From Globalisation to Internationalisation: Stepping Back to Move Forwards in Progressing Higher Education in Overseas Markets

Eddie Blass, University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire, UK

Abstract: By using the MBA as an example, this paper questions whether we should be globalising education on economic grounds, or inter-nationalising to promote learning. With regard to education, globalisation has already begun. We see universities having ‘franchise’ arrangements with partners in foreign countries; there are staff and student exchange schemes between universities; there are international research collaborations; and there is the growth of the on-line virtual learning environment. Truett Anderson (1998:37) mapped the changing nature of global change and summarised the 20th century as ‘increasing globalisation and cultural pluralism influenced by the idea of socially constructed reality’. He refers to the ‘reaction against the doctrine of inevitable progress’, implying conflict and resistance to the progression of global society (ibid). The question arises as to whose socially constructed reality it is that dominates the global agenda. Sentamu (2000:51) argues that we should be valuing cultural diversity in education, presenting a relatively liberal view that offers a more inclusive view of globalisation. ‘Education must challenge our complacency, our prejudices and our misconceptions.’ To him globalisation is an opportunity for further development and exchange of ideas, rather than the one way opportunistic approach currently being practised. This paper explores patterns of globalisation of Higher Education, paying particular attention to the MBA qualification. By questioning whether we are really achieving ‘globalisation’ or merely spreading a western view of capitalism throughout the rest of the world, the paper presents an emergent international model of higher education and offers an alternative model as a more collaborative, inclusive way forwards.

Keywords: Globalisation, Higher Education

Paper

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to find a source which discusses the future, the move from the 20th to the 21st century, or indeed changes taking place at present, without them referring at some point to the concept of globalisation. The world wide web has essentially made the world a smaller place by removing national borders. You can buy and sell shares in any stock exchange in the world from your living room; you can study at Harvard without ever going to Cambridge, Massachusetts; and you can buy and sell information and commodities without having to go through customs.

With regard to education, globalisation has already begun. We see universities having ‘franchise’ arrangements with partners in foreign countries; there are staff and student exchange schemes between universities; there are international research collaborations; and there is the growth of the on-line virtual learning environment offering the potential for students to study at any institution from anywhere in the world.

Truett Anderson (1998:37) mapped the changing nature of global change and summarised the 20th century as ‘increasing globalisation and cultural pluralism influenced by the idea
of socially constructed reality’. He refers to the ‘reaction against the doctrine of inevitable progress’, implying conflict and resistance to the progression of global society (ibid). The question arises as to whose socially constructed reality it is that dominates the global agenda. Spring (2008) offers four major theoretical perspectives on globalisation of education representing differing ‘realities’ of global society:

A neo-institutionalist perspective believes that nation-states draw on a world culture in planning their school systems, and this world culture is based on Western ideals of mass schooling as a model for national school systems. This would manifest itself through multicultural curricula embedded within a national curriculum, arguably what we find in the UK today. This leads to an uneasy mix for individuals in terms of trying to maintain a cultural identity with some groups to which they feel they belong, while establishing a shared national culture to which they may not feel they belong. The model for Higher Education is largely driven by market forces and is largely deregulated.

The world systems perspective sees the globe as integrated but with two major unequal zones; a core Western zone which legitimises its power by inculcating its values into periphery nations and a periphery zone which services the core zone and hence is dominated by the core zone’s influence. This could apply to Western educational providers selling their systems or qualifications overseas, particularly in developing nations, for example the provision of an MBA qualification to business leaders in China so that they can work for multinational organisations in the region. In this model the global education players are emerging as the new educational elite. This leads to a free, competitive, global education market where the Western providers dominate simply because they were there first, and everyone else is playing catch-up. This in turn arguably leads to exploitation of the many by the few, but that is not the aim – the aim is a free competitive market; the inequality is a result of people not starting on level playing fields.

A post-colonial perspective suggests globalisation attempts to impose particular economic and political agendas on the global society that benefit wealthy and rich nations at the expense of the world’s poor. This is similar to the above view but more deliberate in its economic aims, and more likely to be seen at a national level. Examples of this might be the drive towards the knowledge economy in the UK, with the target of 50% progression to University so that UK citizens do knowledge work and migrant populations remain in unskilled jobs. This perspective sees the future as one where some countries dominate others for the benefit of themselves, and there is continued exploitation based on economic rationality. In many ways this is a Marxist interpretation of the world systems perspective.

