DOES GLOBALISED EDUCATION BENEFIT DEVELOPMENT?

INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT AND POWER IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

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Introduction

The 21st century marks the arrival of the knowledge society and the transformation of knowledge into a new form of capital. Consequently knowledge is also a key asset for development, crucial in enabling developing countries to improve their economic perform-ance and political systems and to catch up with developed countries. Given the globalised nature of today's world, the internationalisation of higher education is a key strategy in providing developing countries with access to knowledge.

These and similar assumptions are rarely questioned in development literature. Although seemingly self-evident they may yet prove inaccurate, depending on the specific societal context and power relation framework in which they are placed. The following introduc-tory considerations attempt to analyze their validity by examining whether there is a direct causal relationship between the internationalisation of higher education and international development.

First, various processes that accompany the internationalisation of higher education will be analyzed. Then, the effects of globalisation and internationalisation will be summarised in relation to development processes in different global contexts. Finally, the question is raised as to how internationalisation strategies need to be shaped in order to be beneficial for development.

Internationalisation, globalisation and commoditisation: different, but interrelated

In order to fully understand the character of internationalisation in higher education, it is necessary to relate it to a number of other different, yet intertwining processes. In fact internationalisation cannot be analyzed independently from the process of globalisation, which constitutes the fundamental context in which the internationalisation of higher education has been taking place.

Globalisation is a multifaceted concept whose definition is somewhat disputed (Tikly 2001). It is generally described as a process that has re-shaped economic, political and cultural structures throughout the world. Central to this concept is the shift of the organisation of power from national to supranational levels and from the political to the economic arena.

In education, globalisation mainly refers to the emergence of different forms of trans-bor-der educational provision and of a global education market, which tends to blur national

systems of education (Varghese 2009:14) (1). In practice, the globalisation of education has taken the form of commoditisation, i.e. the transformation of education into a commodity. At the beginning of the 21st century, higher education appears to have become a market-determined process (Altbach 2009:ii; Varghese 2009:9).

Knight (2006:47) differentiates between four processes which she describes as the commercialisation, privatisation, marketisation and liberalisation of education. These processes imply changes at different levels of education, e.g. changes (liberalisation) relating to the legal framework and governance of educational institutions, or to their internal organisation and pedagogical processes (marketisation). At first sight, these processes apply at the national rather than the global level. However, as components of the overall process of converting education into a globally tradable good, they might as well be considered as preconditions for educational globalisation.

As for internationalisation, it is generally described as the process of increased international cooperation and mobility of both students and faculty and the enhanced international orientation of curricula and programme structures (Mohamedbhai 2003:153).

Compared to globalisation or commoditisation, the notion of internationalisation in higher education seems to be much more 'neutral' in terms of politically sensitive implications. Yet, a number of issues arise questioning this assumption. Firstly, internationalisation as a process and strategy is subject to overall power relations and the asymmetric patterns of global knowledge architecture. Unless deliberately orientated, it will by nature follow dominant patterns of educational provision, structuring and content. As will be analyzed in more detail below, under given circumstances, in the majority of cases internationalisation implies the alignment of national higher education in non-Western countries with dominant Western models. In a few cases it refers to cooperation between non-Western countries or regions, but mostly shaped on Western educational models. Hardly ever does internationalisation mean the introduction of non-Western dimensions into Western higher education.

Secondly, and related to the first observation, the question arises whether internationalisation processes can take place independently from commoditisation pressures in higher education. In fact, besides following the traditional North-South (or West-South) paradigm, most internationalisation processes in practice abide by the dominant market orientation rationale. While affecting higher education in most countries around the globe, this last phenomenon generates particular concern among students, faculty and the wider population in Europe, as will be described below.

Educational globalisation – a story of growing disparities…

Different features of educational globalisation point to the same conclusion: globalisation has widened disparities rather diminished them. Varghese (2009:8), drawing on recent UNESCO and OECD data, notes that higher education rapidly expanded worldwide during recent decades. The number of students enrolled in higher education institutions more than doubled between 1991 and 2005. However, expansion has been uneven, with the lowest expansion rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Enrolment rates confirm that the world is still substantially divided when it comes to higher education.

Table 1. Gross Enrolment Ratio in Tertiary Education 1999 and 2007 (in %)

Region	1999	2007
Developing countries	11	18
Countries in transition	35	58
Developed countries	55	67
Sub-Saharan Africa	4	6
Caribbean	6	7
South and West Asia	7	11
East Asia	14	26
Central Asia	18	24
Arab States	19	22
Latin America	21	34
Central and Eastern Europe	38	62
Pacific	47	53
North America & Western Europe	61	70

Source: UNESCO: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010:378

These numbers show that there has indeed been rapid expansion in higher education in-cluding in the developing world, but transition countries show the fastest rate of growth, and the poorest regions show the slowest.

