Critical Perspectives on Transnational Higher Education

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Transnational higher education is a specific form of internationalisation which treats education as a product which can be packaged and sold abroad. It accelerated in the 1990s, precipitated by the marketisation of higher education, a neo-liberal economic agenda, and the forces of globalisation. Transnational higher education, however, is not without controversy. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to present critical perspectives on transnational higher education. It begins by outlining the rationales for transnational higher education. The article then examines the impact of transnational higher education on its various stakeholders. Finally, it enumerates the many criticisms of transnational higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of higher education might be considered as old as the university itself. The University of Oxford, for example, welcomed its first international student, Emo of Friesland, in 1190 (University of Oxford, 2014). In medieval Europe, scholars often spent their sabbaticals abroad, enjoying time in "Oxford, Tübingen or the Sorbonne to pursue their scholarly activities and access the vast resources of the university libraries" (Harris, 2008, p. 352). And Sultan Ulug Beg, the 14th century ruler of a vast area of Central Asia from Kyrghyzstan to Afghanistan, built one of the world's first observatories in Samarkand along the Silk Road, thereby attracting researchers from far and wide to study astronomy and geometry (Golden, 2011).

The 1990s, however, ushered in the latest era in the internationalisation of higher education—an era in which education itself is considered a product which can be packaged and sold internationally (Cudmore, 2005). According to the Council of Europe (2002), this 'transnational' higher education—sometimes also called cross-border higher education or borderless higher education (Lourtie, 2001)—includes "all types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based" (Council of Europe, 2002). It is "education provision from one country offered in another" (ACA, 2008, p. 57). For some experts, it also includes foreign student mobility (Naidoo, 2009a). But in short, transnational higher education is about the international trade of higher education.

Transnational higher education was triggered in the United Kingdom by Tony Blair, who launched a worldwide campaign to increase the number of foreign students in British universities (Ayoubi and Massoud, 2007). Likewise, government changes in higher education funding encouraged Australian universities to begin offering their degrees internationally (Currie and Newson, 1998; Smart and Ang, 1993), especially in the markets of Southeast Asia. The inclusion of education as a tradable product in the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) 1995 General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)—the culmination of the Uruguay Round of negotiations which began in 1986—gave additional momentum to its spread (Anandakrishnan, 2008).

Transnational higher education is now a widely-recognised concept and a fast growing global phenomenon (Chen, 2015). Indeed, recent decades have witnessed an explosion in the number of universities 'going abroad'. Weill Cornell Medical College, for example, was opened in Qatar by U.S.-based Cornell University in 2001. The Open University Business School of the United Kingdom now has more than 30,000 students in more than 100 countries who are studying by distance education (Open University, 2014). And the number of students studying internationally (Husain, 2007) is expected to reach 6.7 million by 2020 (OECD, 2013).

Transnational higher education is also a multi-billion dollar industry (Alderman, 2001). Trade in higher education accounts for 3% of global services exports (Vincent-Lancrin, 2005). Higher education ranks as Australia's fourth largest export behind coal, iron ore, and gold (Group of Eight, 2014). And the more than 1 million international students who studied at American institutions of higher education in the 2016-2017 academic year contributed almost 40 billion USD to the American economy, and supported more than 450 000 American jobs (NAFSA, 2017).

Proponents of transnational higher education also claim that it has myriad societal and scientific benefits (See Adam, 2001; Alam *et al.*, 2013; Husain, 2007; Naidoo, 2010b; Shams and Huisman, 2012; and Wildavsky, 2010.), including the development of local skills, higher standards of living, transfers of knowledge and technologies, the increased access to education, the improved competitiveness of local institutions, higher national education levels, the reduction of skills migration and brain drain, capacity-building, new research opportunities, more innovation, the lessening of capital outflow, the mitigation of pressure on local education systems, and higher institutional quality. Writing about transitional economies broadly and about Russia specifically, Saginova and Belyansky (2008) suggested that transnational higher education can facilitate the development of the university sector in nations which are in transition, which in turn can make positive contributions to society.

Transnational higher education, however, is not without controversy. Indeed, questions about the rationales for transnational higher education have been raised. The impact of transnational higher education on its various stakeholders has been scrutinised. And many criticisms of transnational higher education have been voiced.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to present critical perspectives on transnational higher education. It begins by outlining the rationales for transnational higher education. The article then examines the impact of transnational higher education on its various stakeholders. Finally, it enumerates the many criticisms of transnational higher education.

RATIONALES FOR TRANSNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

The distinction between globalisation, internationalisation, and transnationalisation has often been fuzzy in the literature (de Wit, 2000). Mitchell and Nielsen (2012), however, produced some clarity, arguing that "internationalization is seen as something which higher education institutions **do** while globalization is something that is **happening to them"** (par. 2). Indeed, internationalisation can be viewed as a process, activity, or exercise (van der Wende, 2002) in which a higher education institution engages; globalisation is a set of environmental forces within which internationalisation occurs. Transnationalisation, therefore, is not equal to but instead a "component of the wider phenomenon of the internationalization of higher education" (British Council, 2013, p. 6).