A cultural theorist perspective emphasises cultural variations and the borrowing and lending of educational ideas within a global context, with the Western model of education for all and the importance of education in maintaining economic and democratic rights having been adopted across the globe. This would be a Western idea of education provision in developing countries, and is modelled by capacity-building initiatives in education and teacher training between Western universities and developing countries. This perspective sees the future as one where equity and justice prevail and education becomes a universal right. Through this perspective, the expansion of Western education to the East is viewed as a positive initiative rather than exploitative.

Spring’s (2008) perspectives differ with regard to the extent to which they acknowledge the existence of multiple knowledges, and the subjugation of some knowledges by other, and the extent to which they support the human capital model or view it as exploitative.
Eckersley (2007) writing about teaching and learning about globalisation, views the concept as having developed from the field of international relations but sees it now as essential to be included in any discussion of political, economic, cultural and social issues. The concept of globalisation, therefore, appears to have become all pervasive. The relative wealth and power of countries and even continents around the world are an important part of the globalisation concept. Indeed, it is this economic foundation to the analysis of activity that frames it as globalisation rather than internationalisation. Internationalisation is essentially ‘between nations’. Globalisation, on the other hand, is about economics, as it is linked in discourse to the concept of the ‘knowledge economy’.

Forstrop (2007:227) argues that ‘in a post-industrial society, knowledge will be regarded as a national property or resource and its cultivation and optimisation provides paramount hope for an economically secure future at the top of the global food chain.’ He states that the concept of a knowledge society can be understood in terms of a tool-kit for global survival from a Western perspective, based on the assumption that manual labour will be transferred from other parts of the world. Knowledge work therefore will be reserved for the West, and hence Forstrop views it as an extension of colonialism on a larger scale. The intercept of globalisation and the concept of the knowledge economy reinforce globalisation as an economic concept rather than a social concept. The question then arises as to what this means for the international development of Higher Education (HE).

Fielden (2007) differentiates between an international strategy and an internationalisation strategy within HE in the UK. The former is focussed on recruiting international students, while the latter is much wider and covers a broader range of activities within an institution. He sees three models developing: a university-centred model where the focus is on the future reputation and capacity of the institution; a student-centred model which concentrates on the quality of the student experience; and an all encompassing model where everything the institutions sets out to do is framed as internationalised. Arguably the first and last of these are globalised models as there are clearly economic and political drivers. The second model is more international as it is concerned with the individual students and their experience in the UK rather than the wider impact of the strategy. In focussing on the student experience, the institution is actually more likely to succeed long-term at attracting students to its campus, as word of mouth or word-of-internet can be a very powerful recruitment tool.

The Fielden report (2007) uses Knight’s (1994) definition of internationalisation as its starting point, which is the process of integrating an international/inter cultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institutions. This definition is quite insular as it is about bringing an international element into the university, although it does stretch to include study abroad, exchanges, and accreditation of overseas partners. Globalisation may be better defined as both a strategy and an impact, with a more external focus, perhaps ‘the promotion of inter cultural dimensions in teaching, research and education service functions in an international market context.’