There has also been rapid growth in private and cross-border provision in tertiary educa-tion. The number of students consuming private domestic or foreign higher education has doubled in the last decade (Varghese 2009:9). However, the main direction of fee-paying student flows is from South and East to North and West, with the US still being the most attractive provider of higher education, although its share declined from 25% in 2000 to 21.9% in 2005 (Varghese 2009:19). In 2007, seven OECD countries (USA, UK, Germany, France, Australia, Canada, Japan) accounted for 68.8% of incoming cross-border students. While China sends by far the greatest number of students abroad, sub-Saharan Africa has the most mobile student population, with one out of every 16 students studying abroad. By contrast, only 0.4% of North American students (or one out of 250) study overseas (UNESCO Institute of Statistics – UIS 2006).

In terms of economic revenues, these statistics indicate a transfer of financial resources from the South/East to the North/West. They also point to a loss in human resources, resulting from students and staff leaving their home country to study, teach or research in another country. The impact of brain drain on development is a subject of controversy. Various studies (Docquier/Sekkat 2006, Hunger 2003, Nunn 2005, UNCTAD 2007) point to the fact that the effects of brain drain depend substantially on the context. While highly populated and middle income countries may profit from brain circulation and knowledge transfer, the contrary is true for small and low income countries. They suffer from the loss of essential individual, institutional and financial capacities in crucial sectors such as health and education. The Caribbean, Central America, sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific are the regions with the highest rates of skilled migration. In sub-Saharan Africa the ratio between low and high skilled migration is the highest worldwide, standing at 1% vs. 13.4% respectively (Docquier/Sekkat 2006:11).

Comparing these numbers with the above data on enrolment ratios in higher education, the downward spiral for the weakest countries of educational globalisation becomes apparent: those countries with the lowest student enrolment rates have the highest rates of skilled migration.

Recent data on research capacities confirm these patterns (UIS 2009). While the total number of researchers has increased from 5.8 million worldwide in 2002 to 7.1 million in 2007, the share of sub-Saharan researchers (excluding South Africa) has remained at an insignificant 0.6%. Asia's share has grown from 35.7% to 41.4%, with China accounting for 20.1% (14.0% in 2002). China's growth comes at the expense of North America and Europe. However research density is still by far highest in Japan, North America and Europe. The EU, the USA and Japan represent about 70% of global expenditure on research and development (R&D), whereas Africa accounts for a negligible share.

In terms of the governance and structuring of higher education, globalisation has introduced substantial changes in many parts of the world. Altbach (2009) describes global trends such as university massification, diversification in terms of the governance and funding of higher education, growing university-industry links, increasing emphasis on cost recovery and tuition fees and the growing influence of international university rankings. Massification has led to lower educational standards, especially in developing countries, where a growing proportion of university teachers only hold bachelor degrees and are forced by low salary levels to seek additional income elsewhere. Universities are increasingly run like businesses, which entails a transfer of decision-making power away from academic staff to the benefit of managers and administrators. This process of restructuring higher education systems potentially affects the very role universities and institutions of higher learning have played in contemporary societies. They may lose their function as universal generators and distributors of knowledge in the societies which they serve.

Indeed, privatisation and commoditisation have entailed a fragmentation process for higher education systems, especially in poor countries. By their very nature, for-profit institutions do not base their activities on national priorities or needs, but on economic expectations. This has resulted in cost-intensive disciplines like sciences and medicine remaining with

increasingly underfunded public universities. Ogachi (2009:344) describes this process in East Africa: an analysis of foreign private degree courses has shown that 'most forms of international higher education institutions in East Africa have avoided offering courses in pure sciences where the region has critical demand for knowledge'.

Gentili (2005:16) asserts that university reforms in Latin America have introduced a techno-cratic concept of quality, deprived of any political and social dimension. Quality is reduced to a set of academic and administrative standards, to the implementation of evaluation systems and to whether or not the university manages to establish ties with business.

Another important feature of globalised higher education is the increased employment of information and communication technologies (ICT). Yet, as Altbach (2009: xv) notes, this trend has exacerbated disparities between rich and poor countries. Poor countries are often not in a position to cope with the high costs and infrastructural requirements necessary to effectively apply ICT in higher education and are consequently left even further behind.