For Yang (2008), the emergence of transnational higher education—as a distinct component of internationalisation—signalled a dramatic change in the nature of higher education. Indeed, it switched the emphasis from the internationalisation of *higher education* to the *internationalisation* of higher education. Or more pointedly, it moved from *making* higher education international to *taking* higher education international.

Knight and de Wit (1995) noted that the internationalisation of higher education has historically followed four different approaches:

1. activity—the addition of curricular and extra-curricular offerings such as international exchanges and joint research,
2. ethos—the creation of an international culture in an institution,
3. competency—the development of international skills and attitudes among students and staff, and
4. process—the integration of an international dimension in all university programs, policies, and procedures.

Similarly, Hamrick (1999) suggested that the internationalisation of higher education has historically focused on:

1. international studies—the establishment of internationalisation as an academic subject (area studies or cultural studies, for example),
2. facilitation of interaction—the furnishing of opportunities for shared experiences (study abroad and foreign student recruitment, for example),
3. international assistance—the provision of foreign aid (instructor exchanges, for example), and
4. preparation of students—the promotion of the 'global citizen' (internationally-themed dormitories, for example).

Transnational higher education, by contrast, views the internationalisation of higher education through a product lens. Indeed, while the historical view of the internationalisation of higher education has focused on the injection of an international dimension into university teaching/training, research, or service functions (Knight, 1997), transnational higher education considers higher education as a product which "can be manufactured, bought, and sold" (Muller, 1995)—that which Galway (2000) called the commodification of higher education. It acknowledges that commercial forces have a legitimate, if not dominant, role in higher education (Altbach and Knight, 2007).

This new product lens is mirrored in the significant, if subtle, semantic shift of terminology. The historical view of the internationalisation of higher education resulted in various descriptors of higher education, including international, comparative, cross-cultural, global, and multi-cultural, all of which allude to the potential 'international-ness' of higher education. Transnational higher education instead takes the nation as its defining unit, which, when combined with the Latin prefix *trans* which means across or beyond, intimates the very tangible movement of higher education across national boundaries.

It is evident that transnational higher education also follows a different set of rationales for internationalisation. Knight and de Wit (1995) argued that the internationalisation of higher education has historically been driven by economic and political rationales, and by cultural and educational rationales. Economic and political rationales include:

1. economic growth and investment in the future economy—the internationalisation of higher education has a positive effect on international trade, bilateral economic relations, national competitiveness, and technological development;
2. human resources globalisation—the internationalisation of higher education is necessary, to equip students for a global labor market;
3. foreign policy—the internationalisation of higher education is a form of soft diplomacy, improving a nation's brand image;
4. revenue generation—the internationalisation of higher education earns additional income, especially with full fee-paying foreign students; and
5. educational demand—the internationalisation of higher education serves students from nations which have limited capacity.

Cultural and educational rationales include:

1. cultural function—the internationalisation of education spreads social values;
2. development of the individual—the internationalisation of higher education is necessary, in order for students to learn about themselves by confronting alternative world-views;

3. research and teaching—the internationalisation of higher education reflects the universal human enterprise of advancing knowledge and understanding;
4. institution-building—the internationalisation of higher education strengthens the structures and systems of an institution; and
5. quality improvement—the internationalisation of higher education can enhance the content and delivery of teaching and can increase the rigour of research.

Transnational higher education, by contrast, is premised on a different set of rationales. Indeed, transnational higher education is most often associated with marketisation, neo-liberalism, and globalisation (Moutsios, 2008). As summarised by Sidhu and Christie (2014a), higher education has now embraced "neo-liberal funding regimes, marketisation, cross-border movements of students as well as institutions, the centrality of information and communications technology and the challenges of a knowledge economy more generally" (p. 182).

Marketisation

Starting with the marketisation of higher education, it is clear that transnational higher education has embraced—perhaps even accelerated—the paradigmatic shift from government-controlled systems of higher education in which higher education is for the public good, to a market-based system in which higher education is a good for the public (Jongbloed, 2003; Kehm, 2003; Altbach and Knight, 2007). It exploits the commodification of higher education (ESIB, 2011), spurring universities to market their wares (Alexander and Rizvi, 1993). It is certainly not isolated to the Western World; there is evidence of the marketisation of higher education in Russia (Hare and Lugachev, 1999), Eastern and Central Europe (Czarniawska and Genell, 2002), Israel (Oplatka, 2002), Asia (Gray *at al.*, 2003), and Africa (Ivy, 2001; Maringe, 2004; Maringe and Foskett, 2002). In summary, it re-defines the economic narrative of higher education— "[i]nstrumental reasoning, new regimes of accountability, and strict adherence to the economic imperative are the defining features of the contemporary university. Competitiveness, excellence and performance are central to its survival" (Harris, 2008, p. 347).

Stromquist (2002) argued that this marketisation of higher education can be explained partly from a social equity perspective. State-funded higher education, he contested, typically benefits the upper and middle classes of society, and consequently, it is intrinsically unfair. Similarly, Altbach and Davis (1999) observed that governments have increasingly viewed higher education as an individual not social benefit, and held, therefore, that individuals ought to bear the cost of higher education. Healey (2008) interpreted the rising commercial activity among universities in developed countries as a consequence of supply-side and demand-side factors in emerging markets. Drawing on institutional theory, Kerlin and Pollak (2011) proposed that broader exogenous environmental forces influence all not-for-profit organisations. And Carroll and Stater (2009) suggested that revenue diversification in not-for-profits can lead to greater financial stability.