Fielden (2007:6) offers a table which outlines how ‘internationalisation’ is occurring both at home and abroad in terms of current practice in UK organisations. These could equally be reconceptualised in terms of the definition of globalisation offered in this paper, such that they are no longer seen as activities, but initiatives with a specific purpose.
Table 1: Adaptation of ‘Internationalisation’ and Transformation to ‘Globalisation’ in Higher Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internationalisation at Home (Fielden 2007:6)</th>
<th>Re-interpretation as Globalisation at Home</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Internationalising the curriculum and related materials.</td>
<td>1. Adapting the curriculum and materials for a global market.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Foreign language study for home students.</td>
<td>2. Foreign language study.</td>
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<td>3. New courses with international themes.</td>
<td>3. New curriculum development on globalisation.</td>
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<td>4. A mix of international students.</td>
<td>4. Increased diversity of student population.</td>
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<td>5. Involvement of international students in teaching/learning process.</td>
<td>5. Integration of peer-learning strategies across diverse student groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. International academic staff.</td>
<td>6. Increased diversity of academic population.</td>
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<td>7. Intercultural campus events.</td>
<td>7. Intercultural campus events to celebrate a global calendar.</td>
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<td>8. Liaison with community groups.</td>
<td>8. Integration of overseas students with local relevant community groups.</td>
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<td>9. Student placements with local ethnic organisations.</td>
<td>9. Student placements to maximise international networks and opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Internationalisation abroad (Fielden 2007:6)</th>
<th>Re-interpretation as globalisation abroad</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Home students studying abroad.</td>
<td>1. Improving employability through international experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Academic staff working overseas on teaching, research or consulting.</td>
<td>2. Academic sabbaticals overseas to generate a presence overseas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Delivery of courses offshore jointly with partners.</td>
<td>3. Development of offshore partnerships for income generation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Accreditation of partners’ programmes as part of a home degree/award.</td>
<td>4. Development of offshore accreditation for income generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Establishment of an offshore campus delivering home degree/awards.</td>
<td>5. Development of offshore research centres for research efficiency.</td>
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<td>6. Establishment of joint research centres abroad.</td>
<td>6. Offshore research to ascertain Western interpretation of offshore development.</td>
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<td>7. Research projects undertaken abroad.</td>
<td>7. Capacity building projects to model Western methods offshore.</td>
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<td>8. Capacity building or technical assistance projects.</td>
<td>8. Pro-social fulfilment and good marketing through charity offering.</td>
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<td>9. International volunteering and charity work.</td>
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The left hand side of the table lists activities that are occurring in UK universities as part of the ‘integration’ process of internationalisation. The right hand side of the table reframes
these activities so that they have more of a purpose than simply to achieve integration. Most of the globalisation at home elements underpin a marketing strategy of making the university more attractive and inclusive of the global market place. Most of the globalisation abroad elements are driven by the economics of income generation. Why else would Western universities be engaging in this form of activity? While the individual academics involved in actually delivering offshore activity will wax lyrical about the learning that they have gained from their experiences, this is not shared institutionally, nor is it appreciated or valued within the academic performance management frameworks. Hence this contributes to ‘teacher quality’ rather than ‘teaching quality’ (Jasman, 2008). Many UK academics are very reluctant to become involved in offshore developments as they amount to a lot of extra work for them in terms of administration and no significant payback. At the end of the day, the driver behind this activity is economic.

Let us take the MBA as a case study example. In 2003 Cranfield School of Management undertook a substantial research project to look at the future of the MBA (Blass & Weight, 2005a). Little has changed since then with regard to the ‘international’ positioning of the MBA as outlined by Blass and Weight (2005b) and summarised here. The MBA started out as an American, and then Anglo-American qualification with some growth in Europe and Australasia. It has developed along capitalist principles and represents a Western interpretation of management and leadership. Now the MBA is allegedly a global qualification, taught all around the world, and also delivered by e-learning so it is globally accessible. Kathawala et al (2002) compare e-learning MBAs and traditional MBAs with regard to their global potential. They find the strengths are that it can be disseminated to large numbers globally, allowing local delivery where students can’t attend class, and allowing people to receive US education without having to be in the USA. This assumes that it is a good thing for US education to be available around the world. While the concept of global accessibility to education is something that no-one would be foolish enough to deny is of benefit, is this the case for the MBA per se? Is the MBA a global qualification?

A body of research is emerging that suggests Western Management Education doesn’t travel well. Newall (1999) looked at the transferability of knowledge to China and found that the cultural and contextual differences between China and the West meant that they would not share a system of meanings of codified knowledge. The underpinning tacit knowledge in China is different to the West, so ideas need reinterpretation as well as translation. Mellahi (2000) found leadership models and theories to be non-universal and non-transferable across cultures when he tested Western rhetoric with Asian, Arab and African leaders. Berry (1997) argues that management education is based on a stance of liberal market capitalism and that alternative critiques should be used for ideological debate on the MBA programme, and Sardar (1996) claims that one of the assumptions underpinning futures debates is that ‘reality’ however it is defined, is constructed in the image of the white man. All these papers raise the question of whether or not it is appropriate to teach an MBA as a global qualification without it being specifically contextualised to the cultural region in which the students operate.

