

## THE EXPANSION AND TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Since World War II, every industrial nation has experienced very rapid growth of its system of higher education. Toward the end of the '60s, most countries also experienced increasingly severe strains and problems, most visibly in widespread student unrest and attendant demonstrations, but also in the forms of university governance and administration, finance, the curriculum and the organization of instruction, the recruitment and training of faculty, student admission policies, support of research, student-faculty relationships – indeed, in every area of college and university life. All over the world, from Berkeley to Tokyo, from M.I.T. to Berlin, these related and cumulative strains have given rise to a sense of crisis, a growing feeling among academic men that the rate of change and the accumulating strains are forcing the transformation and not merely the growth of higher education. This crisis, both in Europe and America, marks the transition from one historical phase of higher education to another: in Europe, from élite to mass higher education; in the United States, from mass to universal access to post-secondary education.

In America, during the 1950s and '60s, almost all thinking about the future of higher education assumed a rapid and continuous growth of enrollments within institutions much like those that we know. Our natural propensity to think about the future in the categories of the past is strongly reinforced by the impressive continuity in the growth of higher education in America over the past 80 or 90 years. Since the turn of the century American higher education has grown from a system of small and medium-sized colleges and universities, enrolling about 4 per cent of the age grade, into a system of mass higher education enrolling nearly half of the age grade, and about 60 per cent of all high school graduates.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the society and its colleges and universities seem to be moving steadily toward the provision of post-secondary education for the whole of the college-age population.

But suddenly that goal seems problematic and uncertain. There are still powerful forces both within the colleges and universities and in the larger society pressing for increased enrollments and enrollment rates in every class, race and region. But we are beginning to see another set of forces which may even be more powerful and which may prevent the future of American higher education from being written in the categories of the past. It begins to appear that mass higher education has created con-

ditions which will preclude its easy and natural expansion into a system of near universal post-secondary education for college-age youth in the familiar kinds of colleges and universities. Student disaffection, campus disruptions, the breakdown of the basic value consensus among college and university teachers, administrative overload and fatigue, acute financial crisis, punitive legislatures and government officials, widespread public concern and hostility – all argue that the movement toward 10 million youthful students in our present colleges and universities by 1978 is unlikely.

And yet the forces lying behind rapid and continuous growth persist; the demands of the occupational structure for more educated people, the growth of the new and semi-professions linked to the expansion of governmental services, the lack of job opportunities for youngsters of college age, above all, the rise in the educational standard of living in the whole population which has transformed higher education from a privilege into a right and, for increasing numbers, into an obligation – all these forces for continued growth in college enrollments continue to be present. There were many good reasons why we should anticipate that higher education, like secondary education in the first half of the century, would simply come to enroll the bulk of the appropriate age grade. Parents, youth, academic men, the country at large will not surrender that expectation easily. On one hand, this system must grow and expand, or so it appears; on the other, there is reason to fear that it is already ungovernable and in parts unworkable – and this surely will have consequences for public policy.

### *Exponential Growth*

Let us review briefly where we are and how we have come here. At the turn of the century, about a quarter of a million students were enrolled for degree credits in American colleges and universities – that comprised about 4 percent of the college age population of eighteen to twenty-one year olds. Fewer than 6,000 were doing graduate work. By 1920 the number of undergraduates had more than doubled to about 600,000, then comprising about 8% of the college age population. By 1940 the undergraduate enrollments were nearly one million and a half, nearly 16% of the college age group. In 1960 undergraduate enrollments were about 3¼ million, then about 33% of the college age population. Thus, during that 60 year period the proportion of the age grade enrolled in American colleges and universities roughly doubled every twenty years. During the past decade, it has continued to rise by about one per cent of the age grade a year. By 1970 the total undergraduate enrollments of about 6½ million comprised 45% of the age grade and were still rising. Over those 70 years the graduate

student population grew even faster, from fewer than 6,000 at the turn of the century to over 850,000 in 1970. Most of this growth in graduate enrollments has occurred since World War II: while undergraduate enrollments grew by a factor of about 4 between 1940 and 1970, graduate enrollments grew by a factor of 8 over the same period. The number of college and university teachers more than kept pace with enrollments, going from the 25,000 college and university teachers in nearly a thousand institutions in 1900 to nearly a half a million college and university teachers, not counting graduate teaching assistants, employed in some 2500 institutions in 1970. The experience of growth, and the expectation of continued growth, is the most powerful single force in American higher education and conditions all our thinking about it.

The pressures for expansion are reflected in the growth of higher education in every industrial society, but the differences in scale reflect a difference in the phase of development of those systems as compared with America's. While the United States begins a movement from mass toward universal higher education, other rich countries struggle to transform *élite* systems into systems of mass higher education. Sweden had 14,000 university students in 1947. By 1960, the number had more than doubled to 35,000; by 1965, it had doubled again to about 70,000, with another doubling projected by 1971, when university students would comprise about 24% of the relevant age group.<sup>2</sup> France saw a growth in its university population between 1960 and 1965 from 200,000 to over 400,000, with another doubling by the mid-70s projected, to an enrollment rate of about 17% of the age group. Denmark doubled its university student population between 1960 and 1966 from 19,000 to 34,000; by the mid-70s it will double again to 70,000, who will then comprise about 13% of the age group. In the United Kingdom the Robbins Report anticipated university enrollments growing from about 130,000 in 1962 to 220,000 by 1973, and to nearly 350,000 by 1980. These projections have already been substantially revised upwards by the D.E.S. toward 400,000 (about 13% of the age group) in all forms of full-time higher education by 1973 and over 800,000 by 1981, with some 460,000 in universities.<sup>3</sup>

What these numbers conceal, or perhaps foreshadow, are two fundamentally different processes. One of these is the expansion of the *élite* universities – the growth of traditional university functions in traditional, if somewhat modified, forms of universities. The other is the transformation of *élite* university systems into systems of mass higher education, performing a great variety of new functions (at least new to universities) for a much larger proportion of the university age group. Up to the present, in Britain as on the Continent, growth has mainly been by expanding the *élite* uni-

versity system. But the old institutions cannot expand indefinitely; they are limited by their traditions, organization, functions and finance. In European countries, it is likely that an increase in enrollment in higher education beyond about 15% of the age grade requires not merely the further expansion of the élite university systems, but the development of mass higher education through the growth of popular non-élite institutions.