Viewed through a policy lens, the marketisation of higher education (and the transnational higher education which parallels it) appears to be more the result of pro-active decisions which have been made by governments in recent decades. Consider the Australian case, for example. As intimated previously, the conservative government in Australia deregulated and de-funded education in the late 1980s and early 1990s, opening the way for full fee-paying foreign students (Alexander and Rizvi, 1993; Smart and Ang, 1993). The total number of foreign students increased from 17 248 in 1987 to 39 490 in 1992, with full fee-paying foreign students rising from 1 109 to 30 296, most coming from Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore (Department of Employment, Education and Training Higher Education Division, 1993). By 2013, however, almost 300 000 foreign students were enrolling annually at Australian universities, contributing $15 billion to the Australian economy (Group of Eight, 2014).

Cudmore (2005) reported on the marketisation of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) in Canada, which were created in the 1960s to support economic development of the province of Ontario. He noted that in 2002 the government rewrote the mandate for the CAATs in order "to meet local, regional, and global *marketplace* demand" (Cudmore, 2005, p. 38, my emphasis). Subsequently, the CAATs have attempted to internationalise with the recruitment of foreign students, the internationalisation of the curriculum through foreign languages, overseas academic programs, faculty exchanges, and technical assistance to other countries.

Several nations have initiated policies (often accompanied by government-led incentives) with the explicit intention of becoming educational hubs within a global educational market (Chen, 2015). Malaysia (Gill, 2009) and Singapore (Mok, 2008), for example, are both noteworthy because of their national higher education strategies which aim not only to attract foreign students but also to lure foreign universities to set up branch campuses (St. George, 2006). The United Arab Emirates and Qatar, which now boast forty and nine foreign branch campuses respectively, are also much discussed, particularly due to the generous financial and infrastructure support from their governments (Becker, 2010). Twenty-two of the forty foreign branch campuses in the United Arab Emirates are located in Dubai, specifically within the so-called Dubai International Academic City, which offers 100 percent foreign ownership, tax exemption, and repatriation of profits. In Qatar, the government bears all infrastructure development costs for foreign branch campuses.

Perhaps the most obvious examples of a government's pro-active decisions to marketise higher education can be found within the European Union. In 1987, the ERASMUS programme was developed by the European Union to support student exchanges within the European Union (Enders, 1998). In the 20 years since its inception, more than two million students have participated. In 1999, however, the European Union undertook an even bolder initiative. Named the Bologna Process after the Italian city in which the founding declaration was signed into effect, it aimed to create a single transparent and competitive higher education market out of the diverse higher education systems of 46 nations, by adopting a standardised 3-cycle bachelor-master-doctoral progression and a common credit transfer system (Bennett *et al.*, 2010). The result has been the emergence of the European Area of Higher Education, the educational equivalent of Europe's currency-based Eurozone (EHEA, 1998) …the marketisation of higher education indeed!

Neo-Liberalism

Continuing with neo-liberalism, the marketisation of higher education which transnational higher education has embraced appears to have grown in tandem with a broader neo-liberal economic agenda, which likewise has left its imprint on transnational higher education. Neo-liberalism is an economic philosophy which advocates consumer agency, free markets, and private property. It eschews government participation and market interference. And it underpins modern views of economic growth and globalisation(WHO, 2014). As summarised by Dudley (1998),

> [t]he claim of globalization is that national economies are being increasingly subsumed into a global economy and that the discipline of international markets and money markets, rather than national, social, and/or political priorities, should determine public policy. These policies, almost without exception, require states to reduce public spending, deregulate capital and labour markets, minimize welfare provision, and either eliminate or privatize as much as possible of the welfare state (p. 25).

Neo-liberalism is evidenced in higher education at the general level in a number of ways. Chen (2015), for example, suggested that entrepreneurship has become an important activity of the modern university—a method for generating funding for research and teaching support, student services, and infrastructure maintenance and growth. Van Vught*et al*. (2002) contended that neo-liberalism has caused a shift in higher education from cooperation to competition. Harris (2008) noted that neo-liberalism is also reflected in the mission statements of today's universities, and in the aggressive promotion which they perform. And Kauppinen (2012) proposed that higher education has become part of a much larger global academic capitalism which is an outcome of the increasingly global circuits of economic activity. Slaughter and Rhoades (1997) even proposed that this academic capitalism can explicate the global dominance of the American university.

With respect to transnational higher education specifically, neo-liberalism is manifest in the policy of the World Trade Organisation which promotes trade liberalisation, including in educational services (Naidoo, 2010b). Rikowski (2002) characterised this "as the facilitation of the business takeover of education through its commercialization, privatization, and capitalization" (p. 3) and which has led to a kind of invisible hand of education (Chen, 2015) and a "single global marketplace of ideas, data, and communication" (Knight and de Wit, 1995, p. 8).

