

Globalization and Higher Education

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The question of the role of higher education in society and culture today is linked, in this article, with two parallel processes: the questioning of the nation-state in the global age and the gradual decomposition of the welfare state in the majority of the OECD countries. What is currently happening is, first, a major redefinition of the general responsibilities of the state vis-à-vis the familiar type of society characterized by the welfare state and, second, a major revision in thinking about the role of the state in contemporary politics and economies brought about by globalization processes (and hence the possible demise of the nation-state). The modern German-inspired university in the form in which it exists in Europe is certainly affected by the two processes. The aim of this article is to discuss higher education in this particular context.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, the question of the role of higher education in general, and of the university in particular, in contemporary society and culture, is linked to two parallel processes: first, the questioning of the role of the nation-state in the global age, and, second, the gradual decomposition of the welfare state in the majority of OECD countries. The first theme is much more historical and philosophical; the second, much more sociological and public policy oriented. The point of departure that is assumed is that the university in its modern form was closely linked with the Nineteenth-Century political invention of the nation-state and that the university in the last half of the Twentieth Century has been increasingly dependent on the welfare state as it gradually began to pass from its élite to its mass (and in current predictions) to its near-universal participation model. What is happening right now, in very broad terms, is, first, a major redefinition of both the general responsibilities of the state *vis-à-vis* society, according to the familiar model of the welfare state, and, second, a major revision in thinking about the role of the state in contemporary politics and economics brought about by globalization processes (and hence the possible demise of the nation-state).

Few institutions in the contemporary world are being affected, at the same time, by both reconfigurations, for there have been few institutions so closely dependent, at the same time, on the two fundamental paradigms, the welfare state and the nation-state. Certainly, the modern German-inspired university in the form in which it exists in Europe, as well as with some modifications in America (Lucas, 1996), is one of them.

As a recent American publication, *The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research*, states in its conclusions, "First, policy for the coming decade cannot be fashioned successfully by fine-tuning policies that are currently in place; policy makers need an entirely new conceptual approach to policy frameworks and subsequently to the individual components of policy. Second, policy—and policy research—must be conceived holistically. Although policy is likely to be implemented

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piecemeal, it must be designed within the context of a broader perspective” (Jones *et al.*, 1999, p. 25). This article attempts to provide that broader perspective, the main question being the possible impact of globalization on higher education, or, in the sharp form presented by the editor of this publication, globalization, as a new paradigm for higher education policy.

The most general point of departure is the conclusion that hard times have come for higher education all over the world. It is not accidental that following the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism in the Central and Eastern European countries, and along with the further spread of free-market economies and neo-liberal economic views all over the world, public higher education institutions, and the universities in particular, are under siege worldwide. The current problems of public higher education are connected with the much more profound problems of the public sector in general.

The financing and the management of higher education institutions was at the top of the agenda worldwide in the 1990s. Interestingly, the patterns of reforms and the directions brought about were similar in countries with different political-economic systems and different higher education traditions, not to mention their different technological levels and cultural outlooks (Johnstone, 1998). No matter what level of fiscal prosperity might be expected, the general conclusion has been expressed in numerous recent educational policy reports, that hard times are coming for educational institutions (Hovey, 1999; Finn, 2000) and their faculties. Budgets are going to be squeezed, state support, already small, is expected to become even smaller, owing to other huge social needs, to the universalization of higher education, to its expanded scope, diversity, and numbers, and owing to growing social dissatisfaction with the public sphere in general, higher education included (as Philip G. Altbach, 1997, p. 315, recently phrased it with reference to the academic faculty: “the [academic] profession’s ‘golden age’ ... has come to an end”).

So the global direction taken by governments worldwide, with huge intellectual backups provided by international organizations (see, for example, OECD, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1998; World Bank, 1994, 1997), is favouring lifelong learning for all and a near-universal participation in increasingly market-oriented, financially independent, higher education institutions. This direction is currently very explicit. As Harold A. Hovey claims in a penetrating report, *State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade: The Battle to Sustain Current Support*, higher education in the United States is generally not competing successfully with the attractions of other demands on state spending. In his account

the underlying question about spending will be whether, at the margin, higher education spending is contributing more than spending at the margin in other programmes. This question will be raised in a political dimension with the adverse electoral consequences of cuts in higher education compared with cuts affecting public schools, health care providers, and others active in state politics (Hovey, 1999, p. 17).