The development of higher education in America has differed in several important respects. While its system of higher education in 1900 was small – the 4% of the age grade it enrolled in that year was about the same as in many European countries after World War II – the structure of our system was, for a variety of reasons, extremely flexible and responsive to the emerging pressures for growth. One might say that after the emergence of the American university, and especially the land grant universities, after the Civil War, the United States already had a system structurally and normatively adapted to mass higher education which simply had not yet had to meet the demand for mass enrollments. That demand could not really emerge until secondary education had expanded to bring much larger proportions of the age grade to the point of college or university entry. And that was effectively accomplished in the thirty years between 1910 and 1940, by which time nearly half of all students graduated from high school.

Instead of a small number of universities with high uniform standards, centrally controlled or coordinated, as in European countries, America had a large and differentiated system without common standards or coordinate policies. Without a central governing body, these autonomous and competitive institutions made their decisions about growth much more in response to popular sentiments and the play of the market than did European universities which were, and are, highly insulated against those external forces. The lack of a common degree standard, either between or within institutions, freed most American colleges and universities from the constraints of the selective admissions criteria of the élite institutions. The unit credit system provided great flexibility both for the curriculum and for students; it liberated the curriculum from the boundaries of the received academic disciplines, and the students from the boundaries of a subject or an institution. The key link between the institutions and the academic disciplines was provided in 1890 by the emergence of the department, a much-maligned arrangement whose advantages can only be appreciated by comparison with the antiquated faculties and schools of many European universities. The differentiation and formalization of faculty ranks, also round the turn of the century, defined the academic career, and laid the basis for an academic community based on colleague-

ship, as compared with the relatively very great power of the European chair-holder ruling over an undifferentiated and dependent body of academic assistants. It was important also, in this connection, that the full professorship became the ordinary, the expected, terminal grade, and was not reserved for a small minority of especially distinguished or powerful scholars, as in Europe. This development both reflected and reinforced the collegial, as opposed to the hierarchial, aspects of university and departmental government in the U.S. In general, the weakness of the pre-industrial university traditions in America – our readiness to accept and develop the applied sciences, and to serve many groups and institutions outside our own boundaries – greatly increased the capacity of our colleges and universities to diversify their activities and functions and increase in size.

This has not happened painlessly, but until recently we had every reason to believe that this broad, flexible, and heterogeneous system of American higher education was well adapted to rapid and continuous growth. Our state universities appeared to be capable of almost indefinite expansion either on their home campuses or through a network of satellites. The junior college, over the past two decades, began to show itself to be a major instrument for mass higher education. While undergraduate enrollments in four-year institutions were growing by about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times between 1955 and 1970, enrollments in junior colleges were growing by a factor of nearly 5. And in California and elsewhere, statewide master planning seemed to have answered the nagging problem of how access to the system could be ensured at the same time that the unique characteristics and high standards of universities and graduate and research centers were preserved. Not long ago the multiversity and the junior college seemed twin expressions of the American genius that had created first the common school, then universal secondary education through the comprehensive high school, and now mass higher education moving inexorably toward universal exposure to post-secondary schooling. During those years our analyses and projections were made with great confidence, and indeed with something like euphoria: the characteristic euphoria of an expanding economy. And since we have not experienced the painful transformation of an élite system of universities into a system of mass higher education, we are quite unprepared for the difficulties we are now experiencing as we move from mass toward universal higher education.

I would suggest that some of our difficulties are analogous to the problems of European systems, but at a different stage of growth and development. Although the problems that they face are much like our own, it is noteworthy that the European countries are enormously attracted by

the American solutions just at the moment when they look less and less attractive to us. I think the explanation is that our arrangements are extremely well adapted to the phase of mass higher education into which *they* are moving, but not nearly so well adapted to the problems of universal higher education toward which *we* are moving.

Like the Europeans, we have attempted to move to the next phase of provision of higher education by expanding the institutions of the last phase. I think that we, like they, will find it necessary to transform our institutions, and not merely expand them. We will find it more difficult, precisely because of the past success of the American system of higher education, and of the grip that these familiar forms have on our imagination and expectations.

The transformation of a *system* of higher education need not affect in similar ways each of its component institutions. Indeed, as American higher education as a system moves towards the provision of universal access, some colleges and universities will stubbornly defend their older forms of élite education; others, including some of the great multiversities described by Clark Kerr,<sup>4</sup> will continue to provide mass higher education, that is, to apply traditional standards and modes of instruction to a wider range of subjects and broader constituencies. Side by side with these survivals from earlier phases of educational development, and in some cases within them,<sup>5</sup> are emerging characteristic forms of universal education marked by new forms of instruction and quite different "standards of achievement" accessible to an even broader range of "students" who begin to resemble a representative sample of the whole population.

Nevertheless, while the emerging system of universal higher education may, when fully developed, permit the survival and coexistence of earlier forms of education within it, this period of transition between mass and universal access gives rise to strains and difficulties of various kinds: indeed, those strains and difficulties are among the forces which in turn give rise to the search for new forms and solutions. Among the most important of these strains that have emerged in recent years are (1) the breakdown of consensus among faculty and students about the basic nature and functions of the institution; (2) the growth of involuntary attendance in our colleges and universities; and (3) a rebellion by large numbers of students against the constraints of formal academic programs.

### *The Breakdown of Consensus*

Universities have usually assumed a broad acceptance by the participants of certain norms and values which reflect a common conception of the basic nature of the institution and its functions. The importance of

this broad consensus has been obscured in part because when the consensus is operating no one notices it; it operates as a set of unquestioned assumptions and comes into question only in a crisis like the present one, when the consensus breaks down. But in addition, the consensus has in fact been tenuous and partial because the broad conception of the big American university allows for such variation, for so many different specific conceptions of mission and function.

The multiversity could not be identified with the traditional liberal arts college exclusively, or with the graduate school committed to basic research, or with any single definition of the academic role. Rather it encompassed all of them. The underlying consensus was not around any specific set of academic values but rather around a set of values that justify the coexistence of quite diverse educational enterprises. The multiversity was tied together by a complex set of procedures both collegial and bureaucratic which managed to effect the necessary degree of coordination of a very wide range of diverse activities and people, maintained necessary control over expenditures and personal records, while preserving for the teaching and research units a very high degree of freedom and autonomy. These procedures, while often irritating and cumbersome, and slow and faulty in other respects, nevertheless gained the acquiescence of most of the participants in the institution; and indeed the basic assumption was that the procedures themselves could be modified through other regular procedures.

Thus the university has rested on certain broadly shared norms and values, some of them procedural (institutionalized in the university), some of them substantive (institutionalized in the department) and focused on the central characteristics of the academic role. This consensus has broken down, both within the faculty and among the students. Relations among colleagues and between professors and students no longer can be built on a broad set of shared assumptions, but are increasingly uncertain and a source of continual strain and conflict.