In terms of social equity, growing disparities are apparent in many regions. Due to increasing tuition fees and the rising cost of living on the one hand, and the decreasing quality of accessible public and private education on the other hand, access to good quality higher education has narrowed for poor and underprivileged population strata (Altbach 2008:12; for Latin America Vizcaíno G. 2007:266).

The recent economic crisis will aggravate the above-mentioned disparities, with the least developed countries being most affected (Altbach 2009:xvii). It is likely that both government and private spending on education will decrease, as will that of private households and, presumably, aid expenditure on education. Due to growing budget constraints, tuition fees will rise and student loan systems will come under pressure. Quality will deteriorate in the wake of cost-cutting practices (Altbach 2009; Varghese 2009).

To sum up, globalisation has led to a process of polarisation on various levels. Economically, disparities between rich and poor have been widening (Robertson et al 2007:xiii). This is particularly apparent in Latin America, which 'continues to be one of the most unequal regions of the planet' (Davidson-Harden/Schugurensky 2009:13). A process of educational polarisation has run parallel to this. Tarabini (2009:210) notes that globalisation has increased the importance of education through an 'increasing demand for high-qualified jobs, [but globalisation also] creates a parallel demand for low-qualified jobs'. Hence, globalisation of education has turned out to be a key tool in consolidating the asymmetric global division of labour between North and South, as extensively demonstrated above.

Educational polarisation is, however, apparent not only as a growing educational divide between North and South, but also in the gap between emerging economies and the least developed countries. It can apply at a regional or national level. In Latin America, and this is true for other regions as well, Davidson-Harden and Schugurensky (2009:16) identify inequality in educational access and attainment and growing divides along the lines of gender, class, environment (urban/rural) and identity/race.

….and increasing homogenisation

Paradoxically, parallel to the processes of educational polarisation there has also been a process of global homogenisation. Tarabini (2009:206) describes growing convergence in educational discourses and practices due to the emergence of powerful supra-national agents and a consequent loss of decision-making power from the state as the main actor in education.

This is primarily true for lower levels of education, particularly for primary education, where a 'Globally Structured Educational Agenda' (Dale 2000) is evident in international educational initiatives such as *Education for All* or the UN Millennium Goals. In recent decades, homogenisation pressure has been exerted on the governments of developing countries, and on bi- and multilateral development agencies, under the banners of 'harmonisation' and 'alignment'. In developed countries a similar process has taken place through international assessment tests, such as PISA, advocated and run by the OECD. As a consequence, room for alternative and nationally determined education agendas has narrowed in developed and developing countries alike.

Homogenisation also applies to higher education, albeit in different forms than for the lower educational levels. As for developing countries, higher education was almost entirely eliminated from the international development agenda in the 1980s, since when the focus has been on primary education. During this process, the World Bank has imposed itself as the leading agent in education at the expense of UNESCO. It may seem as another paradox: despite advocating the abandonment of higher education for many years, especially in Africa, the World Bank has substantially influenced higher education. Assié-Lumuba describes in this volume how Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by the World Bank and other international financial institutions have left the African higher education systems in ruins, and that World Bank policy has not ceased to be detrimental even after the restoration of higher education to the development agenda. Gentili (2005:15) asserts the key role of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in determining Latin American higher education policies.

Multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD have become leading policy-makers in education. In developing and transition countries, the World Bank directly influences education and higher education through policy advice and loan conditionalities. In developed countries, the impact of OECD policy advice might be more complex, with less direct influence, especially in higher education. However, both organisations, as well as other IFIs, have helped to determine a global agenda in higher education based on concepts driven by considerations of finance and competitiveness.

As shown above, this homogenised agenda in higher education is unbalanced. Samoff (2005) describes how 'universal' assessment tests, standardisation processes and other mechanisms of international comparison, measurement and ranking are based on Western, and increasingly the Anglo-Saxon, understanding of education and science. This not only disadvantages other traditions in terms of examination results and ranking positions. It also eliminates sensitivity to the importance of locally determined knowledge production.

Internationalisation – perceived as neutral, apparently biased

Can the internationalisation of higher education be unaffected by the factors described above? Ogachi (2009:333) proposes to 'deconstruct the notion of an altruistic internationalization of higher education process'.

Indeed, there is no single process of internationalisation; it assumes various forms based on different rationales and differing goals. However, some patterns predominate, and the overall global conditions described above set the framework for all approaches, as different as they may be. Hence, internationalisation cannot be neutral.

Jowi (2009:266) notes different rationales of internationalisation, depending on the region, the country or even the institution. Unlike in Europe, where the economic rationale has been predominant in recent years, African universities tend to base their internationalisation strategies on academic rather than economic rationales. This might be mainly due to the perceived need in Africa to catch up academically with other regions as a precondition to participating in global competition.