Neo-liberalism has also ushered in a new level of competition in higher education. As summarised by Lowrie and Hemsley-Brown (2011), "competition will define higher education and its being in the world" (p. 1081). This competition, however, consists not only of other universities but also of non-university education providers (Lourtie, 2001) and corporate universities (Husain, 2007). According to Lorange (2002), higher education has always had competition—universities competed for resources including money, faculty, facilities, and students. But with globalisation, he continued, they are now also competing globally for students, with foreign institutions, and with commercial education providers. In its 2008 report, for example, the US Council of Graduate Schools underlined the efforts which Europe was making to retain its students and to recruit more international students.

Chen (2015) maintained that transnational higher education is also a response to the growing global demand for higher education (and education in general), especially from emerging economies. According to UNESCO (2009), student numbers rose 125% from 1990 to 2007. This growth is due, Chen hinted, to rising incomes, changing demographics both domestically and internationally, and labor shortages. Bloom (2002) added that higher education has simply become a necessity—higher education is to today's knowledge economy as secondary education was to the industrial economy.

Many national higher education systems, however, are simply unable to meet this new demand. The leading providers of technical, medical, and commercial training in India, for example, can only serve about 1% of the market (Anastasios, 2011). To exacerbate the issue, according to Colucci e*t al.* (2009), demand for higher education is outpacing (traditional) supply. They quoted Sir John Daniel who, in 1996, claimed that a sizable new university would need to be created every week merely to sustain the participation rates in higher education at the time. This excess demand—in India and elsewhere—argued Alam *et al.*(2013), can only be met by transnational higher education.

Consequently, many higher education institutions have reduced or eliminated their financial support for emerging economies, and instead begun to serve full fee-paying foreign students—in other words, they have shifted from aid to trade. And for many of these institutions, these students have become an important source of income, especially as their domestic public funding has withered (Altbach and Knight, 2007).

In the neo-liberal competitive global market for higher education, reputation has also become increasingly salient, a reflection of neo-liberalism's emphasis on consumer agency. Consider the importance which is now ascribed to university league tables, such as the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (See www.shanghairanking.com.). From a transnational higher education perspective, the level of a university's internationalisation has also become a measure of its excellence (Harris, 2008). Indeed, both students and sponsors alike consider it to be a contributing factor to a university's brand image (Naidoo, 2010b).

Globalisation

Complementing marketisation and neo-liberalism, is the notion of globalisation. It is evident that the emergence of transnational higher education has also mirrored the acceleration of globalisation which was triggered in the 1980s with the opening of the global economy (Eggins, 2003). To be fair, different higher education institutions respond differently to the forces of globalisation (Luitjen-Lub, 2007; Maringe and Foskett, 2002). But from a macro perspective, one of the most important effects of globalisation "has been to crack open existing territorialities to enable different local actors to participate in international arenas that were once open only to nation-states" (Sidhu and Christie, 2014a, p. 182). Indeed, as articulated by Kwiek (2001), globalisation has caused a major redefinition of the general responsibilities of the nation state, and a rethinking of the role of the nation-state in politics and economics.

Simultaneously, higher education has de-monopolised, de-institutionalised, and de-nationalised (Kampf, 2002). It is impossible to understand transnational higher education, therefore, without understanding it in the context of the forces of globalisation (Singh *et al.*, 2007).

According to the International Monetary Fund (2008), globalisation is primarily an economic phenomenon, involving the increasing integration of national economies through the growth of international trade, investment, and capital flows. It implies the reduction or elimination of national barriers, temporal limits, and spatial boundaries. In the words of Thomas Friedman, author of bestsellers *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (1999) and *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century* (2005), globalisation is the "inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before—in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations, and nation-states to reach round the world farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before" (1999, p. 14).

In the context of transnational higher education, Haug (2000) emphasised that "what is genuinely new and explains the growth of transnational education is that students are less and less restricted to what their national system is prepared to offer" (par. 3). This reduction of restrictions is due, in part, to the new opportunities for transnational higher education which are afforded to students by information technologies (Husain, 2007). Indeed, the internet has completely transformed the notion (and reputation) of distance learning from the days during which it meant correspondence school. The University of London, for example, which was chartered by Queen Victoria in 1858, now has more than 54 000 students in 180 nations who follow courses on their own time and in their own locations (University of London, 2014). The reduction in temporal limits and spatial boundaries has been accelerated further by the "emergence of 'global English' as an alternative to the national language for the acquisition of higher education qualifications" (Haug, 2000, par. 5)…as the *lingua franca* of modern higher education (Altbach, 1989)

The impact of globalisation on higher education is most pronounced in emerging economies, which often have unmet demand (Naidoo, 2010b) or which face other distinctive challenges (Husain, 2007), including:

- the inability to offer degrees in certain scientific disciplines,
- a lack of curricula and teaching materials in local languages,
- limited domestic expertise, and
- restrictive social customs (access to higher education for women, for example).

As summarised by Lourtie (2001), the growth of transnational higher education to and for emerging economies is "a sign that the national systems are not responding to the needs of potential students" (p. 6).