Large parts of the university are still insulated from the sharpest experience of these conflicts. In some of the professional schools and most of the old science departments, in engineering and in business administration, the old assumptions still obtain, and reports of breakdown in the social sciences and in some of the humanities departments are greeted with skepticism and a faint air of moral superiority. But every year more academic men experience at first hand the corrosive effects of ideological controversy, and begin to see how these make their work increasingly difficult, and for some finally impossible. That kind of controversy, unlike the old and familiar forms of academic politics, makes collegial relations

difficult; it demands unlimited commitments of time and energy; it makes the ordinary compromises of organizational administration impermissible as unprincipled and corrupt; and worst of all it is charged with a kind of moral passion that makes any tactics seem to be justified by the virtuous end.

It is only through the collapse of consensus that university teachers discover how important it was in maintaining a climate conducive to their work. The new climate makes demands on their time and energy and emotional equilibrium that are quite incompatible with their pursuit of their subjects and the work with their students that is or ought to be the main business of academic men.

The breakdown of consensus is documented in findings from a large national survey of academic men sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, and carried out in the Spring of 1969.<sup>6</sup> The survey delineated two quite different conceptions of the university associated with age, but also with academic discipline, and the quality of institutions. On the one hand, we see a traditional view of the liberal university, committed to teaching, research, and a variety of "services" to other institutions, but with sharp limits on its permissible intervention as an institution into the political life of the enviroing society; on the other, a profound hostility to that society and a passionate belief that the university is, or ought to be, a major instrument for its reform and transformation.

We cannot be sure from these data whether these attitudes and views of young academics will persist and transform the institutions, or whether they will be transformed by time and the power of the institution. Nevertheless, I tend to believe that the differences that we are finding are not going to disappear over time, but are likely to persist and perhaps become sharper. And if they do, this will have two sets of consequences: first, it will place in positions of power and responsibility large numbers of academic men who are quite fundamentally opposed to the present organization and structure of the colleges and universities and to the politics of consensus by which they have been governed. Secondly, the same trend will widen the gulf between the colleges and universities and the larger society. These developments would thus further increase the strains in the governance of our present institutions, further increasing the difficulties that the colleges and universities are having with those institutions and groups which furnish their resources and support. I suspect these developments will be decisive for the future of many of these institutions.

### *Involuntary Attendance*

When we speak of student rebellion we ordinarily think of demonstra-



tions, sit-ins, the visible and dramatic disturbances of one kind or another that have dominated the news about higher education since the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley. But there is another kind of rebellion that may be even more important in its long-range implications, and that is the rebellion of large numbers of students against the universities and their forms of instruction: against the constraints of the formal academic programs and curriculum, the requirements and the lectures, the seminars and the papers, the reading lists and laboratory assignments. Behind this rebellion, which in many institutions is rapidly undermining all the assumptions about the relations of students and teachers, lies the issue of involuntary attendance in colleges and universities that is a concomitant of the movement beyond mass toward universal higher education.<sup>7</sup> By 1968 about half of all high school graduates across the country were going *directly* from high school to some form of higher education; about 10% more were entering after some delay.<sup>8</sup> But in 1968 in the upper-middle classes and in states like California, the proportion of high school graduates going on to some form of post-secondary education was already about 80 per cent.<sup>9</sup> For youngsters in those places and strata, universal higher education is here: nearly everybody they know goes on to college. And those strata and areas are growing inexorably. Many of the difficulties now being experienced by American colleges and universities reflect the strains of this transformation from mass to universal higher education.

In the recent past, attendance in our system of mass higher education was voluntary – a privilege that had in some places become a right, but not yet for many an obligation. Whether seen as a privilege (as in more selective, mostly private institutions), or as a right (as in less selective, mostly public institutions), voluntary attendance carried with it an implicit acceptance of the character and purposes of the institution as defined by “the authorities.” The authority of trustees or administrators or faculty to define the nature of the education and its requirements could be evaded, but was rarely challenged by students. With few exceptions students played little or no role in the government of the institution.

The growth of enrollments and the movement toward universal higher education has made attendance at college increasingly “involuntary.” To this extent colleges begin to resemble elementary and secondary schools, where compulsory attendance has long been recognized as increasing problems of student motivation, boredom, and the maintenance of order. The coercions on college students take several forms. The most visible in recent years has been the draft, coupled with an unpopular war, which has locked many young men into college who might otherwise be doing something else. But other pressures will outlive the reform or abolition of the

draft and the end of the Indo-China war. The unquestioned expectations of family and friends and the consequent shame in not meeting those expectations; the scarcity of attractive alternatives for eighteen and nineteen year-old job-seekers without college experience; the strong and largely realistic anticipation that without some college credits they will be disqualified from most of the attractive and rewarding jobs in the society of adults. As more and more college-age youngsters go on to college, not to be or to have been a college student becomes increasingly a lasting stigma, a mark of some special failing of mind or character, and a grave handicap in all the activities and pursuits of adult life.

The net effect of these forces and conditions is that we are finding in our classrooms large numbers of students who really do not want to be in college, have not entered into willing contract with it, and do not accept the values or legitimacy of the institution.

Much of the discontent arising from involuntary attendance fuels student pressures within the university against formal course requirements and grades, and for greater "flexibility" and more "relevance" in the curriculum, demands for less dependence on books and reading and more on "field work" and contemporary experience. These pressures and tendencies have already had an important effect on the undergraduate curriculum of most American colleges and universities.

There is a very clear parallel between what was happening to the curriculum in our colleges and universities about 1970 and the transformation of the secondary school curriculum in the first two or three decades of this century. In colleges and in universities, as in the secondary schools before them, the growth of involuntary attendance forces changes in the curriculum, away from the intrinsic logic of the academic disciplines, and toward the interests that students bring with them to the classroom. The necessity to motivate, rather than being able to assume motivation, means that the instructor has increasingly to ask how the material can be approached in ways that will "turn the student on." This may mean changes in the form of instruction; it may mean changes in the emphasis given to different aspects of the subject; it may mean efforts to involve the students more directly in the definition of the course content.<sup>10</sup> And in recent years all of these tendencies were to be observed in the colleges and universities as new committees were created to bring students views' more directly into the structure of curriculum formation and decision-making.

The events associated with the Cambodian invasion of the spring of 1970 accelerated these changes in at least some of our leading colleges and universities. They did so not so much by changing the attitudes and values of academic men or students as by revealing very sharply how thin and

fragile is the structure of normative assumptions on which the university is based. The academic values of patient inquiry, the sequential development of ideas, the emphasis on reasoned discussion and criticism, the continual reference to evidence and the special attention to negative evidence, all are institutionalized in academic routines. Cambodia, at many leading American colleges and universities, provided the political occasion and passion for an attack on these routines and on the values behind them, and revealed to all how weak was the attachment to them by many students and some faculty.

