Globalization and Higher Education

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About

Globalization and Higher Education
Jaishree Odin, Peter Manicas
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004

If you are interested in the relationship between higher education and globalization, you will find this a very useful work. However, as the title, Globalization and Higher Education, suggests, the work is extremely broad in its scope. The term “Globalization” in the title could well be replaced by “Change.”

Most of the articles focus on the many forces for change that now impact the university as an institution. These include the impact of the Internet (instruction and learning will be “disembodied” (ch. 7, John J. McDermott, p. 135); the rapid rise of for-profit institutions (education and learning are being “commodified” (an idea present in many if not most chapters, but notably in Michael Margolis’ chapter 2); and the decline of control by the professoriate itself (again pervasive throughout).

The authors are mostly practicing scholars and the origin of the book lies in a series of academic conferences held at the University of Hawaii beginning in 2001. As mentioned in the forward by Deane Neubauer, the convener of the first conference, much of the writing was done before the immediate consequences of 9/11 were fully evident. (p. ix) Following 9/11 we have seen a rapid process of centralizing and strengthening the American government, as well as many others. We have also seen the accelerated privatization of many aspects of society earlier thought of as the “commons,” including most particularly education. Many of the authors might have chosen to give these related processes even greater emphasis were they writing today.

However, despite the relative age of the volume in this period of rapid and dramatic change, the work is a very useful one. In part, it is useful as a sort of indication of the state of the field. The concern for higher education has not greatly changed in the five years since these ideas largely
took shape. This because the challenges remain the same, and because they have not been effectively met. While it is no doubt somewhat unfair to take one turn of phrase out of context, Neubauer’s reference to distance education as an “interesting subspecies of activity” is somewhat revelatory of the general tone with which other changes are viewed; they are somehow “outside” the institutions and are to be studied rather than to be effectively utilized.

The book is also an interesting one in that it reveals a somewhat conservative bent to the response to change on the part of at least these particular practitioners. The university as an institution is seen as firmly in the hands of a “neo-liberal” system of ideas and practices, meaning that profit increasingly comes before education as such, and that the institution itself is increasingly corporatized. While these critiques might be seen as themselves radical or liberal to many in the general public, many issues typical of earlier criticism are very much muted. There is little concern, for example, to equality of access, or to any of the intellectual tropes of the “culture wars.” Many of the authors rightfully point out that higher education is a very conservative institution, despite what is often thought by outsiders. The impression that comes through is of an almost desperate holding action in which scholars who came up through the institutions of a rapidly passing status-quo try to come to an understanding of the process that is changing their worlds.

The work also shows, however, many positive adaptations to change. With the exception of McDermott’s self-style “Jeremiad,” there is very little of the earlier reactionary response to the rapid rise of electronic delivery of information, whether in the classroom or in the library. The Internet is now a given, and we are all, like those of us working at the Berglund Center, striving to comprehend its impact.

There are several chapters that would be particularly useful to anyone contemplating teaching or studying on the Internet. Odin’s chapter “New Technologies and the Reconstitution of the Internet” is particularly useful in giving both a practical and theoretical introduction to the topic. Like several other chapters, it is ultimately a hopeful one, which sees change as offering more opportunity than threat.

Several of the chapters also give excellent brief summaries of both the history of the university and of important schools of thought and seminal works on the development of higher education in general. While the tone and some of the vocabulary is markedly post-modernist, it is not incomprehensibly so to the lay reader. In general the chapters are very well written and effectively organized. Each chapter has useful notes and bibliographies.

Another advantage of this work is its international voice. The contributors come from eight different countries as well as from the United States. The reader gets a sense of globalization as more than just a local concern, but as an immense process lapping over the entire world. Few of the articles, however, give much of a historical sense of globalization as such. It would have been useful to have at least one chapter focusing on the phenomenon itself, and pointing out in particular that this is far from the first wave of globalization we have experienced.
There is no doubt that the intended market for this work is largely higher education itself, and particularly the professorate. However, any college graduate or academic administrator would find the book useful and provocative. And for those of us interested in the impact of the Internet, the book shows the breadth and depth of that impact in this important institution/industry.

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4 THOUGHTS ON “GLOBALIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION”

uroda
on January 30, 2014 at 7:12 AM said:

Thanks, I’ve just been seeking data about this subject to your lengthy time and yours is the very best I’ve came upon so far. But, what concerning the conclusion? Are you particular about the supply?

nigeria
on January 30, 2014 at 1:57 PM said:

Bravo, what phrase…., a magnificent idea.

Poznan
on February 1, 2014 at 3:53 AM said:

Great post! I’m heading to acquire to examine these all out! I have observed bits of the one Scorcese film on a Stones.

dating online
on February 3, 2014 at 1:49 AM said:

upset for the immense review, but I’m very loving the post, and hope this, as well as the great assessment some other individuals have written, will assist you decide if it’s the
appropriate choice for you.