

School of Education
Educational Leadership and Administration Department

BOOK REVIEW: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
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LEAD 778: Global Education Study Tour
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Introduction

Global Perspectives on Higher Education is a reflection of Altbach's (2016) observations related to the trends impacting the globalization and internationalization of higher education. In this text, Altbach (2016) reflects on these phenomena by introducing the emergence and reality of contemporary internationalization, followed by the impact of the massification of higher education, and how this has paved the way for academic superpowers. In addition, he offers an overview of historical global tension and its impact on the internationalization of higher education. The impacts of globalization are also explored, with special emphasis on both its benefits and the inequalities it perpetuates both nationally and internationally. Within the context of inequalities that have resulted from these phenomena, Western influence on higher education is also analyzed, particularly the influence of English as the widely-used and accepted language of research. Research universities in developing countries are also explored, with a special focus on their classification as central institutions or peripheries. Comparative perspectives on private higher education are also presented, as well as the international challenges and realities related to accountability measures.

Synopsis

Altbach (2016) posits that while the concepts of the internationalization and globalization of higher education are not new, they have become more widespread in the last century. These trends have not only resulted in the expansion of higher education across international lines, but have also contributed significantly to the global economic market. Technology has been a major contributor to the massification of higher education, providing access that transcends borders and promoting student mobility by way of exchange of ideas on a global platform. Nevertheless, with increased access inequalities continue to be perpetuated, given the market-driven competition

that characterizes globalization and internationalization. English-speaking academic systems, which are primarily Western, tend to benefit the most from these trends.

One of the negative impacts of these trends is the posed threat to the national and local scientific communities, which can offer diversity to science and scholarship. The concern is that homogeneity will result in lost interest in local issues that may not be relevant internationally. Altbach (2016) proposes that creating a balance between regional and international research communities is critical to the preservation of diversity within the research community. Moreover, if this balance is not achieved, Third World universities and local communities will suffer for it. Third World universities are considered peripheral institutions within the international academic system. This peripheral status continues to be reinforced, based on the resources, funding, influence, and the established relationships central institutions have in comparison. Altbach (2016) suggests that international higher education ought not to succumb to these profit-based pressures, but rather, seek active ways to ensure higher education benefits the regional public, as well as peripheral institutions.

Nevertheless, this may pose a significant challenge, given governments' inability to fund the increased demand for public higher education, which has resulted in the global expansion of private higher education in meeting these needs. With increased pressure, society's perception of higher education closely aligns with this phenomenon, as "the idea of an academic degree as a "private good" that benefits the individual rather than a "public good" for society is now widely accepted" (Altbach, 2016, p. 116). In addition, while private higher education continues to expand, so do the stark differences in the quality of programs and curricula offered, calling into question quality assurance protocols and accountability measures, while combatting the inequalities and inequities that can result from unregulated academic systems within the private

sector. These outcomes vary depending on an institution's status, as some public institutions are considered prestigious, central institutions within the higher education landscape, as are some private institutions.

Application

The trends and concepts outlined in *Global Perspectives on Higher Education* are very much relevant to higher education today. Through the LEAD778 Global Study Tour, I was able to see the application of these phenomena in real-time. Altbach's (2016) observations are just as relevant in 2022 as they were six years ago, when the book was published. The education systems in Israel, Jordan, and Egypt are very much aligned with the trends and observations discussed in the text. More specifically, we learned about Tel Aviv University and Hebrew University of Jerusalem's rankings amongst the top 100 universities worldwide, their research contributions, and their influence as central institutions within their respective locations (U.S. News & World Report, 2022; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2022). We also gained an understanding of the influence of the English language in both institutions, as well as Nile Union Academy in Egypt (Nile Union Academy, 2021). More specifically, we examined the influence of Western educational systems, such as that of the United States, on their respective curricula and program offerings. The privatization of higher education in Jordan is also relevant to what we uncovered in our research of the country's educational system, particularly as it relates to the benefits of private funding in lessening the financial burden on the government to fund the fragile educational infrastructure currently in place (USAID, 2022).

Critique

Global Perspectives on Higher Education provides educational leaders and administrators a lens by which to examine some of the complex trends that impact higher

education both nationally and internationally. Altbach (2016) supports his observations with relevant examples rooted in historical events- including wars, global tensions amongst countries, the emergence of technology, and massification, among others. While not included in the book, recent events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic can be viewed through the framework established by Altbach (2016) as it relates to the overlapping implications of global phenomena and their direct and indirect impact on educational outcomes worldwide. While Altbach (2016) provides an introduction to the inequalities the internationalization and globalization have resulted in, future administrators can expand on this concept by further exploring the inequities (which are different by definition) of these trends and how to combat them to provide equitable opportunities to all students seeking to attain higher education.

Altbach (2016) takes readers through a historical journey, applied to modern events, and sets the foundation from which future educational researchers can further expand our collective knowledge on the influences that impact the work we do with our students every day. As Altbach (2016, p. 15) notes, “Globalization has meant that internationalization issues and themes have become more prominent for higher education at all levels and in all countries. This nexus of themes and issues deserves careful attention and analysis”. I agree with his conclusions- these trends are not simple in nature, nor can they be applied broadly. It is critical to understand the nuances related to the individual academic systems in question within the context of these global trends. Expanding our knowledge base and perspectives as educators is critical to our effectiveness in serving our institutions, students, and communities. The more we know about the constituents we serve and the trends that impact their outcomes, the better we can prepare to devise strategic plans and efforts to provide the best quality education we can offer.

References

Altbach, P. G. (2016). *Global perspectives on higher education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.