The significance of the Cambodian invasion is not that many students protested against a military decision. Its meaning is more subtle: the events made visible to students and faculty on many campuses how widespread involuntary attendance in our colleges and universities is, and how, given opportunity and justification, large numbers of students eagerly seize the occasion to turn away from the normal routines of their course work and toward a fundamentally different kind of activity in and around the university. In some colleges and universities, at least in the leading institutions, the "reconstitution" of the curriculum and the political activity were felt by many to be a kind of liberation from the hated books and course work.

But Cambodia only accelerated a broad movement of the undergraduate curriculum away from the academic disciplines and traditional concepts of liberal education toward the interests and values of the youth-oriented culture. We are seeing in the curriculum of many institutions a shift of emphasis (1) away from books and towards action, (2) away from analysis and criticism toward affirmation and commitment, (3) away from solitary work toward collective enterprises and the pleasures of cooperative sociability, (4) away from the competitive pursuit of grades toward informal non-graded "evaluations," (5) away from what is defined as an arid or spurious objectivity, marked by the search for negative evidence, toward the rewards of engagement and membership, and the definition and confirmation of appropriate moral positions. With the confidence that arises from the support of their peers and from parts of the mass media, and in the face of the weakness of traditional academic authority, many students are demanding that their teachers and institutions provide them with the ultimate meanings and values that heretofore they have found in tradition, or politics, or religion, or some other social movement. The traditional academic disciplines, which pursued Knowledge rather than Truth, and cultivated skepticism rather than conviction, cannot contain those energies and yearnings. Nor is it yet clear what their impact will be on the future of higher education. A liberal society and state which can ignore

or permit or even encourage the cultivation of skepticism and the appeal to evidence in its leading colleges and universities may be less tolerant of their new cultural orthodoxies, especially if these are at variance with popular sentiment or powerful interests. The movement of the curriculum I have been describing is likely to strain the autonomy of institutions which move very far in that direction.

Thus, recent events have opened the question of whether and how the forms of teaching and inquiry that developed during the phases of élite and mass higher education are to survive into the phase of universal higher education. The period following Cambodia has seen growing concern and discussion about what might be done with large numbers of young men and women who have completed secondary school; who have great talent and intelligence and energy; who are ready for larger, more adult responsibilities and tasks than we allow them in the colleges and universities; who are not nearly so hostile to the society as their spokesmen claim, but who want, many of them, to put their energies at the service of the poor and the despised and toward a better and more just society. American society has made little provision for those strong and generous impulses and those healthy strivings for adult status; and it is no solution to send most young men and women to college straight from high school. There is a fraction of youth that can achieve its adult roles and intrinsic satisfactions through serious prolonged formal study. That proportion may be 10 or 15, or even 20 per cent of the age grade, but it is almost certainly not 50 or 60 or 70 per cent of the age grade.<sup>11</sup> To send most youth directly to college is to frustrate them and to undermine the colleges and universities. That is reason enough to believe that the future of American higher education will not be an extrapolation of the past. And some alternatives are already emerging.

### *A Caveat*

A recognition that not all or even most young men and women of college age are interested in scholarly studies ought not to become the basis for an attack on equality of opportunity for a higher education, or for a reactionary effort to restrict scholarly studies to the upper and upper-middle classes. My arguments surely apply better to the United States, with its already substantial achievement in educational equality, than to many European countries.

In America, even more than in Britain and elsewhere, the democratization of access to higher education has been associated historically with the growth of enrollments. The British attempt through stipends and the like to reduce differences in the class origins of university students within

a highly selective system, while in the United States, the attack on social inequalities in educational opportunities has largely taken the form of expanding the number, variety and size of institutions, and thus the total number of places.

What effects would a change in the assumptions about the growth of enrollments toward universal higher education have on the equality of educational life chances throughout the society? If continuation on to higher education were based primarily on interest and motivation and not required by parents and the demands of career, would there not inevitably be an even greater disproportion of students from more educated homes?

The answer, of course, lies in the nature of the alternative opportunities that are created for young men and women other than formal studies, and whether these formal studies are available to much larger proportions of the population at later points in their lives and careers. If educational opportunities become much more common and widespread for adults, then that is likely greatly to reduce class differentials in higher education. I have not been arguing against universal access to colleges and universities, but only against the notion that this must occur in the years directly after secondary school, and as an outcome of social coercion. What are some alternatives?

### *Emerging Responses*

If, as I think is clear, we are moving to universal access to higher education, then the structural forms of our system, and of some of its constituent institutions, must begin to reflect both the greater numbers and the greater variety of students who will seek college education, training and credentials in the years ahead. The pressures for new forms and structures of higher education come from at least three sources:

a) The very poor and culturally handicapped who have not in the past had either the aspirations or resources to attend a college or university. These pressures are both moral and political; the former work on and through the egalitarian values of academic men and politicians, the latter on their sense of emerging power relations, especially in our bigger cities.

b) "Adults" who did not enter or complete college and who in mid-career find themselves wanting more education or better credentials. Housewives with children in school, technicians and executives dissatisfied with deadend jobs or obsolescent or inadequate skills, men who look to a second career after an early retirement from the army or public service, all comprise a growing market for "extended higher education"; and are no longer satisfied with existing forms of adult education or university extension.

c) "Involuntary" students of college age, many from affluent middle class homes who though obliged to attend college are not interested in the academic "bookish" studies that characterize existing programs. These students often want to drop out of formal studies for a while, to travel or to work in some "socially relevant" field, and yet want a link to a college and to be able to make progress toward some kind of credential.

These different kinds of constituencies, needing different kinds of post-secondary education, emerge as part of the movement toward universal access. For them, even our highly diversified system of mass higher education is inadequate. These new constituencies, in their several ways, demand access to the resources of the colleges and universities, both on and off the central campus, but they want those resources deployed somewhat differently than they have been in most American colleges and universities.

The most important structural responses to these new constituencies and their demands are new programs that encourage students to stop out for periods either before or during the college years, with guaranteed or easy re-entry; the provision of part-time adult education earning credits towards degrees in the central colleges of the university, using the facilities and faculty of the university proper rather than its extension services; and the development of external degree programs, involving degree-credit work taken largely through correspondence (often media-aided) courses on a part-time basis, on the model of the British Open University. In addition, the growth of "field work" courses and credits for various kinds of "services" and "experience," work in the same direction – toward the "university in dispersion" – reaching and serving new constituencies without (or with less) regard to traditional boundaries, functions, or "academic standards".

