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GLOBAL CHALLENGES, LOCAL RESPONSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION

I

History of the social sciences could be followed via keywords that characterize each period of its development. *Globalization* is a term that suddenly appeared at the end of the last century pushing its brand in the forefront where it still insists. Depending on the viewing angle it is invoked once as a “solution” and other time as “destruction.” At the same time it opens up yet other perspectives; one of them is articulated as *glocalization*. The dialectic of the *global* and *local* is very prominent in contemporary social science debates and has had a significant impact on higher education studies. Last but not least, the recent debates on the *glocalization* of education have confirmed that this is a fertile field of comparative education.

These discussions are more or less consensual in that the following two or three decades the focus of higher education was transferred from the national to an international or global level. Since the 19th century, national systems of higher education and national universities were promoted by the dynamics of national markets and required to develop a nation-building scope; now they are challenged by the global market and the requirement for a much broader scope. However, this transition has been neither linear nor simple: the process of globalization is accompanied by a parallel process of localization. Every day we can read about an increasing global competition within the higher education sector. This competition pressures on institutions in two – at first glance opposite – directions: to be “globally competitive” and to serve the needs of local economy, i.e., to be “locally engaged” (OECD, 2007). This seemingly paradoxical relationship is well translated into political discourses. For example, the European People's Party Group reported a few months ago: “Higher education institutions should act locally to compete globally”.¹

This is an inventive rephrasing of an older saying, by substituting the verb “to think” into “to compete”. “How cute,” someone would sigh (and we need to comment by saying how indicative it is for the *Zeitgeist* of our time). However, even the original saying – “act locally, think globally” – is just one of those that are nice to hear but do not really say much. In today’s world, “thinking globally” can quickly dissolve into Platonic abstractions and “acting locally” can turn into egotistic rescue of the self. Therefore, it is much better if the passion of inventing sympathetic sayings is replaced with an analysis of the world around us. If we follow this path,

we can see soon that the global and local do not shake hands but are characterized with a much more complex relationship.

Therefore, what should be considered carefully from the perspective of comparative education is the very paradox of this relationship. Around the world we are faced with common, global challenges and we respond to them individually, locally. In the recently published monograph on the dialectic of the global and the local in the lens of comparative education we could read that “the workings of a global economy and the increasing interconnectedness of societies pose common problems for education systems around the world” but “regional, national and local responses [...] vary” (Arnove, Torres, & Franz, 2013, p. 1). Of course, there are efforts to respond to global challenges with common responses; however the “happy end” scenarios obviously do not work in the world around us. Most often, they resemble either a utopia or a dystopia.

Therefore, we need to analyze common problems in the perspective of their possible variations. To understand global, common problems we need to study variations and to make comparative analyses. At the same time it also should not be overseen that “cross-national comparisons of national patterns” by themselves do not explain the global dynamics, as “global forces are not so much analyzed or theorized as they are identified.” For serious analyses we need a “glonacal agency heuristic” (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 281).

II

Europe has a special position in this respect. The idea and the gradual development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have put all of these issues in a double perspective: on one hand, the EHEA has been an innovative “European response” to the “global challenges”; on the other, “global” and “local” face one another in many different ways within Europe itself. Europeanisation is but just “the regional version of internationalisation or globalisation” (Teichler, 2004, p. 4). The idea of building a “common” higher education area has faced from the outset with an overwhelming diversity. Fifteen years of building a common space has certainly contributed to the creation of some “common solutions,” while the EHEA today faces also many interpretations of what it was supposed to be. Besides “common solutions,” a considerable part of the old diversity has been preserved within the EHEA and has been partially reinforced and partially renovated in the process.

Two decades after the beginning of major reforms the EHEA is facing the dynamics of global and local in a new light. Development of national systems of higher education does not have the same pace; greatly enhanced mobility is far from the ideal of balanced flows; it seems that the crisis of recent years in some countries hit the higher education sector in an especially hard way. Attention should not only be aimed at the “full implementation” of the principles of the EHEA but also at “locally defined” factors. Last fall the first European Access Network (EAN) World

Congress was held in Montreal and according to University World News one of the major issues was that access to post-secondary education is “locally defined.” For example: “Who is excluded and how they are excluded differ across countries and continents.” (Atherton, 2013).

Of course, this is not only a European but a global issue. A whole series of factors – and many of them are only accessible with cultural and ethnological research – explain why it is so difficult to defend generalized answers. Brave new common global world is a world that is cut across by many fault zones, such as those which delimit the famous “World Class Universities” from unknown “local” colleges or higher education “centres” from higher education “peripheries,” etc. These fault zones do not only delimit developed and developing countries; they are fault zones also within them.