Generally speaking, the fiscal predictions for public higher education spending are bad; merely maintaining the current level of services, in this case, in the United States, seems very difficult.

RETHINKING THE STATE AND ITS LINK TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Thus, to open a wider perspective, globalization processes and fierce international competition have brought back to the world agenda the issue of the role of the state in the contemporary world. As the World Bank publication, *The State in a Changing World* (1997) states in its opening paragraph:

Around the globe, the state is in the spotlight. Far-reaching developments in the global economy have us revisiting basic questions about government: what its role should be, what it can and cannot do, and how best to do it (1997, p. 1).

It is necessary to understand that rethinking the university today is inseparable from first rethinking the state, for the modern university was put, by its German philosophical founders, at the disposal of the nation-state, and, second, the university is traditionally a vast consumer of public revenues. Thus, rethinking the state moves in two parallel directions: the nation-state today and the welfare state today. Both ideas are clearly linked to the modern institution of the university, and fundamental reformulations of both will surely affect it. Generally, the state is increasingly perceived in a global context as a “facilitator”, a “regulator”, a “partner”, and a “catalyst” rather than as a direct provider of growth or of social services. What is being evoked is a redefinition of the responsibilities of the state towards society and a high level of selectivity in regard to the activities to be supported with public funds. “Choosing what to do and what not to do is critical”, as the World Bank publication phrases it—and in this context, hard times are ahead for higher education worldwide.

The 1998 OECD publication, *Redefining Tertiary Education*, speaks of a “fundamental shift” and a “new paradigm” of tertiary education for all, as well as about a “historic shift” and a “cultural change”. The author fully agrees with the statement that “it is an era of searching, questioning, and at times of profound uncertainty, of numerous reforms and essays in the renewal of tertiary education” (OECD, 1998, pp. 3, 15, 20, 37). The question of the university today cannot be answered in isolation, even though this question goes hand in hand with questions about cultural and civilizational changes brought about by the Internet and information technology, with the issues of globalization, the welfare state, the nation-state, etc.

As a result of all these changes, it may happen that certain activities traditionally viewed as belonging to the sphere of social responsibility of the state may no longer be viewed in this way. Higher education is certainly a serious issue in this context, particularly in regard to a trend suggested in public policy towards subsidizing consumers rather than providers, that is to say, students rather than institutions of higher learning (or “the client perspective” in OECD terminology) as well as a shift not only away from government, but also away from the very higher education institutions and their faculties toward their “clients” (Johnstone, 1998, p. 4).

Thus, there are serious indications that the nation-state as a political and cultural project is in retreat in surroundings determined by the processes of globalization, which in itself is a subject of heated debate. As Dani Rodrik (1997, p. 9), an influential American political economist, put it recently, “we need to [be] upfront about the irreversibility of the many changes that have occurred in the global economy. ... In short, the genie cannot be stuffed back into the bottle, even if it were desirable to do so. We will need more imaginative and more subtle responses.” Responses of this sort are also needed in the domain of higher education policy issues.

Capital, goods, technologies, information, and people cross borders in ways that were unimaginable only a few years ago. The power of the state as such is increasingly viewed as mere administration and less as the governance of (national) spirit.² Sociologists describe

² See, for instance, the chapter about the gap between the state and the economy in the era of declining nation-states (“After the Nation-State—What?”) in Zygmunt Bauman’s excellent study, *Globalization. The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) as well as the book by Martin Albrow written from the perspective of the end of the nation-state in the confrontation with globalization, *The Global Age: State and Society Beyond Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

the current situation as a “partial shift of some components of state sovereignty to other institutions, from supranational entities to the global capital market” (Sassen, 1996, p. xii, 1998). The possible decline of nation-states brings about vast social, economic, and political consequences of a global nature. Susan Strange in her book, *The Retreat of the State*, writes that the state is undergoing a metamorphosis and “can no longer make the exceptional claims and demands that it once did. It is becoming, once more and as in the past, just one more source of authority among several, with limited powers and resources” (Strange, 1996, p. 73). Martin Albrow (1996, p. 164) goes even further when he states that “society and the nation-state have pulled apart”. Thus, national identity seems to be ceasing to play the crucial role in the social lives of contemporary technologically advanced, free countries in the late modern era. And, again, it is necessary to remember that national identity laid at the foundations of the modern university in its German formulation.

