitimacy. Transforming from this old model of the last two centuries, requires clearing the obstructions from the out-of-date state models and bureaucracy. The goal is for the local reality to connect directly with the global. (This is a phenomenon that state structures and bureaucracy do not like, they are opposing it vigorously).

The realization of the new model of higher education requires changes in operative structures. The traditional university campus changes into: a main campus with branches; multi-campus programs; international campuses; corporate alliances; for-profit universities; networked universities, and more. Knowledge transfer from experts to students, is consequently unfolding primarily through ICT (information communication technology) with the use of on-line universities and programs, and information exchange forums.

Turning to North America, where the state system is not the exclusive higher education model, one can see the rapid growth of the MOOCs (massive open

(enrollment) online courses—a term dating just to the year 2008) as a strong indication that the standard higher education model is mutating. The participation of world class research universities including Stanford and M.I.T. just since year 2011, in MOOC course development lends further support to this premise. In North America, where state and private universities have co-existed for centuries, the MOOC model spreads in both systems. But in Europe, where the state has a monopoly on accreditation, the model hardly exists. Thus young Europeans adults enroll in MOOCs based in North America—further advancing the global reach of the knowledge based culture.

If the new scenario means process, not system (and this is the difficult part to understand and to accept, politically and even ethically for Europeans, because the past model developed over centuries and is strongly linked to political-cultural values), the implications are multiple, clusterized and liquid, or even one could say „gigantic.” Higher education based on learning and not teaching is in fact the best possible outcome arising due to the ICT-based knowledge society. This means that higher education players must accept the re-conceptualization of knowledge transfer, a transfer that has to happen „here and now” and that constitutes a „continuous and permanent life education” in which the student is not at the bottom rung of a system. A student is also a client—a client with expectations. The acquisition of knowledge does have to be real, measurable, and expendable.

Nowadays it is already clear and accepted that knowledge transfer is happening under the three main principles: measurable, mutable, and mutant. Experience education based on mobility is therefore the path for creating knowledge transfer in higher education, also from the local up to global. In this perspective the „teaching” factor will survive in acquiring the features of being: blended, branded, virtual, social, mobile, exchangeable, and practicable.

The coming decade will see a range of attempts to alter the existing state model of higher education. The players will be the traditional institutions, small start-ups, non-academic entities which develop academic portals (whether the bricks and mortar type, or purely virtual), and hybrids thereof. Not all attempts will be successful, but all players will fundamentally reshape the higher education landscape.

Streszczenie

Nowy paradygmat (model) rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego w XXI wieku, dokonuje się nie tylko na poziomie lokalnym. Procesy globalizacji widoczne są głównie w sferze gospodarczej i kulturalnej, procesom tym poddany został również lokalny wymiar życia uniwersyteckiego, pojawiły się nowe zjawiska, dotąd niespotykane. Wpływ procesów globalizacji zmienia lokalne realia, jest niemożliwy do kontroli. Następuje przenikanie czynników globalnych, są one adoptowane do lokalnych środowisk, zmieniając miejscowe standardy. Jesteśmy obecnie w obliczu skomplikowanego procesu, którego celem jest obsługa wartości niematerialnych (np. wiedzy) i zarządzanie procesami

niematerialnymi (koncepty kształcenia). Powszechnie wiadomo, że wiedza jest podstawą rozwoju na całym świecie. Realizacja tego założenia polega na podniesieniu wartości lokalnych w kontekście procesów globalnych i pogodzeniu wartości globalnych z potrzebami lokalnymi. Współczesna koncepcja rozwoju na poziomie lokalnym i globalnym przyznaje kluczową rolę wyższym uczelniom. Szkolnictwo wyższe musi być poddane procesowi transformacji. Jest bowiem rdzeniem procesu globalizacji i jako czynnik systemowy, uniwersytet nie może być „fabryką wiedzy”. Z tej perspektywy uniwersytet jako lokalna wartość stoi przed burzliwymi zmianami. Powinien spełniać wyjątkową rolę – podmiotu, instytucji narodowej. Należy pamiętać, że wiele razy uniwersytety odegrały zasadniczą rolę w procesie budowania tożsamości narodowej. Przyszłość krajowego szkolnictwa wyższego wymaga poważnych zmian, przejścia z pozycji lokalnej do wymiaru globalnego.

Higher Education: the Challenge to Link Global and Local

Abstract

The path of development for 21st century models of higher education no longer unfolds only at the local level. Within the economic and cultural context of globalization, the local dimension of university life has been impacted by external extraordinary phenomena. On one hand, such impact has obliged the local realities, to consider objective and meritocratic scrutiny. On the other end, the penetration of the global factor into the local environment has broken over local barriers. We are now facing the complicated challenge of having to handle intangible assets (e.g. knowledge) and managing intangible processes (learning concepts): knowledge is the foundation of development, worldwide. The task consists in how to elevate local values into the global context, and how to insert global values into the local dimension. In this scenario the significance of higher education is crucial, today, and tomorrow. Higher education is undergoing a transformation not seen, since the „university” emerged as „the factory of knowledge”. Higher education has become major systemic factor and strategic core in globalization. In this perspective, the university as a local reference point, is facing a turbulent future; and its role as a national institution, needs urgent re-examination. Once upon the time universities played an essential role into the nation building process. Not anymore, not now, not in the future. The national dimension of higher education has been eroded. The future of higher education remains uncertain and liquid indeed, but certainly moving from a local to global position.

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Rada Wydawnicza Krakowskiej Akademii im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego:
Klemens Budzowski, Maria Kapiszewska, Zbigniew Maciąg, Jacek M. Majchrowski

Recenzja: prof. nadzw. dr hab. Urszula Wąsikiewicz-Rusnak

Projekt okładki: Oleg Aleksejczuk

Adiustacja: Filip Szczurek

Korekta: Margerita Krasnowolska

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Księgarnia U Frycza

Kampus Krakowskiej Akademii im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego

ul. Gustawa Herlinga-Grudzińskiego 1, 30-705 Kraków

tel./faks: (12) 252 45 93

e-mail: ksiegarnia@kte.pl

Skład: Oleg Aleksejczuk

Druk i oprawa: Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne sp. z o.o.

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