The EHEA is not divided only in the context of mobility: surveys show that there is a dominant flow of students and staff from the (south)east to the (north)west. This division seems to be influenced mainly by economy. However, there is also a division which can be attributed to culture. For example, hegemony of the English language requires a paradigm shift from local academic communities, and this is not just a problem of the “third” world, but increasingly of Europe itself. World, as well as the European higher education is faced with “academic discrimination of locality,” which is particularly clearly demonstrated, for example, by the “SSCI Syndrome in Higher Education”: by “degrading local journals” and “accelerating academic stratification” (Chou, 2013, p. xi) in global frames. Global vs. local is not the only dichotomy which characterizes universities in a globalized world; no less important is the dichotomy of “centres” vs. “peripheries” which, last but not least, draws attention also to the “academic inequality” (Altbach, 2010, p. 10).

This is just another reason why only focusing on differences may help to identify and understand what is – or should be – common (Zgaga, Teichler, & Brennan, 2013, p. 14). A lot of research has been done over the past two decades and a lot more we know today about the European and global higher education. Nevertheless, many questions remain insufficiently treated, especially from the perspective of “centres” and “peripheries,” and new ones are also opening.

This book seeks to contribute to filling the gaps in this area. It offers a series of contributions in the intersection of university governance, academic profession and internationalisation and reflects the profound interest of contemporary researchers in the questions of how the contemporary higher education reforms across Europe affect university governance and especially the roles and functions of academics. Twenty authors from all over Europe – from South to North and from East to West – deal with some specific aspects of “global challenges” and “local responses” in eleven chapters. Their papers are divided into three parts: the first dealing with issues of academic profession, the second dealing with changes in research training and doctoral studies and the third dealing with changes in the organization of higher education and higher education institutions in different parts of Europe.

III

Ever since the prominent projects Condition of academic profession (CAP) and Academic Profession in Europe (EUROAC) research on academic profession has proliferated. The present book reflects this rising interest in conditions of academic work and the impact of contemporary higher education reforms on academic profession. The book opens with a chapter by Mitchell Young in which the author analyses governance changes in the Czech Republic's research policy over the past decade according to New Public Management (NPM) principles. Young claims that Czech Republic has developed what is arguably the most radically quantitative and retrospective performance-based research evaluation system in Europe, known locally as the "coffee grinder." This policy tool has come under heavy criticism from both local academics and international experts as not fit for purpose. Young presents year by year evolution of the research evaluation as a policy tool and outlines the shift in research policy ideas, and concludes by examining the distorting effects of an extreme NPM agenda.

Based on the experience of the Czech Republic in developing the Evaluation Methodology author identifies three sets of dangers which should be considered as research policy reforms are carried out: the first set are the dangers in allowing a single doctrine to dominate a policy debate; the second set is that of the abstraction of policy discourse, as policy and policy innovation become more transnational especially though the use of entirely abstracted models or prototypes as promoted by supranational bodies like the EU and OECD; lastly, the third set is that of using purely quantitative measures to analyse and judge research quality, excellence, and relevance: terms which are rooted in a qualitative understanding of what is good and desirable.

In chapter 2, Santiago, Carvalho and Ferreira discuss the new challenges for Portuguese academics with regards to the issue of knowledge society/economy and managerial changes. The starting point of the chapter is the 2007 higher education act in Portugal which was implemented with the aim to (re)configure higher education institutions to make them more corporate and to impose a more competitive and efficient environment. The authors then analyse how academics in Portugal are positioned in relation to these changes and whether they view changes as affecting their professional group. The chapter draws empirical data from a survey of academics with management responsibilities (which are in the extended research project compared to physicians and nurses).

The authors first confirm the findings from previous research that the majority of academics overall still identify the mainstream "traditional" academic values and beliefs as the core reference of their professionalism. Further, they expose some important differences and qualifications to these findings. The authors point out that academics in managerial positions perceive a dramatic change in institutional objectives which have predominantly turned to market and managerial concerns. The knowledge society is substantially present in their day-to-day professional

practices, at least discursively. Next, they suggest that surveyed academics in leadership positions perceived strengthening of their influence over key institutional decisions. In turn, academic boards and individuals emerge as the actors who have been losing more power over the main institutional decision-making processes. Finally, the authors conclude that their respondents were in agreement suggesting that the academic profession has been losing social prestige and power compared with other social groups.