#### *Delayed Entry Into Higher Education and "Stopping-Out"*

The influential Carnegie Commission on Higher Education included in its report *Less Time, More Options* (January 1971) the recommendation

that service and other employment opportunities be created for students between high school and college at stop points in college through national, state and municipal youth programs, through short-term jobs with private and public employers, and through apprenticeship programs in the students' field of interest; and that students be actively encouraged to participate. . . We believe not only that all colleges should encourage prospective and continuing students to obtain service and work experience, but also that some colleges may wish to require it before admission or at some point during matriculation, and could in fact in appropriate instances grant credit for it toward completion of degree requirement.<sup>12</sup>

Changes in admission policies and practices which enable students to delay entry after having been accepted by a college or which allow them to stop-out during their college career with easy or guaranteed return, are the least radical of the several new responses. And some institutions have already changed their policy and practice in that direction. For example, a group of fourteen New England colleges which include Williams, Wesleyan and the University of Connecticut, have adopted a common policy regarding deferred admission and stopping-out.

Several major American foundations, including Carnegie and Russell Sage, are exploring the difficult problem of finding or creating temporary jobs for students who choose to delay entry or stop out during their college careers. And there have been suggestions that the federal government create a broad program of non-military voluntary national service for young men and women who do not wish to proceed to college directly from high school. Such service might in fact earn stipends toward later college tuitions and living expenses, as military service in the U.S. has done since World War II.

Clearly, the aim of this movement is to increase the voluntariness of attendance, and to bring back to college somewhat more mature students who can take better advantage of the formal course during their college years. A related proposal, also strongly recommended by the Carnegie Commission, with similar aims, is the awarding of a certificate after two years of college attendance and the Bachelor's degree after three years.

### *Bringing Adults Onto the Campus*

Adult education through university extension programs and "night school" has long been a feature of American higher education, serving an enormous number and diversity of interests and needs. But many institutions, certainly the leading and most prestigious colleges and universities, have long resisted granting part-time adult students the right to enroll in the central degree programs of their institutions. In part, this was out of a belief that such studies, largely vocational in nature, were not compatible with the commitment to liberal education of their main daytime degree work. In part, it was a concern with the loss of status associated with such part-time vocational studies. But these concerns and restrictive policies seem to be breaking down, and we see a growing tendency to bring part-time adults onto the central campuses and even into the same classrooms as the younger undergraduates.<sup>13</sup> A report of a Task Force initiated by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and strongly endorsed by the Secretary of the Department, observed that "some colleges are moving now in the direction of relaxing barriers to non-standard admissions and

transfers, providing opportunities for part-time students, and caring about individuals beyond "college age" who are seeking higher education. . . .<sup>14</sup> They go on to say that currently (1971) "these are gradual and marginal reforms. We believe that the time has come to halt the academic lockstep and reconstitute our colleges and universities as educational institutions for individuals of all ages".

The arguments for extending the opportunities to earn degrees to part-time adults are many – it extends access to higher education to people who are obliged to work and cannot forego earnings while attending college full-time; it allows people who have been forced to drop out of college to return later to finish their degrees; it allows housewives whose children have gone to school to prepare for a career outside the home; and somewhat more problematically, it may enrich the environment on campus by bringing into the classroom people with a wider range of experience and different interests than those of youngsters just out of high school.<sup>15</sup> But surely this suggestion has its great appeal as the opposite side of the coin of delayed entry or "stopping-out" – as an opportunity for adults to return to college *voluntarily*, bringing with them stronger motivations and broader interests than we commonly find among students who enter more or less involuntarily directly from high school. The attractiveness of a broad program of adult education using the major resources of the university and earning its certificates and degrees is that this preserves the American ideal of universal access to higher education without increasing the strains associated with involuntary attendance.

### *The Open or Extended University*

By far the most radical and far-reaching of these responses to universal extension of higher education in America are the many movements toward an "open," or "extended," or "dispersed" university. The essence of this idea, already visible in states and universities all over the country, is the offering of degrees for study off campus – sometimes called "external degree" programs. One of the first and most important of these is the newly established Empire State College, founded as a non-residential college of the State University of New York in 1971. As its first bulletin notes,

when in full operation, Empire State College will operate through a network of regional Learning Centers located within reasonable commuting distance of most New York State residents. . . . By 1973, 20 Centers will serve nearly 10,000 students.<sup>16</sup>

However, much of the students' academic work will be done at home or in other non-campus situations. Academic credit will be awarded for a wide variety of activities, including correspondence work, the use of instructional



materials prepared especially for the college, educational courses on television, on-the-job and community-volunteer experiences, occasional week-end seminars and summer colloquiums, and, if desired, attendance at courses in regular colleges. Written examinations, research papers, and other tests will be required of students. Unusual activity for which credit is given must relate to the over-all educational goals of the students and thorough evaluation must document their contribution to learning. . . . Students may enter the College at any time of the year and contract for a program lasting a month, a semester or a year, full-time, or part-time.<sup>17</sup>

Quite independent of the Empire College, but also part of the New York State system is a "state-run program of external degrees" in which the State Board of Regents will award Associate and Bachelor degrees to persons who pass college-level examinations, regardless of whether they have been formally enrolled in college or university. The first examinations, which will be in Business Administration, are expected to be ready in 1972.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most sweeping suggestion has been made by Lawrence Dennis, the head of the Massachusetts College system, who has called for the creation of a national "Open University", which he would call the "University of North America". This would depend primarily on television to reach its dispersed student body, and would offer "external degrees" at baccalaureate and graduate levels.<sup>19</sup>

This idea, in one form or another, is being discussed and transformed into institutional forms in universities and state systems all over the country. The appeal of the idea is enormous: it extends access very widely, and meets a variety of political pressures for "open admission" to higher education on the part of minority and other disadvantaged persons; it meets the increasing demands for part-time degree-credit adult education; and it promises to do these things and more for much less money than residential programs cost.

Provision for delayed entry or stop-outs, and for part-time adults earning credits on campus, are both efforts to increase the voluntariness of attendance under conditions of universal access. They aim to influence the quality of students' motivation for working in the existing curriculum (or some modest modifications of it), and thus are a defense of existing academic standards – the standards of mass higher education. In a sense, they are the characteristic responses of a system of mass higher education to the problems brought on by the move toward universal higher education. By contrast, the extended or open university is, in some of its manifestations, a much more radical departure from existing forms of education: it is perhaps the first genuine form of universal higher education, one which breaks sharply with traditional notions about attendance in class, patterns of student-teacher relationship, what is properly included in the curriculum

of a college or a university, and in some cases, the application of ordinary "academic" standards to students' work for credit.