OBSOLESCENCE OF THE HUMBOLDTIAN UNIVERSITY

It is necessary to ask two questions. Does the current passage to late modernity and to the information age as well as the decline of the role of the nation-state and the increasing power of globalization processes and the decomposition of the welfare state mean that the radical reformulation of the social mission of the university is unavoidable? Will the university (in North America and in Central Europe alike) be able to come through the transitory crisis of public trust and of its founding values as well as through the dramatic crisis of its own identity in a radically new global order? In the face of globalization and its social practices, are the processes of the “corporatization” of the university and the accounting for its activities in terms of business rather than of education irresistible? Is the response to decreasing public trust and decreasing state financial support to be found in new ideas (by once again reformulating the philosophical foundations of the modern university) or in new management? Surprisingly enough, these questions are of equal significance for North America and for Central and Eastern Europe in its period of vast social and economic transformation (Kwiek, 2001). The significance of the transformations of universities in the global age cannot be fully captured outside the context of the changes that the economic order, the welfare state, and the nation-state are currently undergoing.

The modern university derives from the intellectual work of German philosophers: from Kant and Fichte to Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt (Blackwell, 1991; Röhrs, 1995). Its concept is relatively new and was born, along with the rise in national aspirations and the rise in the significance of nation-states, in the Nineteenth Century. A tacit deal made between power and knowledge, on the one hand, provided scholars with unprecedented institutional possibilities and, on the other, obliged them to support the national culture and to help in the shaping of national subjects, the citizens of nation-states. The alliance between modern knowledge and modern power gave rise to the foundations of the modern institution of the university.

The place, social function, and role of the university as one of the most significant institutions of modernity were at that time clearly determined. But currently it is no longer known what the exact place of the university in society is, for society itself has changed. As the late Bill Readings (1996, p. 2) observed in his breathtaking reflections about the “post-historical university”:

... the wider social role of the University as an institution is now up for grabs. It is no longer clear what the place of the University within society nor what the exact nature of that society is.

The uncertainty regarding the future location of the institution of the university in culture is growing step by step along with structural changes occurring in the economy and in politics today. The nation-state as a political and cultural project seems to be declining in the surroundings determined by globalization.³ One could risk making the following statement: in the age of globalization, national identity ceases to be the most important social glue and therefore its production, cultivation, and inculcation—that is, the ideals that stood behind the modern project of the university as conceived by its German intellectual founders—ceases to be a crucial social task (Kwiek, 2000b).

The university, in its traditional modern form, is no longer a partner of the nation-state; therefore, along with the decline of modernity as a social, political, and cultural project (Kwiek, 1996, 1999), the political and economic role of the nation-state decreases in the global circulation of capital. And the decreasing role of the state goes hand in hand with the decreasing role of its modern ideological arm—the university.⁴ While these transformations are easy to perceive in economics and politics,⁵ the situation is a bit different in the other pole of the power/knowledge relationship, that of knowledge. Power and its character get changed and therefore, out of necessity, knowledge and its character get changed.

Awareness of the fact that the university, invented and proposed to the world by the Nineteenth-Century German thinkers, is therefore a culturally and historically determined product, is increasingly common. Nothing determines in advance its shape, tasks, and functions, as well as the expectations directed at it and the requirements imposed on it by the culture and society in which it is immersed. The university in its modern form is a child of modernity; it ages along with modernity and is susceptible to political, economic, and social transformation as much as any other (modern) institution (Kwiek, 2000a). Or, as Peter Scott put it recently, “[g]lobalization is perhaps the most fundamental challenge faced by the university in its long history ... more serious even than the challenge posed by totalitarianism in our own century” (Scott, 1999, p. 35).

