
The Genesis and Growth of Commercialization of Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has integrated the world into one. It is closer integration of national economies by removing barriers. It is based on market mechanism, which does not include the concerns for value. From the economic perspective, neo- liberalism is linked to globalization in terms of freedom of commerce or to free trade. The globalization phenomenon in the latter part of the twentieth century had a profound impact on higher education and the basis has shifted from a traditional welfare approach to a more privatized, market- oriented approach. All over the world, since the beginning of the 1990's, education has been brought under the umbrella of GATS, that views education as a tradable commodity. Almost all nations of the world have succumbed to dictates of powerful organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in providing a platform for trade in higher education as a solution to resolve the crisis in higher education in the era of fiscal constraints. Neo- liberalism advocates privatization and internationalization of higher education based upon market ideology. It has assumed a great role in response to the shrinking role of the state. The present paper argues that the neo- liberal economic globalization has not worked as an engine for universal prosperity, but on the contrary, it has widened the gap between the rich and the poor nations and, between the rich and the poor people and has been increasingly fatal towards breeding educational inequalities.

Keywords: *Commercialization of Higher Education, GATS, Neo- Liberal Globalisation, Internationalization, IMF, Marketization, New Economic Policy, Privatization , World Bank Globalization*

Each day billions of people, products and ideas around the world are globally inter-linked through the e-mail and the internet. Globalization has integrated the world into one. What happens in one part of the country affects others across the globe. It is considered to be an economic process aided by technology. However, its effects are not only economic but are manifested in social, cultural, environmental and political instruments (Saha, 2005).

The term globalization was used by Theodore Levitt in 1985. It is a pervasive, encompassing and a multi-dimensional construct. According to Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz (2002) globalization is closer integration of national economies by removing barriers. It implies that “linkages and inter- connections between states is moving closer. Another aspect is its supra-national dynamic of perpetual transition and what often seems to be irresistible change, in which the processes of modernization are no longer the singular property of the nation- state” (Marginson, 1999, p. 19-20). Wilding (cited in Angus, 2004) put forth the meaning of globalization as “the term [globalization] is most commonly used to describe trends in economic, political, social, and cultural developments. The term is also used, however, to

explain such trends- they are as they are, the argument runs, because of this force we call globalization” (p. 24, *emphasis in original*). Thus, globalization may be said to bear its effect on the socio- economic, cultural and political fabric of the nation- states and relating them to the world economy, in diverse forms. Summarizing this argument, Dale (1999) stated that “Globalization is not a homogeneous process, nor are its effects homogeneous” (p.3).

Kanmony (2003) viewed globalization as a long step forward step in the direction of private enterprise and market-oriented system. It is based on market mechanism, which does not include the concerns for value. The driving forces of globalization are ideological (the market), economical (the capital) and political (the leadership) (Hallack, 1994). It emerged as an outcome of certain circumstances that were created post- war, and centered on international financial agreements and institutions known collectively as the Bretton Woods agreement and its ideology was distinctly highlighted in the Washington Consensus. Giddens (1990) considered globalization as “the intensification of world-wide social relationships which link distant places in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa” (p.64). The latter perspective looks globalization as a transformative project of unifying the world in accordance with the logic of global capitalism. When globalization is viewed in this manner, it seems to be “a project of the North to capture the markets of the South by manipulating the latter to believe that it is a new development strategy which would accelerate their development” (Sharma, 2002, p.73). “...Globalization represents new wave representing the latest design of the capitalist regime to capture the world through coercive market integration after colonization and modernization” (ibid., p. 75).