In chapter 3 Ćulum engages with the question of the role of academics in the university civic mission and university engagement in local community as “to embody university purpose, objectives, priorities and academic pillars, meaning teaching and research, with the needs and problems of their neighbouring (local) communities.” Drawing on the existing literature, Ćulum suggests that the most sustainable way of integrating civic mission is its incorporation into teaching and research, thus exposing a crucial role of the academics. The chapter further discusses some possibilities and constraints of the civic mission integration into Croatian universities. It focuses on three key determinants of successful integration: (a) academics' readiness to introduce change into their everyday teaching and research, (b) attitudes that academics take toward the civic mission and (c) models of institutional support that would encourage academics to integrate community engaged learning in their everyday teaching and research.

In addition, Ćulum develops a typology of Croatian academics in relation to their willingness to accept changes in their daily teaching and research. Ćulum finds that in Croatia academics working in humanities and social sciences as well as in arts, women, associate and tenured professors and those academics aged from 41 to 50 years appear to be more willing to accept changes and new ideas, and to integrate the university civic mission in their teaching and research activities. Finally, the least likely to bring change in daily teaching and research are the youngest respondents up to 31 years of age in the associate status.

Another highly relevant subject in the domain of academic profession is discussed in chapter 4. The authors Rostan and Ceravolo present an analysis of the international academic mobility based on the *Changing Academic Profession* international survey (CAP) data. Descriptive analysis of the CAP sample indicates that there are five main types of academic mobility based on the duration and purpose of mobility, named by authors as: 1) early circulation for study; 2) late short job circulation; 3) late long job circulation; 4) early migration for study and 5) late job migration. In the subsequent analysis authors use multinomial regression modelling for the analysis of different factors influencing different types of academic mobility. The primary focus of the analysis is the influence of macro factors like country size, level of economic development in the country, presence of English as one of the official languages etc, while controlling for individual and organisational characteristics and dimensions.

The results confirm the importance and relevance of macro level social and economic characteristics of the countries of origin and current residence for academic mobility, confirming the theoretical models of brain-drain and brain

circulation which exist in various shapes in different contexts. Rostan and Ceravalo show that countries' linguistic traditions, size, economic status and regional location do have an impact on international mobility, although in different ways according to different types of mobility. Finally, data confirm the existence, or the persistence, of inequalities between English speaking and non-English speaking countries, more developed and less developed countries, smaller and larger countries, and the existence of differences between China, other Asian countries and Western countries.

IV

The second part of the book addresses the changes in research training and doctoral studies. The rising interest in doctoral training and careers of doctoral graduates has two main causes. One certainly is in the rising numbers of doctoral students. The other is in the interest of governments to promote research excellence, of which training of doctoral students, and their employment inside and outside of academia are central parts. In chapter 5, Arja Haapakorpi takes on the issue of doctoral education and careers of doctoral graduates in Finland, in particular those employed outside academia. The empirical basis of the analysis represents the combination of quantitative data from the survey of doctoral degree holders in Finland who completed their doctoral examinations in the academic year 2004/05 and qualitative data collected through interviews with the managers of the employer organisations employing doctoral graduates outside academic institutions. Firstly, Haapakorpi analyses careers, job descriptions and hierarchical status at work of doctoral holders employed outside academia and compares them with employees in the same organisations who have a lower higher education degree. Secondly, based on the employer interviews, the author studies the reasons to employ doctorate holders and competence requirements required for their work.

Haapakorpi finds out that although there was no particular labour market niche for doctorate holders outside the academy, doctorate holders had special tasks or positions, for which the degree was regarded as appropriate. At work sites outside the academia, the industry-specific competence was considered important, which, however, did not invalidate the value of the highest academic degree. The membership in the academic community appears to be a good reason to employ doctorate holders for the purpose of reinforcing collaboration with universities, while the doctorate holders themselves were rather satisfied with their jobs. Finally, the author concludes that in order to improve the matching process of competences required through doctoral training and education and job requirements outside academia, doctoral qualifications have to be translated into industry-specific and organisation-based doctoral competences.

Moving to Italy, in chapter 6, Primeri and Reale look into the subject of doctoral training as the process of acquiring academic norms, values, and rules, as well as the behaviours, attitudes, and know-how within specific scientific community. Primeri

and Reale discuss several factors are changing the way in which PhD students and early career researchers are selected and trained. Among these, a key element is the increasing competition and pressure to gain a better position in international rankings – considered a visible measure of academic excellence – and to improve prestige and reputation. Authors present the findings from two case studies (two departments of different disciplines within a large, comprehensive Italian university). The analysis highlights changes concerning three main features: selection and training habits; modifications in the relationships between students and supervisors; and research practices. Authors conclude that the specific characteristics of the disciplines play an important role in shaping how PhD students and early career researchers are trained, but other factors seem to be more relevant: external competition for excellence, evaluation of academic research and performance, size of research groups, and the national features of the HE system.

