

# Globalization Trends and Impacts on Higher Education in Developing Countries

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Structure of the presentation

1. Impacts of globalization on Higher Education
2. Global forces
3. Challenges brought by globalization
4. Addressing challenges
5. Areas for potential international cooperation

## **1. Globalization impacts on Higher Education (HE)**

Globalization is affecting the life of people in contemporary societies and its effects are both extending horizontally (to include more societies) and vertically (by making its effects deeper in everyday life).

Although impacts of this phenomenon are wide and far reaching some areas of social life are particularly affected, most clear examples are of course the integration of the markets and the consequent increased level of mobility of goods, services and peoples. And the same can be said about politics or culture.

We often hear the world is smaller, yet what does that mean? Is it only that information technologies and communication technologies are bringing more and fresh information all the time from far away places?

Globalization has deeper and concrete effects on education, particularly in the area of higher education, hence this presentation will focus on how some of those impacts are lived among developing countries.

### **Global society as a mosaic of cultures**

That new technologies and communication tools put people and societies in closer contact is not news; what is interesting about this phenomenon is the fact that even if we are becoming a more “unified world” in terms of accessibility, we remain as a mosaic of cultures, countries and local societies are both accepting the influences of other cultures but they are also reacting against them and protecting and fostering their own local cultures and customs. Further integration is happening, however fragmentation remains a determining factor both in terms of cooperation but also conflict.

### **Labor market: innovation & Ready-to-work-knowledge**

A clear impact of globalization on most societies is the change in the ways the labor market works. In the past labor markets were *contained* by their local and national borders, however globalization has changed that into a market that is more fluid, interconnected, more complex, wider and with faster interactions. A major feature is that labor markets are demanding for innovation and knowledge that is ready to be used. This is affecting higher education systems all around the world and particularly among less developed and more traditional countries that are being called to “catch up” and face the challenges of having to compete at a global level however with fewer resources (financial, educational, human capital, Etc.)

### **Global skills race (reform and update)**

Changes in labor market produce a cascade effect making societies race for access and leadership. As markets integrate the demand side of labor (E.g. companies) access a wider range of human resources, making local markets increasingly exposed to external pressures. This produces in turn a race among countries to develop human resources that are updated while seeking to improve quality of the education provided to widen accessibility to education to more students. In the case of developing countries this implies a challenge in terms of the disproportionate relations between resources available for

education and research, increasing demand from people to access education programs and the need to ensure quality education.

Even if the global skill race brings along positive aspects in terms of innovation and production of more and better human resources, it increases the risks related to a growing gap between developed and developing countries. Access to technologies and other educational resources is costly and developing countries may have to bear heavier costs given their lower prices and cheaper currencies.

### **Globalization and HE mutual influence (driven and drivers)**

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) function as medium and incubators of global agents. While globalization affects the ways in which they function in terms of what they teach and how they teach it, the research they do, and the ways they are administered; HEIs are becoming aware of the fact that they too produce human resources that will enhance globalization. Students and researchers have a vision of their careers that go far beyond local settings, not only they have access to worldwide information and knowledge, but they produce knowledge and interact with a scenario that is also receptive of their production hence further enhancing that interaction. In the case of developing countries this brings challenges and benefits, like increase access to opportunities for cooperation and development, but at the same time increased competition.

## **2. Global forces**

Globalization works as a set of forces that drive stakeholders into acting and reacting in a certain way, and it also gives a framework to those interactions for example by setting generally accepted rules or giving authority to certain institutions. Within this context higher education too is influenced and affected by globalization. And that influence is typically perceived differently depending on where one stands.

### **Knowledge Society (complementation)**

As economies become knowledge based, so have societies as a whole, this brings new pressures onto the HEIs in regards to kind and amount of research they produce. There is an evident shift among researchers towards more practical and development oriented research as compared to basic research in the past. This in turn produces a new international scenario where research becomes an arena for competition and cooperation. While HEIs (and their countries) compete for leadership and financial resources, research institutions and people are opening the doors to more cooperative research. This has meant a positive change in less developed countries as HEIs and researchers there find new ways to access more resources, knowledge and networks that allow them to stay updated and to produce more knowledge based cooperative endeavors. International cooperation is taking place in different forms and multi-directionally.