THE STAKEHOLDERS OF TRANSNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

It ought to be obvious from the preceding outline of the rationales of transnational higher education that its logic represents a radical departure from the traditional view of higher education. Indeed, by following the precepts of laissez-faire and self-interested capitalism, transnational higher education subscribes to the belief in the power of the market to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education globally. The logic is straightforward—emancipate higher education from government participation and interference, furnish students with the dignity of economic choice, and allow the invisible hand of economics to work its magic (Chan and Mok, 2011). The result will be a common global market of higher education, which provides students with services more effectively, which diffuses knowledge more equitably, which holds higher education institutions more accountable, and which uses scarce resources more efficiently. In other words, (global) higher education is now subject to, and supportive of, a kind of educational Darwinism.

Although this economic narrative has come to dominate discussions of transnational higher education, other less 'soul-less' rationales have been proffered. For example, one alternative logic holds that universities are, by their nature, committed to the advancement of human knowledge. Kerr (1994) argued, however, that this academic universalism was usurped by the nation states of 19th and 20th century Europe when they co-opted universities to serve their national agenda. But according to Brown (1950), "the universities of the world are today aspiring to return to one of the basic concepts of their origin—the universality of knowledge" (p. 12), thereby increasing access to students worldwide, and subsequently strengthening mutual understanding (Naidoo, 2010b).

Whichever rationales (and corresponding logic) are at its core, it is anticipated that transnational higher education will continue to grow, and subsequently change the nature and scope of higher education. Husain (2007) suggested that student exchanges will eventually be eclipsed by student mobility. Adam (2001) predicted that in the long-term, more and more programs will be offered by universities in foreign nations; the capital investment of a foreign entity might be high, he admitted, but after it is recuperated, he reasoned, marginal costs are relatively low and profits, therefore, are attractive. Wood, Tapsall, and Soutar (2005) were even more dramatic, envisaging the death of the traditional university, and in turn the birth of a global and most likely virtual higher education industry.

Transnational higher education, therefore, is unquestionably a subject of importance (and concern) for a number of stakeholders (Adam, 2001). Indeed, transnational higher education is big business (Healey, 2012), and as such, both an enormous opportunity (Wood *et al.*, 2005) and a risky venture (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012). Consequently, it has the potential to have an enormous impact on governments, accreditation bodies, institutions, funders, instructors, and, of course, students.

From a public policy perspective, governments must be watching transnational higher education with a mixture of trepidation and jubilation. How does transnational higher education, for example, affect the economy? Which influences will it have on society? And more pragmatically, what does it mean for taxes and spending? For the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for example, a relatively young nation with a conservative domestic political and social climate, the theory of comparative advantage would suggest that the Kingdom ought to have foregone its own higher education system, focusing its efforts instead on the petroleum industry in which it performs comparatively better. To educate its citizens, therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ought to have engaged in the international trade of higher education as it does with petroleum, perhaps by providing educational credits for students to study abroad with a kind of higher education 'voucher' programme.

And indeed, since the founding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, tens of thousands of Saudi students have studied at international universities, most recently under the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Programme (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). Granted, the Kingdom has developed its own universities and colleges, three of which rank among the top 500 universities globally (www.shanghairanking.com). But today the petroleum industry (and the Kingdom overall) is doubtless more industrially- and scientifically-advanced as a result of these students…if less culturally-homogeneous.

Governments must also be concerned about the loss of educational sovereignty and control over traditional educational values and national identity. Consider, for example, the potency of courses such as *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* and *Marxist/Leninist Philosophy*, which were required of all university students in the U.S.S.R. (Cunningham, 2002). The academic capitalism of transnational higher education also raises fundamental questions about regulatory issues, including standards and consumer rights. Governments will certainly want to protect the public by eradicating degree mills and bogus institutions, malpractice, and fraud (Adam, 2001).

In a similar way, transnational higher education also calls into question the role of accreditation bodies, whose traditional purview has been to "scrutinize colleges, universities and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement" (Eaton, 2012, p. 1). Perhaps presaging the global competition which is now experienced by many business schools, the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) changed its name (but not its acronym) in 2001 to the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2014). More pertinently, it has itself internationalised, accrediting 716 business schools in 48 countries. It is now commonly referred to as AACSB International, and its slogan reads *Advancing Quality Management Education Worldwide*.

The global competition which is now experienced by many business schools as a result of transnational higher education has also been realised at the institutional level. Administrators (at all levels) now face not only fundamental questions about the purpose of their institutions, but also serious strategic management decisions about such competitive issues as positioning, branding, product offerings, and pricing (Taylor, 2004). As summarised by Naidoo (2010a), transnational higher education mandates that "universities operating in a changing international education landscape be more market oriented for them to be successful" (p. 20).

Transnational higher education, as intimated previously, also challenges traditional views of higher education funding. If a global marketplace for students is indeed emerging, then who is responsible for financing higher education? Perhaps a sign of the times is the recent announcement of the Schwarzman Scholars programme, a $350 million endowment which was created by Stephen Schwarzman, CEO and co-founder of one of the world's largest private-equity firms, and which threatens the long-established and prestigious Rhodes Scholarships to the University of Oxford. Billed as 'A Landmark Scholarship for the Defining Challenge of Our Time', the programme "will give the world's best and brightest students the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through a one-year Master's Degree at Tsinghua University in Beijing" (Schwarzman Scholars, 2014).