The discussion on the doctoral training is further complemented by the contribution of Meschitti and Carassa. In chapter 7, the authors explore the process of doctoral students' socialisation into their own disciplinary community, to the role of PhD student, to the department and the research group, and to the academic profession. Inspired by situated learning theory, the authors use ethnographic method of direct observation and interviews to gather data on daily academic routines of PhD students belonging to the same research team at a Swiss department of informatics. The authors make several important findings. First, they observe that the research team represents a peculiar community of practice, with a strong mutual engagement among its members, which is considered a good condition to facilitate socialisation. In terms of particular activities which affect trajectory of new PhD, they observed that team meetings were particularly important, as well as invited lectures for fostering disciplinary knowledge. They also highlight the role of team leader in fostering socialisation. Finally, the authors propose a model of PhD student socialisation, highlighting the role of the department, the specific work conditions, and the relationships with peers and supervisors, arguing for the need to create open spaces for discussion to foster socialisation.

V

In the last two decades we have witnessed dramatic changes in the organization of higher education and higher education institutions in different parts Europe. In Chapter 8, Pinheiro and Stensaker address the way in which external possibilities and strategic initiatives lead to internal transformation process of universities. Looking into the empirical account from a Danish university, Pinheiro and Stensaker tentatively conclude that the European university is gradually but steadily moving towards the notion of a unified, strategic, organisational actor: pro-active, more financially self-reliant, increasingly sensitive to the needs and expectations of various stakeholders and more accountable to society. In conclusion, it is suggested that the extent to which the ambitions of the university will be realised depends

on the extent to which organisational culture will be changed in the processes of systematic human resource management.

In chapter 9, Vaira addresses the issue of reforms in higher education by applying the concepts of liminality and transition to organisational change and reflects on it from theoretical and empirical perspective. The author offers a general theoretical model built on these two concepts which is then applied to an empirical case – the Italian university, to show in what way organisational change is hindered. The author argues that the Italian university is a paradigmatic example of an organisation being trapped in a liminal state, given that despite the four different waves of reform in the last twenty years, the organisational change appears to be chronically impeded.

The debate on reforms in different national context is complemented by chapter 10 in which Miklavič and Komljenovič identify the ideational bases – the topics and meanings – underpinning higher education reforms in the Western Balkans. As such it contributes to a much needed research on this little known area of Europe. The main focus of the chapter is on regional idiosyncrasies as expressed through narratives of interviewed regional actors. These narratives are complemented to the data from a large-scale survey of academic staff in the region. The authors apply an inductive approach and to a highly beneficial effect combine both sources. The authors expose several major narratives surrounding the development of higher education systems in the region. One such narrative is the idealisation of the West and in turn a self-imagined peripheral identity which stimulates the discourse of emulation. Another powerful narrative is that of nation-building, especially in the countries that emerged from the armed conflict or delayed transition (as in the case of Albania). Yet another is the difference between the discipline faculties in their perception on the role of higher education. The authors conclude that the reconstruction of society, formation of intellectual elites and nation building are often given priority and importantly shaping higher education reforms.

In the final chapter in this volume, Tavares and Santiago analyse the initiatives of Portuguese higher education institutions in the domain of student access and the extent to which these align with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). In specific, the analysis focuses on three issues: the data on different student cohorts, the institutional mechanisms in place to support the admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students and the variation of such mechanisms by academic programme, as well as the changes in the last decade with regards to the enrolments pattern. The authors conclude that with regards to the ESG 1.1 and 1.6, there is only partial compliance, and while the HEIs in Portugal are in principle aligned with the national legal framework, they do have an extent of autonomy within which they develop their own specific institutional policies on access, as well as strategies and initiatives to attract students aside the national competition. However, as authors further suggest, the notion of quality in the eyes of institutions appears to be much more along the lines of the academic quality of students, rather than the quality culture, procedures and instruments in place with the aim to assure the quality of the institution and its academic content.

VI

This book contains the revised version of some of the papers presented at the anniversary 25th Conference of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER) on “Higher Education and Social Dynamics” which took place in Belgrade in early September 2012. The eleven contributions were selected by editors from about one hundred papers presented at the Conference. Overall, the contributions confirm again that the higher education research landscape is a diverse and rich one. At the same time, these diverse cases have at least one commonality – the fact that even though they are located in different higher education systems, they address issues that, albeit as a rule context-specific, can be found in all parts of Europe and beyond. Certainly, the local responses to the hereby addressed global challenges represent a mere snapshot of a broader landscape the European higher education dynamics is.

NOTES

- ¹ 14 November 2013; see http://web.cor.europa.eu/epp/News/Pages/13-11-14_Boroboly-higher-education.aspx#.Uv9vArQwAT4.

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