New cultural, social, political, and economic surroundings brought about by globalization seem to require a totally new language, which, surely enough, is at nobody’s disposal right now. So the old measures and vocabularies continue to be used to describe phenomena of the new world (of “new global order”, or “new global disorder”, some commentators argue). Generally speaking, there seems to be common agreement that globalization, as a wide set of social and economic practices, introduces to our social world a brand new quality: “a sense of rupture with the past [that] pervades the public consciousness of our time”, as Martin Albrow (1996, p. 1) writes. Ulrich Beck (2000, p. 125), in *What is Globalization?*, describes the passage from the “first” (national) to the “second” (global)

³ Richard J. Barnett and John Cavanagh (1997, p. 19) write: “... no political ideology or economic theory has yet evolved to take account of the tectonic shift that has occurred. The modern nation-state ... looks more and more like an institution of a bygone era.” See also Saskia Sassen (1996), as well as Jean-Marie Guéhenno (1995). Guéhenno clearly links the year 1989 with the collapse of the nation-state: “1989 marks the twilight of a long historical era, of which the nation-state, progressively emerging from the ruins of the Roman Empire, was the culmination” (p. xii).

⁴ Andy Green (1997) asks about the role of education in the “post-national era” and claims that, according to globalization theories, the system of national education becomes “defunct, at once irrelevant, anachronistic, and impossible” (p. 3ff.).

⁵ As Janice Dudley claims (*in*, Currie and Newson, 1998, p. 27): “The state is cast as increasingly irrelevant when confronted by the ‘reality’ of ungovernable international/global market forces. Nation-states are essentially ineffective in the face of global market forces, so that the era of the powerful nation-state would appear effectively to be over. National economic management and national political and social policies are becoming increasingly irrelevant. International markets and international capital markets operate outside of the control of national governments. ... The state is reduced to the role of the ‘night watchmen’ of classical liberalism—maintaining law and order, protecting the sanctity of contract, and providing only the level of welfare necessary to protect property and facilitate the free operation of capitalist markets.”

modernity in sociological terms as “a fundamental transformation, a paradigm shift, a departure into the unknown world of globality”. One can justifiably claim to be witnessing, right now, “the end of the world as we know it” (Waters, 1995, p. 158ff.). Evidently, the significance of the transformations of universities in the global age cannot be fully captured outside the context of changes that the world economic order and the nation-state are currently undergoing, which, to turn to more philosophical grounds, is paralleled by the collapse of modernity (Kwiek, 1998).

The uncertainty about the future location of the institution of the university in culture grows along with structural changes occurring in the economy, culture, and politics. It is often the case that small nation-states are no longer equal partners for big capital (see Holton, 1998, pp. 81–107; Barnet and Cavanagh, 1997; Friedman, 1999). The nation-state as a political and cultural project—but, unfortunately, not nationalism—seems to be declining in the surroundings determined by globalization, which in itself is a topic of a heated debate in political science (these processes can be clearly observed both in the countries of the European Union, in the Central and Eastern European countries attempting to enter it, as well as in the countries of both the Americas). One has to agree with Ulrich Beck, who claims that one constant feature of globalization is the overturning of the central premise of modernity, “the idea that we live and act in the self-enclosed spaces of national states and their respective national societies” (Beck, 2000, p. 20). Globalization is “the time/space compression” (Bauman, 1998), the “overcoming of distance” (Beck, 2000), *la fin de la géographie* (Paul Virilio), as it enables people, goods, and information to travel freely.