The Schwarzman Scholars programme also hints at the concerns which transnational higher education raises for instructors. Competition for university posts, for example, could increase, with candidates coming from all four corners of the world, and, paralleling changes in labor-intensive industries, reduce instructor salaries. The new types of programmes and forms of delivery which transnational higher education fuels could be threatening to many instructors, requiring them to re-tool or become obsolete. And, like Latin in the Middles Ages, English has become the *lingua franca* of modern higher education teaching and research, in effect shutting out those instructors who have not mastered it.

Finally, transnational higher education has many implications for students. Adherents to the neo-liberal rationale which was outlined previously would argue that transnational higher education will benefit students, at the most basic level, via the increased access which it brings. But extending the argument points to more choice in institutions and a broader range of subjects which are of higher quality and with lower prices. The logical conclusion for students is an increase in their own competitiveness, with commensurate increases in mobility, salaries, and livings standards.

Students ought to be wary of this argument, however. They might first reflect on the claim of subject breadth. Transnational higher education has occurred most commonly in subjects like business and information technology which are easiest to sell (Naidoo, 2009b). Most courses and programs which are offered internationally are also fee-based, and are almost always more expensive than government-funded local options. Students could easily fall prey to unscrupulous institutions if programme quality goes un-checked, and because quality is difficult for students to evaluate accurately. If English does become the *lingua franca* of modern higher education, some students might be left behind. And students ought to know that the qualifications which they earn might not be recognised internationally.

CRITICISMS OF TRANSNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Considering the enormous impact which transnational higher education might have on its various stakeholders, it is no surprise that many criticisms of transnational higher education have been voiced. These criticisms range from the relatively innocuous (more like general comments on transnational higher education in an almost op-ed style) to the vitriolic (ardent denunciations of transnational higher education and its basic tenets). Many of the most recent criticisms of transnational higher education focus specifically on foreign branch campuses.

Beginning with general commentary on transnational higher education, it has been claimed that there is widespread misunderstanding of the internationalisation of higher education (and by extension, the transnationalisation of higher education). The consequence is that myriad myths and misconceptions have circulated within higher education circles (de Wit, 2011a; Knight, 2011b). These myths and misconceptions include:

1. more foreign students produces a more internationalised institution,
2. international reputation is a proxy for quality,
3. more international agreements makes an institution more reputable,
4. more international accreditation stars means more international,
5. an international promotional is an internationalisation plan,
6. internationalisation means teaching in English,
7. internationalisation equals study abroad,
8. internationalisation is teaching an international subject,
9. internationalisation requires only a few international students in the classroom,
10. intercultural competencies need not be assessed,
11. higher education is international by its nature, and
12. internationalisation is an objective in itself.

According to Brandenburg (2011), however, internationalisation ought to be viewed not as the destination, but as the journey. That is to say, internationalisation is not an objective in itself, but instead an instrument in service of the objective. The key, therefore, is to identify the rationale for using the instrument. And for many commentators, the rationale is clear—globalisation. According to Scherer *et al.* (2005), for example, globalisation has diminished the hegemony of American higher education. Writing about the field of management education specifically, they declared that "business schools in the U.S.A. have gained a reputation and global dominance in the higher education marketplace" (p. 652), but that the gloss is now off. Consequently, American business schools are not the only option, with competitors popping up all over the world. For Ryan (2001), this competition is a good thing, shaking up the entire higher education system.

Douglass (2005) provided a more detailed and nuanced version of the argument, enumerating eight mega-forces which coincide with globalisation, and which, he predicted, would cause a paradigm shift in higher education: 1. student and instructor recruiting, 2. international networks of research, 3. international collaborations, 4. organisational convergence, 5. information and communication technologies, 6. non-traditional and alternative competitors, 7. institutional mergers and acquisitions, and 8. international frameworks. He also cited four organisational forces which, he warned, could be trouble for some higher education institutions as they are forced to compete: 1. supply and capacity imbalance, 2. unpredictability of the market, 3. the need for flexibility and creativity, and 4. academic conservatism. In fairness, he also suggested that there are six countervailing forces to globalisation which could temper its effects: 1. economic wealth and political stability, 2. local market demand, 3. national regulations, 4. cultural pride, 5. academic culture, and 6. incumbent advantage.

To many commentators, however, the nature of the new paradigm of higher education which globalisation is driving is obvious—higher education will be a commodity, with the production of knowledge, the dissemination of knowledge, and, most importantly, access to knowledge, all going global (Naidoo, 2003). The result will be the multinational or global institution of higher education (Van Rooijen, 2003; Wildavsky, 2010), and "as with a multinational company, this institution will have branches or campuses in several countries in the world…but treasures in its profile the geographical base of its headquarters" (p. 4). This new multinational or global institution will have different organisational forms compared to the traditional institution (Hanna and Latchem, 2002). And transnational higher education will be one component in a mix of the institution's activities (Skidmore and Longbottom, 2011).

It is important to note, however, that this new paradigm of higher education need not lead to the homogenisation of higher education. Indeed, as suggested by Pease (2001), globalisation is often associated with homogenisation, but the "integration of markets, a global market, does not inevitably lead to cultural 'mud' " (p. 12). On the contrary, culture still matters, despite—perhaps even because of—globalisation.