*New Problems: Functions and Standards*

The developments I have been sketching are structural responses to the strains created at the "phase transition" between mass and universal higher education in America. Together, these developments extend the capacity of American education *as a system* to serve the new and broader constituency that emerges as the country moves towards universal access to post-secondary education. Nevertheless, just by virtue of the depth and breadth of these developments, they create problems almost as difficult as those to which they are responding. These can be summarized as problems of function and standards; problems of staffing; problems of admission; problems of finance. In this paper I can touch only very briefly on the first of these.

Problems of function and standards have been obscured in early American discussions of the open or extended university idea by the frequent references to Britain's Open University as a model. There is very much that Americans can learn from Britain's Open University, but we can use it as a model only with very important reservations and in awareness of the enormous differences between our systems of higher education. The Open University in England is part of an élite university system with high, *common* standards throughout. Faculty members know those standards, are committed to them and apply them especially stringently to external students taking their degrees by examination. In the United States there are no common standards among universities; indeed, this was one of the characteristics of American higher education that made our expansion so easy – as I suggested earlier, it was a necessary condition for the rapid and extensive democratization of the system. In the United States, the "external" degree will further extend the range of activities which earn credits towards the degree and further blur the distinction between life (or "experience") and learning. And this must have large consequences for the institutions that are extending their functions in this way. We can evaluate formal learning, but we cannot in the same sense evaluate life or "experience". Britain's Open University is an effort to introduce a certain flexibility into a relatively small, elite, constrained university system. From another perspective, the British Open University is a response to a kind of demand for access that is inconvenient for the existing university system, a safety valve which allows the system to avoid basic structural changes. The same patterns introduced into the United States as part of basic structural changes arising out of the move to universal access

engender a very different set of problems. Changes in university structure of the kind associated with degrees for non-residential students and non-academic work involve changes in university functions.<sup>20</sup>

Questions also arise about the organization and staffing of the new programs and institutions. Will the faculty be the core faculty of an existing university, or the somewhat heterogeneous group of people, largely marginal to academic life, who ordinarily teach in university extension programs? While there are surely many exceptions to the principle that the most highly qualified academic people are likely to have regular appointments at colleges and universities, it is hard to imagine recruiting a faculty substantially outside of the existing stock of academic men and women who will have the qualifications for teaching at the college or university level. In Britain, the core faculty of the Open University are, for the most part, men and women who have already held appointments in other British universities, and some of them are highly distinguished in their own fields. Their own academic status greatly helps to legitimate this new enterprise. This may also be possible in the United States, but how this will be resolved in different states and universities is still problematic. Unlike the situation in England, the movement toward the extended degree in the United States is associated with a strong populist, anti-elitist, anti-academic, even anti-intellectual spirit, and it may be felt that academic men, just by virtue of their expertise, are unqualified for these new forms of higher education. The question of whether an "open university" will be taught by people recruited from the regular faculty of a university, or by a special class of instructors recruited from outside the existing fields, will have very large consequences for the character of both the education and the degrees it offers.

The temptation to move in the latter direction, toward a specially recruited faculty, arises in part from the tendency of studies in these new programs to move further from any defined fields of learning, toward the "problem areas" in which life is experienced.

It is significant that early American discussions of "extended universities" do not really come to grips with the questions of faculty recruitment or the maintenance of standards. To many of the enthusiastic innovators who are naturally associated with these new and exciting developments, the very notion of "standards" is part of the conservative resistance of existing universities and faculties to innovations of any kind. Nevertheless, these new institutions in America will face these problems in circumstances quite different from that of Britain's Open University. The American "university in dispersion" will find it very difficult to place limits not merely on what is acceptable work towards a degree, but much more

fundamentally, on what are legitimate activities and claims on the institutions' resources. The definition of functions and the defense of boundaries do not come naturally to the kinds of men who are creating and staffing these new forms of higher education – yet those problems may be the central dilemmas of the forms of universal higher education that are emerging in America.

But one cannot generalize on all of the new institutions and forms of higher education. It is important to consider that “similar” institutions can play quite different functions in different kinds of systems of higher education. For example, the Open University in Britain is an institution at the point of transition from élite to mass higher education: it applies relatively élite standards to a larger constituency which may eventually require some relaxation of those standards. In the United States, an extended university or a program for awarding degrees by examination may similarly serve to extend mass higher education, with bookish studies applied to new problems and occupations, under the firm control of an existing body of faculty and its academic standards. Or an “extended university” may be, as I have suggested, the authentic child of the movement toward universal higher education, awarding credits and degrees for a variety of academic and non-academic activity and experience in almost any area where “learning” is said to be taking place. Here is where the sharpest dilemmas and problems will emerge in the coming decades.

Finally, whatever the responses of the society and of colleges and universities to the extension of higher education to the whole population, there remains a very large question – at its heart a political question. That is: What kinds of activities will be given a home in our institutions of higher education, and a claim on their resources and protections? The larger society will have to answer that question for the university of tomorrow, just as it does for the multiversity of today. We may or may not like the answers then, depending on our own values and the political complexion of the larger society. The fate of liberal education, whatever its organizational form, is and will continue to be profoundly dependent on the fate of liberal democratic values in the larger society.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Fact Book on Higher Education*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1971, pp. 71.6–7.

<sup>2</sup> Data and projections from *Development of Higher Education 1950–1969: Analytical Report*. Paris: OECD, November 1970.

<sup>3</sup> As reported in *The Times Educational Supplement*, October 23, 1970. See also *Student Numbers in Higher Education in England and Wales*. London: HMSO, 1970, and *Student Numbers in Higher Education in Scotland*. Edinburgh: HMSO, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Clark KERR, *The Uses of the University* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963.

<sup>5</sup> Just as certain elite forms of higher education have survived within the institutions of mass higher education – for example, a department of classics in a great state university. But the coexistence of basically different kinds of education within the same institution depends on functional boundaries, structural insulation, and the inattention to and ignorance of details that mark the absence of a tight, rationalized and standardized coordination from the center. In this way, as in others, the growing application of systems analysis to higher education threatens educational diversity and the coexistence of elite, mass and universal forms of education within the same institution.

<sup>6</sup> Detailed information on this survey can be found in Martin Trow *et al.*, *Technical Report: National Surveys of Higher Education*. Berkeley, California: Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1971.

<sup>7</sup> This section draws on my paper, "Reflections on the Transition from Mass to Universal Higher Education", *Daedalus*, Winter 1970, pp. 24–27.