DECOUPLING THE UNIVERSITY AND THE NATION

One could risk the following statement: in the age of globalization, national identity ceases to be the most important social glue and therefore its production, cultivation, and inculcation—that is, the ideals that stood behind the modern project of the university—cease to be crucial social tasks. The traditional, modern social mission of the university as an institutional arm of the nation-state has been unexpectedly questioned after two centuries of cultural dominance. The university as we know it—the modern university (Rothblatt, 1997; Rothblatt and Wittrock, 1993)—is in a delicate and complicated position at the moment: the great cultural project of modernity that has located the university at the very centre of culture—in partnership with the institution of the nation-state—may be gradually outliving itself. After 200 years—merely 200 years!—it is no longer known to what, if any, great regulatory idea the university in search of its present *raison d'être* might refer.⁶ In its modern beginnings, as Bill Readings (1996) shows, echoing Kant (1979) in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the regulatory idea in question was Enlightenment reason;⁷ then, in Schleiermacher and Humboldt, the idea was culture in an active sense of *Bildung*, cultivating oneself as a subject of the nation-state (Richardson, 1984). Should we thus today, as Alain Renaut puts it, *oublier Berlin* (Ferry and Renaut, 1979, p. 138; Allègre, 1993)?

The university seems no longer to be capable of maintaining its modern role as a cultural institution closely linked to the nation-state of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment Europe. In the globalizing world of today, references made to national culture as the *raison*

⁶ The texts about the institution of the university written by German philosophers of the turn of the Nineteenth Century were gathered in the French volume, *Philosophies de l'Université: L'idéalisme allemand et la question de l'Université*, edited by Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut (Paris: Payot, 1979).

⁷ See the splendid English-German edition of Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* (New York: Abaris Books, 1979).

d'être of the university sound less and less convincing, especially if one considers that the state itself, the partner and the other side of the agreement, is itself undergoing transformation, and disregarding its past, that is, its modern obligations (see Bender, 1998) with respect to the university.

The academic world perfectly well understands that there will probably never be a return to the level of funding of universities (both in the natural sciences and in the humanities) of the Cold War era, a period of tough (inter)national competition (see Hovey, 1999). The United Europe, for instance, does not seem to need narrowly national universities, for teaching and research are expected to aim at unification rather than at the isolation of particular national traditions. References to reason or culture are no longer persuasive in society.

These ideas are no longer politically (and economically) resonant because the global configuration of politics and economy has changed. Within the new global configuration, the economy is increasingly less dependent on politics. It is worthwhile to consider, once again, the thesis suggested by Dani Rodrik (1997) that “the most serious challenge for the world economy in the years ahead lies in making globalization compatible with domestic social and political stability—... in ensuring that international economic integration does not contribute to domestic social disintegration”. The power of the state as such is increasingly viewed merely as administration and less and less often as the governance of national spirit (Bauman, 1998, pp. 55–76; Albrow, 1996, pp. 163–183).

TOWARDS THE CORPORATE UNIVERSITY

As the idea of “culture” (and especially, but not exclusively, “national” culture) ceases to be effective for the functioning of the institution of the university, that is, the idea of “culture” worked out by German philosophers and accepted all over the world as a regulatory idea standing behind the functioning of the university (see, for example, Schelling, 1963; Schleiermacher, 1994; Kant, 1970, 1979; Humboldt, 1979), new ideas have to be sought. It turns out, however, that grand ideas like those that might resist being deprived of social reference are very difficult, if not impossible, to find in the set of ideas that are currently available. At the same time, the ruthless logic of consumerism brings forth the idea which was greeted with satisfaction by the best American universities: “excellence in education”, behind which there are the ideals of the most useful, best-selling, and most rapidly attained knowledge (or merely certification). As numerous commentators of the phenomenon write, it is appropriate that the university, as an institution, become a bureaucratically governed, consumer-oriented corporation.⁸ To quote just one recommendation: “the only thing that higher education has to do, it seems, is sell its goods and services in the marketplace like other businesses ...” (Leslie and Fretwell, 1996, p. 31).