Apart from different rationales, internationalisation also assumes varying forms and has differing impacts on the higher education systems of individual societies, amongst others dependent on the position held by that country or region in the global power structure. Hence the appearance and meaning of internationalisation varies, amongst others on whether it takes place in developing, developed or transition countries. These three perspectives on internationalisation in higher education will be analysed in more detail in the first part of this volume.

As for the first perspective, Assié-Lumumba notes in her contribution to this volume that international orientation has always been a major feature of higher education in Africa. This applies to the majority of the post-colonial world, where colonialism has destroyed or marginalized pre-colonial forms of higher learning to a greater or lesser extent. Today's higher education mostly dates back to colonial times and consequently has been modelled on university systems in colonial countries. Assié-Lumumba emphasises the fact that Western domination has not ceased with de-colonisation; in fact, the opposite is true. Accordingly, and in contrast to current trends in development discourse, she terms Western educational and economic policy towards Africa 'colonial', pointing to the continuing asymmetries of power.

While Assié-Lumumba asserts neo-colonial rationales and patterns in educational globalisation rather than in internationalisation, other scholars also ascribe similar features to internationalisation. Ogachi (2009:334) describes current debates in Africa as revolving around the fear that 'higher education imperialism [could lead] to weaker systems in developing countries [giving] way to stronger ones from industrialized countries, in terms of institutional set-ups and […] knowledge packages.' Furthermore, she notes that 'internationalization may erode gains already made due to its homogenizing characteristics' (Ogachi 2009:335).

Obamba and Mwema (2009:364) examine North-South research partnerships, one of the main features of internationalisation in developing countries, and express concern over

economic as well as epistemological asymmetries, 'whereby non-Western knowledge from the poor world regions has been systematically relegated to a peripheral epistemic position' (Obamba/Mwema 2009:364).

On the other hand, internationalisation also provides opportunities for developing countries, most of which relate to the potential enhancement of research capacity through participation in various forms of networks and collaborations (Jowi 2009:275). In this regard, the multitude of regional forms of cooperation now emerging is considered particularly promising.

To sum up, unbalanced power relations are a major feature of internationalisation in developing countries. This does not mean, however, that internationalisation should be avoided. The crucial question is rather, how should these imbalances be addressed in order for developing countries to capitalise on the opportunities brought by internationalisation.

The second perspective describes internationalisation in transition countries. Jakab, in this volume, discusses the case of Hungary and touches on a number of countries in South-East Europe. Features are similar in all cases. The internationalisation of higher education is predominantly shaped by European Union policies and by the Bologna Process, an initiative by European (not only EU) governments to align European systems of higher education. The question here is whether the harmonisation of European academic systems impacts national universities in such a way as to enhance their contribution to overall development or not. As shown by Jakab, the university model proposed by the Bologna Process implies substantial changes to existing systems, changes for which those systems are often inadequately prepared.

The main problem arises, however, in the wider context of EU and EU member states' higher education policies. In accordance with the Lisbon Strategy (2), these are targeted to enhance the EU's economic competitiveness. Albeit not an EU initiative, the Bologna Process fits within these policies and accommodates their aims. Even in non-EU member states, EU policies set the guidelines for national policymaking, either through EU accession requirements or by means of supra-national alignments, the Bologna Process among them. The medium and long-term consequences of tying higher education policies to parameters primarily driven by issues of competitiveness are highly controversial topics, as will be described below. In Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, potential risks may be even more apparent, since the recent economic crisis has hit this region substantially harder than Western Europe. As Jakab notes, in the absence of overall economic policies targeted at social equity and wellbeing, higher education institutions are not in a position to fulfil their potential developmental role. On the contrary, they consolidate rising inequalities and disparities.

The European Bologna Process has become a reference for similar efforts in other regions, such as ENLACES in Latin America, harmonisation strategies in Africa and initiatives between ministers of education in the Asia-Pacific region (Altbach 2009:iii). Two questions arise, however, with regard to developmental goals. Firstly, would copying a European model perpetuate the traditional pattern of North-South academic transfer previously described, which does not necessarily correspond to local needs? In this respect, Alou (2009:8 and 15) asserts that African reform efforts modelled on the Bologna Process should be considered as

the products of a wholesale policy transfer to African countries of models for higher education organisation that were developed elsewhere. Such policy transfers tend to consolidate the receiving state's dependence rather than bolster its autonomy.

The second question points to whether the Bologna Process serves to strengthen or weaken the developmental role of European universities – a question examined by Jakab and Verger in this volume for Eastern and Western Europe respectively.