Trading among nations is not a new phenomenon. However the concept, structure and methods of international trade underwent tremendous changes after World War II. The New Economic Order was initiated at the Bretton Woods Conference (1944). Post World War II period witnessed some significant developments such as gaining of statehood by many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America which were earlier colonies of the imperial nations. The period also witnessed the emergence of economic grouping like the European Union (EU), North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries(OPEC) and the formation of trade institutions like, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) also known as the World Bank the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Conference on Trade Development and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

GATT was formed based upon the principles of non-discrimination, reciprocity and transparency. Many rounds were held in different parts of the world to set rules to liberalize international trade. The first round was held at Geneva in 1947 and subsequently four rounds were organized at Annecy (1949), Torquay (1951), Geneva (1950) and Dillon (1960-60). In all the five rounds much could not be achieved with respect to tariff reductions. It was only after the Kennedy Round (1964-67) and the Tokyo Round (1973-79) that the Uruguay Round (1986-94) started and its scope included issues like agriculture, services and a new patent regime. It was during this lengthiest round that different agreements such as Agreement on Agriculture (AOA), General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), Trade Related

Investment Measures (TRIM) and Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) came into existence. GATT was rechristened as World Trade Organization WTO from January 1, 1995.

NEO- LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION

From the economic perspective, neo- liberalism is linked to globalization in terms of ‘freedom of commerce’ or to ‘free trade’. It is an element of globalization that is central to structure the domestic and global economic relations (Olssen& Peters, 2005). Rhoads and Torres(2006) asserted that “Globalization is playing a major role in reshaping culture, politics, and education” (p.1). They viewed the global economic policies to bear the potential of having devastating effects on education in general, and higher education in particular. It is transforming the dynamics between the university, states and the markets throughout the world by forces that are ‘anti-democratic’. The democratic life has undergone a radical change in the age of globalization. While Karl Marx was of the view that inquiry is a vehicle that improves, reforms and revolutionizes social life; John Dewey (1916) a pragmatic educationist in his famous work *Democracy and Education* advocated the view that democracy is just not a form of government or the right to vote. It is an active engagement of people in meaningful social relationships and an effective participation in making decisions that affect their lives. Another great educationist, Paulo Freire who was deeply influenced by the lives of the desperate and oppressed lower-and working- class citizens in his homeland Brazil, believed that engaging people in their communities was central to elevating literacy and raising consciousness. Freire (1970) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* wrote that the purpose of education was to develop the critical consciousness of the citizens who were empowered to offer their own critical analysis of the society and write their own histories. However, the common man is absent or kept away from decisions that are taken by the governments in the globalized world. Bringing education under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is a true example of lack of representation of citizens of the world in the construction of global relations thus making the entire ideology, anti-democratic (ibid.).

Neo- liberalism has spread its clutches globally in the sphere of higher education. Its powerful discourse can be witnessed in terms of change in public higher policy. The basis has shifted from a traditional welfare approach to a more privatized, market- oriented approach. The self- interested individual, free market economics, a commitment to laissez- fairism and free trade are the defining characteristics of this “new brand of neo-liberalism” that has fundamentally brought changes in higher education policy (Olssen& Peters, 2005, p. 314-315). Neo- liberalism as a form of globalization has been promoted by multilateral and bilateral agencies like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that favour opening of national borders for increasing capital and commodity exchange through fast- paced economic and financial transactions, privatize every product and service, create multiple regional markets on one hand, and on the other elevate the free markets over state- controlled markets and interventions, and promote selective deregulation (Rhoads & Torres, 2006, p.8-10). The neo- liberal projects world- wide have surfaced global dangers that have widened inequality in education (Apple, 2002).

Schugurensky (2006) explained that the neo- liberal economic globalization has certainly not been an engine for universal prosperity. In fact, it has widened the gap between the rich and the poor nations and, between the rich and the poor people. It had promised a ‘trickle- down effect’ to benefit everyone but on the contrary, it has demonstrated a ‘vacuum- up effect’ and led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. Increasing inequalities, exclusions, poverty, social breakdown, spiritual emptiness, intolerance, environmental destruction and military conflicts are upsurging (Chomsky, 2004; Clark, 2003; Hedley, 2003, Ibsister, 2003; Korten, 2001). Besides economic discontents, globalization has generated socio- cultural discontents in the developing countries like threat to social security, widening of disparities, increase in social conflicts and tensions, growth of consumerism and Americanization (Sharma, 2002).

THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY, 1991

By the early 1990’s many low income, developing economies found the system of higher education in their country under crisis. This largely happened as a result of the introduction of the new economic reform policies that included stabilization, structural adjustment and drastic cut in public expenditures across the board, including education. In fact, the economic reforms in higher education and decline in public expenditure in these nations did not possess a strong internal capacity to resist the agendas of the global agencies and developed economies. The salient features of the New Economic Policy, 1991 were as follows:-

- i. Free market economy was favoured and the public sector received a backseat; policy of disinvestments.
- ii. Announcement of closing down of ‘sick’ public sector industrial units and the policy of disinvestments.
- iii. Free entry of private sector in industries, free entry of foreign capital and investments including foreign technology transfers and imparts following improvement in foreign exchange reserves situation.
- iv. Opening up channels for utilizing the ‘black money’ which was largely the creation of ‘control-permit-raj’ into fruitful investment, and that too, without either explanation or asking any questions (Satyanarayan, 2002, p.69).

The 1980’s was a decade of structural adjustments. It represented the deployment of the neo-liberal doctrine through the imposition of a new scheme of financial discipline and modernization of the state. Reduce, differentiate, dismiss and discipline were the strategic concepts that were promoted under structural adjustment. According to Slater (cited in Rhoads & Torres, 2006) “to adjust a structure is much more than an exercise for economists, it means to change the life of the people, the inhabitants and the citizens of a nation” (p.215). The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) with stabilization supported by the IMF and the World Bank included devaluation of national currencies, market liberalization, the elimination of protective trade barriers and privatization of social programs like health and education (Mathew, 1996). Many indebted nations, one after the other, fell in line succumbing to the IMF- World Bank agenda. That was the beginning of the new wave of globalization, the third since 1870. While the first wave of globalization (1870-1914) was triggered by a drastic reduction in transport costs, the second wave of globalization was a reaction to increased nationalism of the era of the world wars (Julka, 2005). Thus, structural

adjustments as a policy fragments the world, strengthens social fractures and bring out greater inequalities, poverty and unemployment, especially in the developing countries.

It is necessary to mention here the ignorant treatment that is being given to higher education in the policy planning and implementation by the government of many countries of the world. In fact, during the 1990's special efforts were made to reduce the intensity of public efforts in education. This was mainly as an impact of the Jomtien Conference on Education for All (EFA) which reminded the nations to give serious attention to the fulfilling of the basic goal in primary education. Many countries under the umbrella of major international powerful actors like the World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) proclaimed their commitment to universalize primary school education. This had an undesirable effect on the higher education sector. The World Bank imposed conditionalities on low-income countries that no public subsidies should be given to higher education. Higher education was declared as a 'non-merit good' emphasizing the point that the social rate of return from higher education was much less than the primary and secondary education. Thus, in the early 1990's many low-income developing countries found the system of higher education in their countries under severe crisis and had very little power to resist the agendas of the global agencies and developed economies. Dependent upon the bank loans, most developing countries curtailed public funds in higher education arguing it was a luxury item that served the interests of the elites and not the masses.

THE ROLE OF THE WORLD BANK

In the mid 1990's through its document *Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience*, the World Bank (1994) orchestrated a historic shift in its education policy platform for developing countries supporting higher education as a key priority area and reforming its stance towards higher education. In order to reform higher education, the Bank accorded it to be of paramount importance for economic and social development (World Bank, 1994) and it legitimately incorporated removing the crisis in higher education into its *Knowledge for Development* (K4D) and knowledge-economy agendas (World Bank, 1996, 2000, 2002). This reversal of the Bank's policy provided a platform for higher education to be prioritized. As a solution "to resolve the crisis in higher education in the era of fiscal constraints" (World Bank 1994, p. 3) innovative policies and reform strategies were suggested by the World Bank. These were "(i) greater differentiation of institutions, including the development of private ones; (ii) incentives for public institutions to diversify sources of funding including cost sharing with students (iii) redefining the role of government in higher education and (iv) introducing policies designed to give priority to quality and equity objectives" (ibid., p.4). It also favoured privatization of higher education, with financing to come both from households and private sector (ibid., p.7).