This new paradigm of higher education is not immune to the risks from unforeseen circumstances. Indeed, Naidoo (2010a) stated that a "debate needs to be highlighted to consider the impacts of transnational higher education" (p. 7). Starting in the early 1990s, worries about Australia's pioneering transnational higher education activity were voiced: racism, xenophobia, brain drain, McDonalds-isation, ethnocentrism, and neo-colonialism, for example (Alexander and Rizvi, 1993). Maslen (2009) warned that higher education is particularly susceptible to exogenous shocks, citing the changes which were made in the mid-2000s to the work eligibility for foreign students who were studying in Australia. Consider the significance of the tightening of VISA requirements for foreign students who were hoping to study in the U.S.A., following the 9-11 attacks. And Altbach and Knight (2007) speculated about the possible impact of market uncontrollables such as politics, the rise of the English language as the *lingua franca* of education, European policies, national security, domestic capacity, and private sector players.

This new paradigm of higher education will doubtless have implications for higher education institutions. Indeed, it calls for a doubling down on internationalisation, or running the risk of falling behind (Teekens, 2011). It necessitates strong leaders with strategic vision (Mestenhauser, 2000). And it points squarely to a market rationalisation via mergers, acquisitions, and global networks in higher education (de Wit, 2000). According to Mazzarol and Souter (2012), "many of the world's leading institutions appear to have recognised this and started building strong global networks, such as those seen in Singapore and Qatar examples. However, others have undifferentiated marketing strategies, despite seeking to operate in this highly competitive international market" (p. 731).

This new paradigm of higher education also means the need for a new focus on international students (Jones and Brown, 2007), especially with respect to teaching and learning. Issues such as plagiarism, international communication, and teamwork, for example, will come to the fore (Dunn and Wallace, 2008). It will undoubtedly have an influence on curriculum and instructional design, assessment, and administration (Wood *et al.*, 2005). And it will lead to questions about reputation, quality assurance, and accreditation (Vignoli, 2004).

At a more basic level, however, this new paradigm of higher education raises a fundamental question about its role in society. And indeed, commentators have lambasted universities for simply losing sight of their primary purpose—for pursuing profits instead of progress. In 2007, for example, Hodges chronicled the number of British universities which appeared to be chasing Chinese students with "pound signs in their eyes" (p. 1), neglecting, she charged, their domestic responsibilities of teaching and research. Her conclusion, therefore, is that universities ought to "stick to their knitting" (Hodges, 2007, p. 1).

Switching to the more intense criticisms of transnational higher education, the first and perhaps most passionate criticism of transnational higher education mirrors the more general critique of the marketisation of higher education overall (See de Vita and Case, 2003; Levidow, 2002; and Lynch, 2006.). Indeed, to purists "education is a public good and never a commodity, let alone a free trade" (Cheung, 2006). Harris (2008) conceded that great universities must internationalise, but she argued that this internationalisation must "be a cultural rather than economic internationalisation because such an internationalisation degenerates into instrumentalism, and this robs higher education of what should be essential to it" (p. 356). As in the case of public versus private elementary and secondary education in the U.S.A., this instrumentalism could also lead to educational haves and haves-not.

Likewise, critics have also denounced globalisation itself. Rizvi (2007), for example, railed against the reification and assumed inevitability of globalisation. In turn, he also questioned the taken-for-grantedness of the internationalisation of higher education. Sursock (in CRE, 2001) did not dispute globalisation outright, but instead reasoned that globalisation constitutes a threat to higher education systems everywhere, and especially those "in the more protected and homogeneous national systems which do not offer sufficient choices to students and cannot integrate (and therefore regulate) non-official institutions" (p. 7). Similarly, Yang (2003) maintained that because globalisation is based on the notion of free markets, it brings with it the dangers from which free markets suffer, including a lack of quality control, under-regulation, and restrictions on academic values. In summary, it is a bad idea "to permit caveat emptor to dominate in higher education" (p. 284).

Continuing with the free market theme, Bone (2008) worried that American universities, Oxbridge, and a handful of other higher education institutions around the world have historical and performance-related reputations, thereby allowing them to dominate the 'prestige goods' category. This jibes with

Mestenhauser's (2000) claim that higher education is not a commodity, but instead must be considered a prestige good.

Viewing higher education as a product also has its limitations. Indeed, Standish (2005) censured the notion of higher education as the focus of an economic exchange. Doing so, he argued, impoverishes the value of education. Robertson (2006) also decried the view, avowing that education is a basic human right. And Baldwin and James (2000) thought that treating students who entered into the supposed economic exchange as well-informed consumers was dubious.