<sup>8</sup> *Fact Book*, *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 71.7.

<sup>9</sup> On college going by class (occupation and income), see *Current Population Reports*, Series P–20, No. 185, July 11, 1969, Tables 7 and 8. On rates by state, see *Fact Book on Higher Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.51. The figure for California is supported by an independent estimate made for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in September 1969, using 1968 figures.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, all of this is much more pronounced in the social sciences and humanities than in the natural sciences.

<sup>11</sup> The rebellion of large numbers of students against the academic curriculum is associated not only with enforced attendance, but with its concomitant, painfully prolonged adolescence and the denial of full adult roles and responsibilities. As Bettelheim observes, "Campus rebellion seems to offer youth a chance to short-cut the time of empty waiting and to prove themselves real adults". And he goes on to speak of the "need of late adolescents to feel that their labors make a difference in the world, and the depressing conviction that they do not. For it is hard to see how the average social science student or the student of humanities can get a sense of importance of his studies until such time as he is deeply immersed in them: and this takes effort and concentration. Even then, the feeling may be somewhat esoteric. But what swifter and surer way to feel active than to become an activist?" Bruno Bettelheim, "Obsolete Youth," *Commentary*, September 1969, pp. 33–34.

<sup>12</sup> *Less Time, More Options*. Berkeley, California: Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, January 1971, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> This, of course, has long been true for urban campuses like San Francisco State and Wayne, where many of the undergraduates are part-time students in their late twenties or early thirties, carrying half or even full-time paid jobs.

<sup>14</sup> Frank NEWMAN *et al.*, *Report on Higher Education*. Washington: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, 1971. This is a comprehensive review of the arguments for alternative forms of higher education, and parallels many of the Carnegie Commission recommendations. The Report is reprinted in part in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 15, 1971.

<sup>15</sup> "Having diverse ages represented in a class often marvelously stimulates lively and significant discussions. Having older and younger on campus might improve understanding between generations. Greybeards might find that behind youthful beards there is committed searching for the good life which recalls their own youthful idealism. The young might discover that there are individuals over 30 who can be trusted – men and women who continue the never-ending quest, some even who have learned a little from their experience." Robert A. ROSENBAUM, in *The Wesleyan*, Fall 1970, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Empire State College, The Non-Residential College of the State University of New York, *Bulletin 1971–72*, Coordinating Center at Saratoga Springs, New York.

<sup>17</sup> "State Will Open College Without a Campus in Fall," *The New York Times*, July 9, 1971. Similar plans for state-supported "colleges without walls" have been announced in Massachusetts, California and Minnesota.

<sup>18</sup> *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 22, 1971.

<sup>19</sup> *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 22, 1971.

<sup>20</sup> In a sense, the British, whose universities tenaciously defend their elite academic characteristics in the face of rapid growth, have through the Open University greatly expanded *access* (at least in principle) without relaxing their elite standards. This is one of several ways in which the British are attempting to defend their elite institutions during the difficult phase of transition of their whole system to mass higher education. On this, see Martin Trow, "The Binary Dilemma: An American View," in *Higher Education Review*, Winter 1969, and A. H. HALSEY and Martin Trow, *The British Academics*, London: Faber and Faber, 1971.

## EXPANSION UND UMWANDLUNG IM BEREICH DER TERTIÄREN BILDUNG

VON MARTIN TROW

Seit dem zweiten Weltkrieg haben alle Industriestaaten ein sehr schnelles Wachstum ihrer Einrichtungen und Systeme der tertiären Bildung erlebt. Gegen Ende der sechziger Jahre erfuhren die meisten Länder ausserdem in zunehmendem Maße schwere Belastungen und Probleme, am deutlichsten sichtbar in weit verbreiteten Studentenunruhen und entsprechenden Demonstrationen, aber auch in den Formen der Universitätsverwaltung, der Organisation des Unterrichts und in allen anderen Bereichen des College- und Universitäts-Lebens. In der ganzen Welt haben diese miteinander verknüpften und sich häufenden Spannungen ein Gefühl der Krise geweckt, ein zunehmendes Gefühl bei Akademikern, daß das Ausmaß der Veränderung und die sich häufenden Belastungen zu einer Umgestaltung zwingen, der mit einem blossen Ausbau der tertiären Bildung nicht Genüge getan ist. Sowohl in Europa als auch in Amerika ist diese Krise ein Kennzeichen des Übergangs von einer historischen Phase der tertiären Bildung zu einer anderen: in Europa von der Hochschulbildung für die Elite zu einer solchen für die Masse, in den Vereinigten Staaten von der Massenzulassung zur akademischen Bildung zu einer universalen Zulassung.

Bemerkenswert ist, daß sich die europäische Länder gerade in dem Augenblick außerordentlich zu den amerikanischen Lösungen hingezogen fühlen, da diese den Amerikanern selbst immer weniger anziehend erscheinen. Aus der Sicht des Autors liegt die Erklärung darin, daß sich die amerikanischen Strukturen ausgezeichnet für die Phase der tertiären Bildung für die Masse eignen, auf die sich die Europäer zubewegen, aber nicht annähernd so gut für die Probleme einer Hochschulbildung für alle, auf die Amerika zugeht. Ebenso wie Europa hat auch Amerika versucht, durch den Ausbau von Einrichtungen der letzten Phase in die nächste vorzudringen. Beide werden gleichermaßen die Notwendigkeit erkennen, ihre Einrichtungen umzugestalten und nicht nur auszubauen.

Die Umgestaltung eines Hochschulsystems muß nicht alle zugehörigen Einrichtungen in ähnlicher Weise betreffen. Selbst wenn die tertiäre Bildung in den U.S.A. auf ihrem Weg zum freien Zugang für alle fortschreitet, werden dennoch einige Colleges und Universitäten ihre älteren Formen einer Elitebildung hartnäckig verteidigen; andere werden fortfahren, tertiäre Bildung für die Masse zu liefern, d.h. traditionelle Maßstäbe und Lehrmethoden auf einen erweiterten Kreis von Fächern und eine breitere Schicht von Abnehmern anzuwenden. Neben diesen Überbleibseln aus einer früheren Phase (und in manchen Fällen zwischen ihnen) tauchen charakteristische Formen einer universalen Bildung auf, gekennzeichnet durch neue Unterrichtsmethoden und ganz andersartige 'Leistungsmaßstäbe'. Hier

findet ein noch größerer Kreis von 'Studenten' Zugang, der einem repräsentativen Querschnitt durch die Gesamtbevölkerung zu gleichen beginnt.