It was against this background that the World Trade Organization (WTO) was established in 1995 and General Agreement in Trade in Services (GATS) came into existence to cover the entire education sector. Thus, a new kind of neo-liberal global economy came into existence. Alignment of actors, agendas and practices constitutionalized in a complex architecture of policies, agreements, funding programs protocols, indexes and registers began operating at

multiple scales. As a centerpiece of their policy agenda, the World Bank policy to rehabilitate higher education in low-income developing economies in favour of interests and strategies of the powerful developed countries of the world i.e. the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada tied to the development of a service economy realized through sectors such as higher education.

GENERAL AGREEMENT IN TRADE IN SERVICES (GATS)

The GATS is a wide agreement managed by the W.T.O to further liberalize trade in services. Education was categorized as a service in the same way as transportation, communication, health and culture. When services are entirely provided by the government they do not fall within the GATS rule. However, when the service has to be provided partially by the government and partially by the private providers, they fall under the GATS agenda (Singhal, 2003). The GATS incorporates the basic GATT principles of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment under specific commitments. It also deals in market areas and special and differential treatment for developing economies.

The GATS schedule follows the limited nations Central Product Classification (CPS) system which identifies eleven basic service sectors and a twelfth category for miscellaneous services. These sub-sectors are further divisioned into one hundred and sixty sub-sectors or service activities. The twelve service sectors are (a) business including professional and computer services (b) communication services (c) construction and related engineering services (d) distribution services (e) educational services (f) environmental services (g) financial (insurance and banking) services (h) health related and social services (i) tourism and travel-related services (j) recreational, cultural and sporting services (k) transport services and (l) other services not included elsewhere. Further, the classification list divides educational services into five parts: (a) primary education services (b) secondary education services (c) higher education services (d) adult education and (e) other education services (Singhal, 2003). The agreement through its Article I distinguish four modes of supply and apply to trade of all services (Dongaonkar, Negi & Anand, 2006). These include: Cross-border supply (Mode I), Consumption Abroad (Mode II), Commercial Presence (Mode III) and Presence of Natural Persons (Mode IV). Table 1 summarizes the concepts of modes of trade of services in the context of education.

Table 1 Modes of Trade of Services in the Context of Education

Mode	Meaning	Interpretation	Example
<u>Mode I</u> Cross Border Supply	Educational service crosses the border, does not require the consumers to physically move	Service Mobility	Distance Education, e-learning
<u>Mode II</u> Consumption Abroad	Consumers moves to the country of education	Consumers Mobility	Student joining any educational institution abroad
<u>Mode III</u> Commercial	A service provider establishes a commercial	Institution and Investment	Branch Campus, Franchising

Presence	facility in another country to provide a service	Mobility	arrangements
<u>Mode IV</u> Presence of Natural Persons	Persons travelling to another country, temporarily, to provide an educational service	Human Capital Mobility	Movement of professors or researchers on temporary basis

Source: Adapted from Knight (2002).

In the era of globalization, GATS has re-defined higher education by laying emphasis on trade and market principles and facilitated its internationalization. The rationale for “trade creep” has been given on the ground of innovations through new delivery modes and new providers, improving educational access and increasing economic gain (Knight, 2002).

Commercialization of Higher Education through Privatization and Marketization

Under neo- liberalism, education is to be treated as a “consumable commodity and experience”(Kumar, 2011, p.38). Smillie and Minear (as cited in Schugurensky, 2006) explained that “many institutions are becoming ‘commercial enterprises’ or ‘humanitarian enterprises’ promoting the “business of humanitarianism”(p.301-302). The neo-liberals advocate privatization of higher education based upon market ideology. It has assumed a great role in response to the shrinking role of the state. It has been opined that for increasing access to higher education to the masses and reducing the gap between the wealthy few and the impoverished many, the ‘cult of privatization’ presents itself as an enlightened project. All over the world, privatization has been accepted all too well in ‘consensual silence’ as it offers an exit route from the dark cave of budgetary constraints. It is believed that private buyers would reduce public expenditure and manage the expensive public service of higher education more efficiently than their public counterparts. This rationale of ‘the public of private interests’ justifies the increasing privatization of higher education (Nixon, 2011).