As in Eastern Europe, internationalisation strategies in Western Europe are part of wider competitiveness-oriented reforms, e.g. those recommended by the Bologna Process. These bring about a major restructuring process in educational institutions, a process which threatens to abandon the very foundations of traditional Western higher education in terms of its epistemological orientation and socio-political principles. The traditional paradigm of the university as a place of universal knowledge is increasingly being displaced by the concept of market-oriented training institutions. Graduate courses are intended primarily to accommodate the needs of the job market, while access to research opportunities tends to be restricted to elites. Liessmann (2006) notes in an overall critique of current university reforms that, as a result of restructuring, knowledge is increasingly being standardised, fragmented and ultimately industrialised to fit the principles of commodity production. What is lost in the course of this process is the very essence of knowledge generation. Being intimately tied to the human capability of comprehension and cognition, it requires a spatial and temporal organisation incompatible with the patterns of industrial reproduction.

Apart from these profound epistemological changes, another traditional feature of higher education is at risk. In many European countries, free access to higher education was (and is still) considered a major democratic achievement in the aftermath of World War II, and is consequently viewed as key to social equity and cohesion. Under current reforms, free access is giving way to various forms of selectivity. As a result, higher education as a public good and the societal responsibility of universities are tending to be replaced by the primacy of corporate interests.

This gives rise to concerns about the developmental role of higher education institutions in a dual sense. On the one hand, loss of the traditional societal and intellectual role of universities and concomitantly reduced access through various forms of selectivity may leave universities unable to respond to the overall demands of the societies in which they are embedded. Parallel to a general and already visible trend in rising social disparities in Europe, institutions of higher education may increasingly serve to exacerbate these disparities, rather than to mitigate them.

On the other hand, the role of European universities as development actors on a global scale is being further undermined. Verger in this volume examines the potential contradictions between educational globalisation and the EU's principle of policy coherence for development. On a more general level, competitiveness-driven reforms narrow the possibilities for European universities to engage in developmentally relevant activities. International partnerships are most profitable if undertaken with leading institutions in the powerful West or the promising East; seldom is there enough motivation to seek cooperation with the lagging

South. And last but not least, the room for development-relevant knowledge production, particularly in those areas of social sciences which are not application-oriented, is constantly being downsized in the rush to provide excellent and profitable research findings useful for economic competition.

Conclusion – What kind of internationalisation benefits development?

Against the above background, the assumption of a direct causal relationship between the internationalisation of higher education and improved access to knowledge appears to be simplistic. The same is true for the assumption of a direct causal relationship between knowledge and development. Rather, both prove to be highly dependent on the specific organisation of power structures prevailing at global, national and local levels.

In conclusion, the question arises as to what form the internationalisation of higher education would need to take in order to serve development. Leaving aside the underlying controversy on development models, the crucial issue to be addressed is that of the asymmetries described above. If the internationalisation of higher education does not want to become a further lever for rising global disparities, it has to be deliberately targeted and re-designed to reverse them. This includes establishing appropriate policies in order to break with colonial patterns of North-South cooperation, to counter inequality of access as well as educational polarisation, to replace the dominant competitiveness-driven rationale of internationalisation by a democratic and inclusive understanding and, last but not least, to preserve the very nature of higher education as a process of comprehensive knowledge generation and transfer.

Clearly, under current global power relations the above reversal of trends appears somewhat unrealistic. What gives hope though is a growing discussion in Europe about the need for alternative forms of higher education reform and internationalisation. Not surprisingly, European students are among the main actors in this discussion, calling for a higher education system that preserves the societal and epistemological achievements of traditional university structures while at the same time accommodating the changed reality of a globalised world.

In the South, a multitude of internationalisation efforts is emerging which follow regional or South-South patterns rather than those traced by colonialism. Many of them are still modelled on the competitiveness-driven internationalisation rationale described earlier. Others, such as for example the Latin American ALBA initiative (Muhr/Verger 2009:83) or the cooperation between Latin American, African and Asian councils for social sciences (3), seek to establish partnerships of mutual interest in a dual aspiration: to alter the correlation of forces to the benefit of the South and to strengthen genuine local knowledge production in the interest of local development.

(1) For a more detailed description of various forms of transborder educational provision see Knight 2006.

(2) The *Lisbon Strategy* is a development framework for the European Union. Its main goal is to make the EU 'the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world (…) by 2010' (European Council 2000)

(3) 'Programa Sur-Sur': http://www.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/areas-de-trabajo/area-de-relaciones-internacionales/ programa-sur-sur-de-cooperacion-academica (Last retrieved November 2009)

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