From this perspective, the crucial words for the description of the university are the

⁸ The late Bill Readings wrote with great accuracy about the “University of Excellence”. From a more practical perspective, two other works are more significant: *Wise Moves in Hard Times: Creating and Managing Resilient Colleges and Universities* by David W. Leslie and E. K. Fretwell Jr. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), and Sandra L. Johnson and Sean C. Rush, eds. *Reinventing the University: Managing and Financing Institutions of Higher Education* (New York: John Wiley, 1995) which do not leave a shadow of a doubt about the general direction in which the university as an institution is moving. Its aim is “providing an attractive product at a fair price—giving society value for its money” (Leslie and Fretwell, 1996, p. 26). In the second book one can find such statements as the following: “Higher education will never be the same. Political and corporate America have already responded by fundamentally restructuring the way universities operate” (Johnson and Rush, 1995, p. 22). The time has come for the universities to respond.

following: managerial, corporate, entrepreneurial,⁹ as well as corporatization, marketization, and “academic capitalism”.¹⁰

The questions to be asked can be formulated in the following manner: What is the future of the university deprived of its modern culture-, state-, and nation-oriented mission? Does the university really have to drift towards the model of a better and better managed corporation, a bureaucratic structure fighting in the marketplace with other, similar, isolated bureaucratic structures in search of consumers of the educational services they want to keep selling (*i.e.*, to drift “from the collegial academy to corporate enterprise”, as Ian McNay (1995) describes the process? What, in a social sense, would a (potential) university of mere consumers be like?¹¹

Or, as is evident in a splendid volume, *Universities and Globalization* (Currie and Newson, 1998), the questions could be the following: Are we in danger of having practices at universities drawn directly from the world of business? Will the university under these circumstances be able to maintain its critical judgments about society? Will scholars become entrepreneurs (“academic capitalists”)? Is academic activity still unique in our culture? Is globalization a “régime of truth” in Foucault’s sense (see Ball, 1990), a new fundamentalism, the impact of which on higher education will be revolutionary? Finally, is higher education merely a private commodity or is it a public good?¹²

At the same time, a less cultural and philosophical context and a more economic and political one could be described as follows: “Most Western democracies are now in the throes of a reform of their welfare state institutions. The modern university, as a significant claimant on public resources, is part of [the welfare state]. ... [T]he overriding influence in all countries is that the state can no longer afford to pay the escalating claims, especially in light of the increasing internationalization of the economy” (Melody, 1997, p. 76).

To return for a moment to the question of the use of the university today if it no longer provides the legitimization of power by building national identity: Perhaps the university could play an important role, for instance, in supporting the (already partially forgotten) ideals of civil society?¹³

The question arises: Who needs these ideals? Society, surely, since, paradoxically enough, society now has no good place from which to learn them. But how to pass from national ideals to civil ideals that would in principle be deprived of merely local references? The process of the passing of American universities from the ideal of (American) culture to the ideal of a financially independent (educational) corporation—commonly referred to

⁹ It is important to note two significant books that have appeared within a decade: Janice Newson and Howard Buchbinder, *The University Means Business: Universities, Corporations, and Academic Work* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988), and Jan Currie and Janice Newson, eds. *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives* (London: Sage, 1998). Both present precise reports and detailed interpretations by sociologists and political scientists of the phenomena occurring in the anglophone universities. They explain the ways the ideology of the free market enters the university in the form of practices drawn directly from the corporate world (high-level management, rectors as CEOs, nominated rather than elected deans; accountability, privatization, performance indicators, etc.).

¹⁰ “Academic capitalism” is the term coined by Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie. The diagnosis they present is fully correct: “globalization of the political economy at the end of the twentieth century is destabilizing patterns of university professional work developed over the past hundred years. Globalization is creating new structures, incentives, and rewards for some aspects of academic careers and is simultaneously instituting constraints and disincentives for other aspects of careers” (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, p. 1).

¹¹ See especially discussions about the “unique” place of higher education in society contrasted with its current “survivalist” mood in *The Postmodern University? Contested Visions of Education in Society* by Anthony Smith and Frank Webster, eds. (London: Open University Press, 1997). The only option still open for the university to defend itself today is to stress the unique nature of the university experience as such which, to tell the truth, is not sufficient.

¹² All these questions underlie this extremely useful collective volume.