Marketing in education is right out front. The increased demand for higher education has led to changes in the supply. Higher education, initially a government –supported service has entered the marketplace. Governments are not thinking much on how the universities are managed (Couturier, 2002; Salter & Tapper, 2002; Shattock, 2002). This has been happening largely due to privatization of higher education. Heald (as cited in Kenway, Bigum&Fitzclarence, 1993) identified four overlapping components of privatization that have been central to the emergence of education markets in the post- modern age. These components are “de-nationalization and load shedding by sale of public assets and transfer of the existing state functions to the private sector; privatization of production and provision of education; liberalization and deregulation to enable the private players in the markets exclusively provided by the state; and privatization of finance through cost –sharing mechanisms with the users of the educational services” (p. 110-111).

Universities are big businesses, marketing themselves in the world-wide education market (Salter & Tapper, 2002) by hiring ‘image creators’ to give themselves an academic face lift and turn into a brand. This may also be referred as the industrialization of higher education. “Once the universities are governed by market- driven policies, the public good nature of

higher education linked to communitarian and collective concerns shifts to more individualist, privatized interests” (Rhoads, Torres& Brewster, 2006, p.195). The public universities are “recurrently faced with budget crises forcing them to raise tuition and fees and freeze staff positions. Ironically, this happens at the same time that universities are marketing themselves as institutions committed to teaching and learning” (Zemsky, 2004). Universities are changing into ‘heteronomous’ from ‘autonomous’. From being independent and self- directed, the universities in the marketplace are apparently caught in between the trap of two contradictory dimensions- laissez- faire and interventionism. The heteronomous model encompasses elements of both a ‘controlled university’ and a ‘commercial university’ having the following features that maybe summarized in the form of ten C’s - (1) cultivation of private and foreign universities,(2) customer fees,(3) client- oriented programs,(4) corporate rationality,(5)cooperation with business, (6) casualization of labour (7) contracting out (8) cutbacks, (9) conditional funding and, (10) coordination that combines dynamics of collaboration and competition in the system. The heteronomous university can lead to the development of new priorities that would widen the gap between the rich disciplines and poor ones” (Schugurensky 1999, p.306-310).

As a consequence of marketization of education, the new politics of recognition has emerged and this has been increasingly fatal towards breeding educational inequalities Explaining the inequality in education, Power andFrandji (2010) stated that “...because education is a positional good, there have always been elements of competition for educational opportunities which have unevenly privileged different social groups...however, neoliberal-inspired policies have brought about an intensification of these processes” (p.385).

Commercialization of Higher Education through Internationalization

Another global commercial strategy adopted by countries is the internationalization of higher education. Internationalization of higher education is nothing but international trade in education services. Self- interest is the strongest motivator for trade even when the benefits accrue to all the parties involved. Internationalization of higher education as one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization respecting the individuality of the other nation. Countries are promoting internationalization of higher education in two ways- first, through ‘internationalization at home’ (Nilsson, 1999) wherein teaching- learning, research and other activities help the students develop international understanding and inter- cultural skills without leaving the campus. The second way is ‘internationalization abroad’ or ‘cross-border education’ also referred as ‘transnational education’ which involves the students, teachers, programs, courses, scholars, curriculum and projects to move between countries and cultures (Knight, 2003).