Wenn aber auch das neu entstehende System einer Hochschulbildung für alle nach seiner vollen Entfaltung in seinem Rahmen noch die Beibehaltung früherer Formen der Pädagogik und eine Koexistenz mit diesen gestatten kann, so verursacht doch diese Periode des Übergangs von der Massen- zur universalen Zulassung in Amerika Spannungen und Schwierigkeiten verschiedener Art: In der Tat gehören gerade diese Spannungen zu den Kräften, die ihrerseits Impulse für die Erforschung neuer Formen und Lösungen geben. Zu den wichtigsten dieser Spannungen, die in den letzten Jahren in den Vereinigten Staaten aufgetaucht sind, gehören der Zusammenbruch des Konsens unter Lehrenden und Studenten über das grundlegende Wesen und die Funktionen der Einrichtung; die Zunahme des unfreiwilligen Besuchs von Colleges und Universitäten und die Auflehnung einer großen Anzahl von Studenten gegen die Beschränkungen durch formale akademische Programme.

Wenn die Zukunft der tertiären Bildung in den U.S.A. nicht bloß eine Extrapolierung der Vergangenheit sein soll, was gibt es dann für Alternativen? Manche zeigen sich bereits. Eine wichtige Tendenz besteht darin, neue Formen der tertiären Bildung zu entwickeln, die den Colleges und Universitäten stärker motivierte Erwachsene zuführen. So ermutigen z.B. schon einige amerikanische Colleges und Universitäten Schulabgänger, ein paar Jahre zu arbeiten, bevor sie die akademische Laufbahn einschlagen, oder ihre Studienzeit zu unterbrechen. Andere erleichtern es 'Erwachsenen' durch Teilzeit-Studien im Universitätsbereich, Credits für akademische Grade zu erwerben, während sie halbtags oder sogar ganztätig berufstätig sind. Und es besteht ein schnell zunehmendes Interesse an der 'offenen Universität', die außerhalb des Universitätsbereichs durch Fernseh- und Korrespondenzkurse Credits und akademische Grade mit Prüfungen verleiht. Aber diese 'Lösungen' führen zu neuen, ihnen eigenen Problemen.

## DÉVELOPPEMENT ET TRANSFORMATION DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR

par MARTIN TROW

Depuis la seconde guerre mondiale, chaque nation industrielle a connu un développement très rapide de ses institutions et systèmes d'enseignement supérieur. Vers la fin des années 60, la plupart des pays ont aussi connu des tensions croissantes et des problèmes sérieux qui se sont surtout manifestés par une agitation étudiante grandissante et des démonstrations concomitantes, mais aussi dans l'administration de l'université, l'organisation de l'instruction et dans les autres domaines de la vie universitaire. Partout dans le monde, ces tensions consécutives et accumulées ont permis la perception d'une crise et ont donné au monde académique le sentiment grandissant que l'ampleur du changement et les tensions répétées forcent à la transformation et non pas simplement à l'accroissement de l'enseignement supérieur. Cette crise, qui apparaît à la fois en Europe et en Amérique, marque la transition d'une étape historique de l'enseignement supérieur à l'autre. Elle marque de plus en plus en Europe le passage d'une éducation supérieure réservée à l'élite à une éducation accessible à la masse: aux Etats-Unis, l'accès non seulement de la masse mais l'accès universel à l'éducation post-secondaire.

Il convient de noter que les pays européens sont considérablement attirés par les solutions américaines, précisément au moment où elles paraissent de moins en moins intéressantes aux yeux des Américains. L'auteur pense que l'explication réside dans le fait que les structures américaines sont extrêmement bien adaptées au stade de l'éducation supérieure en masse vers laquelle se déplacent les Européens, mais pas aussi bien adaptées aux problèmes de l'éducation supérieure universelle vers laquelle tend l'Amérique. Tout comme l'Europe, l'Amérique s'est efforcée de se déplacer vers la prochaine phase en développant les institutions de la dernière phase. L'auteur pense que les Etats-Unis, comme l'Europe, découvriront qu'il faut transformer leurs institutions, et non pas simplement les développer.

La transformation d'un système d'enseignement supérieur ne doit pas affecter de manière similaire, chacune de ses institutions composantes. En effet, comme l'éducation supérieure américaine en tant que système tend à prévoir l'accès universel, certaines anciennes formes d'enseignement d'une élite; d'autres continueront à fournir une éducation supérieure de masse, c'est-à-dire à appliquer normes et modes traditionnels d'instruction à une plus grande gamme de sujets et de groupes sociaux. En plus de ces survies des phases précédentes du développement pédagogique et dans certains cas, au sein de celles-ci, des formes caractéristiques d'enseignement universel sont en voie d'apparition marquées par de nouvelles formes d'instruction et par des "normes de rendement" tout à fait différentes, accessibles à une gamme même plus étendue "d'étudiants" qui ressemblent à un échantillon représentatif de toute la population.

Néanmoins, si le système provenant de l'enseignement supérieur universel peut, lorsqu'il sera complètement développé, permettre la survie et la coexistence de formes antérieures d'éducation dans son sein, cette période de transition entre l'accès des masses et l'accès universel donne lieu en Amérique à des tensions et des difficultés de différentes sortes. Ces tensions font en effet partie des impulsions qui, en retour, donnent naissance au désir de rechercher de nouvelles formes et de nouvelles solutions. Parmi les plus importantes de ces tensions qui ont fait leur apparition aux Etats-Unis dans le cours de ces dernières années, figurent: (1) disparition de l'unité existante au sein de la faculté et parmi les étudiants au sujet de la nature et des fonctions élémentaires de l'institution; (2) une plus grande fréquentation involontaire des collèges et universités, et (3) une rébellion chez un grand nombre d'étudiants contre les contraintes des programmes académiques officiels.

Si l'avenir de l'enseignement supérieur américain ne doit pas être l'extrapolation du passé, quelles sont les alternatives? Certaines apparaissent déjà. Une tendance importante consiste à élaborer de nouvelles formes d'enseignement supérieur qui entraîneraient les adultes plus fortement motivés vers l'université. Pour citer un exemple, quelques universités américaines encouragent déjà les diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur à travailler pendant quelques années avant d'entrer au collège, ou d'interrompre pour travailler leurs années de collège. D'autres universités facilitent la tâche des adultes pour l'obtention de crédits de diplômes universitaires en leur permettant d'occuper des emplois à temps partiel ou même à plein temps. Et un intérêt sans cesse croissant se manifeste pour "l'université ouverte" qui accorde des diplômes pour un travail effectué hors du terrain universitaire au moyen de cours télévisés et par correspondance et à l'aide d'examens. Mais ces solutions engendrent de nouveaux problèmes.