### **Knowledge-based-economies: HE = development engine**

knowledge-based-economies implies that what drives national economies is not only their capacity to produce goods but also to know how to manage them. Knowledge and skills have become the master piece of national economies development policies, which affects the role HEIs have at the social level. In the past universities were conceived as houses of knowledge that were “closed and elitist clusters”, nowadays that vision is outdated and considered as counterproductive for the economies of the countries. Now more than ever in the human history the development of the social tissue and the economies imbedded there are based on what graduate students produce and how they manage society as a whole. It is increasingly evident that formal HE is required to access areas of labor market that are more promising and other areas such as politics and public services.

### **Influence of the market**

As explained market forces are the strongest drivers of globalization, the relations between demand and supply extends to all areas of life. In the case of higher education market mechanisms are affecting the way HE works. There is growing demand from companies for updated and quality human resources, which implies growing pressures on families to send

their children to institutions that provide better education, which implies pressures on both government and HEIs to improve and expand the quality and quantity of the programs they provide.

For less developed countries this creates challenges in terms of access to education and then to jobs. However globalization and integration of the markets are changing this as for example now more international companies are seeking to fulfill their demand for quality human resources from graduates in developing countries, because they can provide high quality services and at lower costs than in other developed countries.

**Economies that are Export (X) – Import (M) oriented: Call for human resources that account with technical quality and are global in nature.**

Globalization impacts on the way countries conceive their economic relations to the world. Commerce has expanded to a worldwide scope implying that national economies are now driven by the motivation of exporting goods and services they have comparative and competitive advantages while importing those where their own production falls comparatively behind. This affects the way education is structured and imparted. Modern economies require human resources that account with technical capabilities of high quality that are global in nature, that is that are extensible or usable in and by other economies.

**Companies have more sourcing options → Challenges**

As markets become more global, companies have wider access to more labor sources. Less developed countries have been investing to uplift their educational systems and this creates a new trend where global companies decide to set themselves in less developed economies where there find necessary supply of human resources in terms of quantity and quality at much cheaper costs.

### **3. Challenges brought by globalization**

**Paradox: skilled labor → Demand for HE ← But fewer jobs**

Globalization has created a paradox in which more countries are investing in producing more and better human resources through education systems, this comes as a response from the increasing demand from society in terms of access to higher education, however in many cases there is no a proper correlation to access to jobs upon graduation. This relates to brain drain and human resource wastes.

**High quality of labor skills in low-cost countries**

Due to the efforts some less developed countries are doing to develop and enhance their educational systems international companies are establishing branches and production plants in those countries as this allows them to reduce costs while still obtaining high quality human resources. This appears as an important challenge to more developed countries in terms of the sustainability of their own work markets, regardless of the quality of human resources their universities may be able to produce.

**Brain drain or brain circulation → Human resources waste**

Among the effects globalization has on higher education there is the issue of what happens with students once they graduate. In less developed countries it is common that graduates seek profitable job options outside their countries. This raises questions in regards to the investments those countries do to produce these resources only to loose them after graduation. Recent studies contest this asserting that what happens in fact is a phenomenon of *brain circulation*, meaning that talents tend to move around and eventually return to their home countries as opposed to simply migrating elsewhere. In both cases an important challenge less developed countries face is the waste of qualified human resources that cannot make their ways through to productive and profitable options in their own countries or abroad.

**International knowledge networks**

Due to the influence of communication technologies and facilities for mobility, the HE scenario is increasingly integrated. This has resulted in a growing number of networks both at the national and international level that promote the move and

production of new knowledge as the result from cooperative efforts happening at all levels; which implies a great opportunity for potential cooperation and development in the future.

### **Continues reforms**

Among the main challenges that globalization has brought about in higher education is the fact that innovation keeps pushing for newer and better developments in education, hence the reform process at all levels has become a never ending process.

### **Massification: investment / privatization**

In the search for expansion of higher education both governments and HEIs have strived to widen the services they provide to include and accommodate wider number of students, moving from traditionally elitist systems to systems that are more open and democratic. However this clearly brings along the problem of ensuring quality of the education provided and ensuring completion of the programs by the students.