Internationalization of higher education system has provided a hope of commercial opportunities for the developed countries who took the initiative to form an agreement in education as a tradable service under the World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations. It gave birth to General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATS) under which services could be provided partially by the government and partly by private providers. A key example of international trade in higher education is transnational education wherein the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. The

sending country is known as the exporter whereas the receiving country is referred to as the importer or the host. Transnational education offers many benefits for the exporter and poses a host of challenges for the host country. Cross-border education encompasses formation of educational hubs and academic cities, providing higher education through corporate universities, networks branch campus, training and franchise arrangements, virtual universities and borderless education. The emphasis is more on commercial and market driven activities than development projects. There is stiff competition between universities and university rankings determine the selection of international academic partners who can base their multilateral academic partnerships based on mutual benefits and collaboration (Knight, 2011).

Jane Knight (2005, 2011) explained ‘what’ moves across borders. Four different categories were suggested: people, programs, providers and projects/services/new knowledge. Thus trade in cross-border education can take place in all four categories as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 Framework for Cross- Border Education

Category	Forms and conditions of mobility		
	Development Cooperation	Educational Linkages	Commercial Trade
People Students Professors/Scholar Researchers/ Expert/Consultants	Semester/Year Abroad Full Degrees Field/Research Work Internship Sabbaticals Consulting		
Programs Course, Program, Sub-Degree, Degree, Postgraduate	Twinning Franchised Articulated/Validated Joint/Double Award Online/Distance		
Providers Institutions Organizations Companies	Branch Campus Virtual Universities Merger/Acquisition Independent Institutions		
Projects Academic Projects Services	Research Curriculum Capacity Educational Services		

Source: Knight (2011)

Altbach (1980, 2002) puts forth a valid stand point that universities in the third world find themselves at a disadvantage in the knowledge system. Under neo-colonialism, centers and peripheries exist in the university system. The international education equation has some universities and higher education institutions that provide direction and produce research.

They are centers of knowledge production and have research-oriented faculty. Thus, they function as pinnacles of the academic system. These universities are located in the West or the industrialized world particularly the United Kingdom, France and Germany. On the other hand, the universities in the third world are peripheral institutions that are characterized by lack of facilities, infrastructure and fiscal constraints. They find themselves dependent upon the academic superpowers. They are in majority and are basically distributors of knowledge, followers of universities that are centers of knowledge, seldom blaze and are psychologically dependent. Poor countries and poor people differ from rich ones not only because they have less capital but because they have less knowledge (World Bank, 1999). An interesting paradox of these third world universities is that though they are peripheral in the international sense at the same time they are quite central to their local society. A large number of students from the third worlds study in the industrialized nation and many do not return home resulting in 'brain drain'. Several developing third world countries serve as regional centers between international universities in industrialized nations by training a large number of international students in their region (Altbach 1980, 2002). Thus, the current trend shows that many developing economies all over the world are fast emerging markets for cross-border education.

Cross-border internationalization of higher education has some emerging challenges that need to be addressed with respect to cost, quality assurance, access, recognition of qualifications, accreditation and trade agreements. It is a huge potential but cannot be promoted at the cost of academic quality and integrity. The education providers using marketing and branding campaigns to increase student enrolments, earning recognition and status through self-serving accreditors and accreditation mills that sell 'bogus accreditation labels' have to be identified. If such education providers are not checked, it would certainly lead to commercialization of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. The credentials awarded to the student by these 'degree mills' have to be critically checked and evaluated in terms of their recognition, international legitimacy and employment certainty. Equally important is the presence of international trade laws to regulate cross-border education provider from turning into 'for-profit' commercial business (Knight, 2011).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in the words of Kelsey (cited in Rochford, 2006) "the consensus- mongering of global neo- liberalism has led to the successful subjugation of the traditional university resulting in intellectual closure, an absence of questioning" (p.156). Also, to quote Weiler (2011) "The politics of knowledge manifests themselves in the hierarchical nature of knowledge systems and knowledge institutions, in the intricate relationship between knowledge and power, in the political dynamics inherent in the transnational knowledge system and its division of intellectual labour and in the political economy of the commercialization of knowledge" (p.205).

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