¹³ It is very interesting to read together, in this context, two texts by Stanley N. Katz: “Can Liberal Education Cope?” (an address he delivered in 1997) and “The Idea of Civil Society” (one he delivered in 1998), both available at his Princeton University Web site.

as their “corporatization” (Newson, 1998, p. 108*ff.*)—is surely not worth being copied without further discussion of its implications. The only question is to what extent there is still any choice in our increasingly homogeneous world. If there were such a choice, and let us assume this possibility optimistically, the university could become a center for pluralistic, multiperspective thought that would deal with the ideals of civil society in an increasingly corporate-like world of global capital (see Soley, 1995; Beck, 2000; Bauman, 1998).

A university that consented to function within a framework determined purely by the logic of the (neo-liberal) economy would, with the passage of time, become a mere corporation (and it would find no consolation in the fact that it was an “educational corporation”). That would be the end of the university as a modern institution. Therefore, one has to agree with Slaughter and Leslie (1997, p. 1), who argue that “higher education as an institution and faculty as its labor force face change unprecedented in this century”. Such a situation would obviously not mean the end of the university as such; merely the end of a certain way of conceiving of itself, a conception with which, over a period of two centuries, society has become familiar. The university without its state- and nation-orientation (that is, de-ideologized) seems to be forced by external circumstances to look for a new place for itself in culture, for if it does not find such a place, it will become an educational corporation tasked with training specialists rapidly, cheaply, and efficiently—preferably very rapidly, very cheaply, and very efficiently.

Social and cultural changes today take place with a speed that was unimaginable a few decades ago. The world is changing more and more rapidly, but the university has increasingly less influence on the direction these changes take (if it ever, indeed, had any influence). It is no longer a partner in power (of the nation-state); it has become one among several budgetary items that, preferably, should be cut or reduced. One thing is certain: nothing is permanent or guaranteed in culture, neither is any status nor any place, role, or social task. This fact is well known by all those whose influence in culture has been radically reduced.

TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the potential decline of the project of modernity and of the nation-state entails the potential decline of the institution of the modern university, requiring the latter to search for a new place in culture and new ideas to support the organization of its functioning at the very moment when the harmonious co-operation of power and knowledge—or, more precisely, of the politics of the nation-state and the national consciousness provided by the university—has ended. Globalization brings about the devalorization of all national projects, one of them being the institution of the (nation- and state-oriented) university. If behind the university there are no longer the ideas of nation, reason, and (national) culture, then either new ideas have to be discovered or the university is doomed to surrender to the all-encompassing logic of consumerism. Within this logic, the university, free of its associations with power, devoid of modern national and state missions, exists merely to “sell” its educational “product” as a bureaucratic educational corporation. The study of the future of the institution of the university is inseparable from the study of it within the large cultural, philosophical, and political project of modernity with its ideas of the nation-state and, later on, of the welfare state.

To sum up, rethinking the social, political, and cultural consequences of globalization is a crucial task for social sciences today. The decline of the nation-state, viewed even as giving only some terrain of power to new transnational political players, is strictly linked with violent globalization processes which, consequently, should lead to the redefinition of

such notions fundamental to the social sciences as democracy, freedom, and politics. It also leads to the redefinition of the social role of the university. In the situation generated by the emergence of the global market, the global economy, and the withdrawal of the state (also called the decomposition of the welfare state), a constant deliberation is needed about new relations between the state and the university in the global age.

For the moment, one of the tentative conclusions for the author, as a public policy analyst, would be the following: one should avoid looking at higher education issues in isolation from what is going on in the public sphere generally and, nowadays, in the institution of the state. These changes do and will influence thinking about higher education; so, it is necessary to know the turns they are making. It is no use to keep referring to the rights gained by the university during the period of modernity (the rights gained in the times of national states), as modernity may no longer be with us. Redefined states may have somewhat different obligations and somewhat different powers, and it is not quite certain that national higher education systems, as well as universities, will belong to its most basic sphere of social responsibility. The state, worldwide, is itself fighting to find its own place in a new global order, and, no matter what it declares to the general public, higher education issues may seem to it to be of secondary importance.

Academics are living in a period of revolutionary change. Although they know the point of departure, the point of arrival still, fortunately, remains unknown. The challenge is to try to influence the changes so that academic institutions can thrive as in the past.

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