Campbell (2012) condemned the secular neo-liberal underpinnings of globalisation, insisting that it inhibits human development. Writing of developing nations specifically, he claimed that…

> [d]eveloping nations face the need to develop the capacities and capabilities of their citizens in the broadest possible way and education is widely considered as a key institutional conduit through which this occurs. However, your capabilities and capacities as human beings are deeply connected to our ability to realize and maintain a sense of dignity and moral balance in a world increasingly beset by the values of instrumental reasons competitive rationality and consumerism. (par. 1)

Similarly, Collins (2007) wrote scathingly of GATS, arguing that its neo-liberal ideology creates a new imperialism of intellectual superiority. Rutherford (2001) worried that "GATS could destroy the public interest in policy making in services such as education and end the ideal of a democratic education system run by accountable public authorities" (p. 1). Academia, according to CHEA (2005), is special, and by rights, therefore, deserves a privileged position. "Trade frameworks are not designed to deal with the academic, research, or broad social and cultural purposes of higher education…Trade policy and national educational policy may conflict with each other and jeopardize higher education's capacity to carry out its social and cultural mission" (p. 5).

Czinkota (2006) demurred. "While education may see itself exempt from international service industry rules, it certainly is not immune from the rules of economics, particularly when it comes to issues of supply, demand, and money" (p. 151). Pease (2001) was less conciliatory, alleging that GATS is both welcome and necessary, because higher education has for too long been riddled with unfair and distorting trade barriers. For example,

> [n]ational legislation and policy often serve as inhibitors, singling out foreign education providers delivering services. Examples include: acquiring licenses, registering as private businesses, forcing students to pay a consumption tax, not affording the same benefits to students attending foreign institutions, or restricting accreditation or the granting of degrees entirely. (par. 3)

With respect to transnational higher education specifically, Alderman (2001) cited several fundamental problems, including a threat to national culture, quality control, and cultural imperialism. Custer (2016) voiced concerns over the finances, quality, and outcomes of transnational higher education. Adam (2001) was particularly worried about consumer protection in an age of transnational higher education; national regulatory frameworks are notoriously inflexible, he mentioned, degree-mills sell services to ill-informed students, and many transnational entities have poor or non-existent quality control. Altbach (2003) was likewise concerned, noting the neo-colonial overtones of transnational higher education, especially considering the rise of English as its *lingua franca*. Altbach and Knight (2007) raised concerns about quality assurance and recognition of awards. And Danaher *et al.* (2000) pointed to the changing nature of instructor professionalisms which have resulted from transnational higher education.

Ending with perspectives on foreign branch campuses, the growth of this specific transnationalisation mode in recent years has garnered it much attention, and consequently, has also generated many criticisms. Speaking at a 2013 conference at the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research, Dr.

Warren Fox, head of higher education at the Knowledge and Human Development Authority of Dubai, summarised the positive claims succinctly:

> [b]ranch campuses are an expanding and important part of transnational education. They provide access to meet rising demand, they bring certified quality programmes, they offer international degrees recognised around the world, they often have faculty from the home campus, they have experience and expertise, and they expand cross cultural experiences (as cited in Swan, 2013, Par. 23).

According to Altbach (2010), however, governments and accreditors have started to question the truth in these claims. According to Husain (2007), for example, foreign branch campuses tend to concentrate on the subjects of business and technology which are more marketable in developing countries. Rumble and Altbach (2007) charged higher education institutions with underestimating the risks of financial loss, operational challenges, market fluctuations, and the potential for damage to institutional reputation. Altbach (2010) even argued that the term foreign branch campus is a misnomer. It is often difficult to lure instructors from the home institution. Courses are frequently taught as intensive modules. And in many cases these modules are taught by local temp workers. Is it really a foreign branch, therefore?

Similarly, Altbach (2010) also suggested that foreign branch campuses are usually not very campus-like. "Except where generous hosts—such as in the Arabian Gulf, Singapore, and a few other places—provide facilities and infrastructure, branch campuses become rather spartan places, resembling office complexes rather than academic institutions" (p. 2). The student body, he added, never replicates that of the home institution. And the academic experience and culture are rarely, if ever, reproduced at the foreign branch campus.

In 2011, Altbach continued his assault on foreign branch campuses, observing that student demand is difficult to predict. The University of New South Wales, for example, closed its operation in Singapore after only one year of operation, citing low enrolment. Administrators in higher education institutions, he insisted, have not considered the long-term implications of foreign branch campuses: pitfalls, financial losses, and poor service quality, for example. And he alleged that the decision to open foreign branch campuses—which is often commercially-motivated—causes higher education institutions to stray too far from their academic mission.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to the internationalisation of higher education, there is nothing new about it. Indeed, as summarised by Dirlik (2012), "students have been attending 'foreign' universities, and universities have been recruiting 'foreign' students, since the origins of the university" (p. 49). Consider the University of Karueein, for example, which, as the world's oldest higher education institution, has welcomed Muslim scholars from across the Islamic world since its founding in 859.

Since the 1990s, however, transnational higher education—a specific form of internationalisation which treats education as a product which can be packaged and sold abroad—has accelerated, precipitated by the marketisation of higher education, a neo-liberal economic agenda, and the forces of globalisation. But questions have been raised about these rationales, the resultant capitalistic logic, and its appropriateness for higher education. Transnational higher education has been similarly controversial in terms of the impact which it might have on its various stakeholders. And unsurprisingly, many criticisms of transnational higher education have been voiced, particularly with respect to the foundational rationales, and most recently about one specific transnationalisation mode—foreign branch campuses.

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