### **Transparency and standards (financial, academic)**

A clear tendency among higher education systems in modern societies is the efforts authorities are doing at all levels in order to make both systems and education programs more transparent in the sense of making counterparts understand what the systems are about and how they work; while at the same time pushing for similar standards in quality of education.

### **Homogenization of HE**

Among the main challenges that globalization is posing to higher education as a whole is the risk of homogenization, meaning that both systems and programs are tending to work similarly (which facilitates integration but fades away diversity), while the contents of educational programs are growing increasingly similar in terms of contents and formats. This represents an important challenge in terms of how HEIs can maintain what makes them and their programs unique while sharing increasing numbers of features with other similar ones.

## **4. Address challenges**

### **(1) Educational Reforms**

#### **Workers for knowledge based economies**

HEIs need to produce human resources that are capable of interacting at a global level; this varies from field to field, among careers and personal goals, however as a whole, HE systems are under pressures to produce human resources that are suitable for knowledge based economies. The question here, remains in terms of how to do it. How do universities prepare their students to be members of this global wave?

#### **Non-material skills**

Knowledge based economies demand human resources that account with technical skills in their fields and they require people to be ready, to be innovative and to be critical. HEIs are called to rethink their programs in terms of how to make students account with skills that go beyond their technical capacities and that include: 1) critical thinking people with problem solving minds; 2) people that are assertive and sensitive communicators; and 3) people respect and promote democratic values and are environmentally friendly.

#### **Lifelong learning**

HEIs face new scenarios in terms of the demography of their students. Demands from society to universities grow and change over time. This implies that HEIs need to be ready to produce and impart new knowledge at all times. In the past their student populations were usually on the age range of 17 to 25 years old, however this is rapidly changing as society is demanding more updated knowledge and growing number of people are motivated to take part in the process of lifelong learning.

### **Produce global leaders with cultural intelligence**

To produce global leaders universities need to consider how to create cultural and emotional intelligences among the students. This relates to exposing them to international scenarios. Recent years show changes in terms of the expansion of multilateral students exchange programs that temporarily move them from country to country in a way to make them sensitive to cultural differences and ways of learning and using knowledge.

### **(2) International cooperation**

Now, how do higher education systems move from those new goals to address a global context into concrete action? The most common strategy has been: internationalization of HE and governance reforms.

#### **Governance reforms**

- Within HEIs: universities reform in terms of how they are structured, centralized, how they finance themselves, the resources they account with, etc.
- By governments: governments strive to make their educational systems more effective through policies like decentralization, deregulation and quality assurance mechanisms
- Both HEIs and governments are influenced by international organizations.

#### **Internationalization**

- Internationalization at home → by injecting international elements into their countries or HEIs, E.g. through scholarships for incoming students or researchers; by allowing international HE providers to settle in the country.
- Abroad → by projecting HEIs and HE systems to the world for example by dispatching academicians or students abroad or by supporting HEIs opening branches in different countries.

### **5. Areas for Internationalization Cooperation**

The HE scenario is proving to be one of the most permeable areas where international cooperation can happen. Countries and institutions are rapidly opening up to it due to the rich implications this brings in terms of further development for both institutions and economic systems as a whole.

International cooperation happens mostly in two broad areas: A) Educational reforms by HEIs and governments and B) Through the process of internationalization of HE.

In terms of educational reforms new channels are opening for universities in developing countries to cooperate more with their partners in the developing world as well as with institutions in developed countries. Great potential for cooperation emerges here in regards to for example learning from each other's experiences in how universities are governed. Concrete examples of these include mechanisms aiming to increase transparency and comparability of their programs and administration; or the growing number of joint ventures in the form of investment from governments to HE or privatization of the sector.

HE in itself offers an ample area of cooperation based on the very role of the university: teaching, research, outreach and management.

While in terms of internationalization of HE we are observing that countries and universities are opening up and they are connecting. The complete educational systems are becoming more permeable and integrated, especially at the regional level. Regionalization of higher education is happening in most regions of the world, examples of this are clear in Europe, Southeast and East Asia as well as in Latin America.

This process is the result of the efforts being made in order to des-penalize mobility while ensuring quality in education through agreed standards, the acceptance of cross border provision and accreditation of educational programs and certificates. Very clearly this is also the outcome from efforts at the government level in terms of promoting international cooperation both within HEIs and Countries.