There is also the issue of the relevance of the curriculum to an international audience, and the extent to which the curriculum itself is international. Does the curriculum develop international managers? Sokuvitz (2002) believes that understanding of cultural issues is core to successful global alliances, and that developing the skills necessary for this should be fundamental to an MBA. De Valesco (1999) suggests many reasons for an international dimension
in the curricula including the promotion of a global perspective, questioning of the status-
quo and reinforcement of individual identity and cultural tolerance. Gupta (2002) argues the
case for cultivating a global mind set, but it is hard to find this now in current programmes.

If the MBA is international, where is the contribution to the curriculum from international
sources? The information revolution assumes that there is a national information infrastructure,
but this is not true for Africa (Thapisa, 2000). In addition to the lack of the hardware, he
feels that being left behind in the development of software means that Africa will be ‘relegated
to a permanent position of being a conduit, importer and consumer of predetermined content
rather than a formulator, contributor, producer and exporter of content’ (ibid:173).

Selvaratnam (1988) sees these issues as going back further than this, as he traces all uni-
versities in their modern sense in the Third World Countries back to their Western origins
in terms of the social fabric that existed within the colonial powers. He highlights that their
relative lack of economic and human resource means they are not equal in the generation
and enhancement of the frontiers of knowledge in the international arena. Hence “third world
universities suffering from a lack of resources do not have the capacity to generate within
their own boundaries an indigenous intellectual and publishing capacity. Under such an un-
equal system of resource and academic relationship the core of knowledge naturally grows
in the central institutions in the developed countries and is constantly disseminated to third
world universities through an asymmetrical academic and intellectual relationship” (ibid:43).
This in turn shapes the curriculum and research agenda. The promotion of e-learning as a
global product further exacerbates this situation. If the aim of the e-MBA is to spread Anglo-
American imperialism, or the culture of the colonial powers into the third world, then the e-
MBA could be viewed as a good thing. Otherwise, it is contributing to the downfall of the
third world countries own universities as they have to compete against the Western univer-
sities for their student intake, a share of the curriculum, and their ability to contextualise the
MBA.

The ‘barons’ of the MBA programme are in the USA. They control the canon of knowledge
around which the curriculum is based, and this is partly achieved through the Academy of
Management and the role of academic journals, and the league tables, although many
European MBA providers are more ready to step outside the mould. Berry (1995) suggests
that it is the pressure in the US to conform, to get published and to get tenure that has led
the American model to dominate. Journals are given an ‘impact factor’ which indicates their
‘worth’ as a journal in which to be published, and the American journals have the highest
impact factors. Thapisa (2000:173) suggests that ‘whoever controls the knowledge base also
controls its content and the values that inspire it and, therefore, the direction of the flow of
information.’ As long as the MBA is limited by this bounded criticality it will remain ‘thin’
with regard to its content meeting the needs of future organisations.

It is rare for people to fail an MBA at an accredited MBA school. The school’s argue that
this reinforces their recruitment mechanisms which weed out candidates who would not
make the grade. However, Pfeffer and Fong (2002) question whether graduate business
programs are now more about networking, screening and recruitment services than they are
educational institutions.

Monks and Walsh (2001) think the lack of depth in the curriculum stems from the subjects
being taught being determined by the skills and knowledge available within the business
schools. Again this is bounded by the canon of knowledge accepted by the journals. Fuller
(2002:97) summarises the situation as
‘Eligibility to produce “cutting-edge” disciplinary knowledge is restricted to those who have learned to embody knowledge in some canonical way …. By submission to such training the knowledge producer has de facto agreed to have her subsequent actions judged in terms of whether they appropriately extend the canon. Moreover, the agencies that initially administer the canon – say, the curriculum committees of academic departments – are the same agencies that subsequently evaluate actions against the canon, say, in contexts of promotion or publication.’

The MBA thinks it is fat when the reality is that it is becoming thin. The accrediting bodies and barons of the ‘canon’ are not looking forward to what global companies will need in the future, or what the skills of global managers and leaders will need to be. The MBA is rooted in a knowledge base that is taught, learnt, and regurgitated in exams in order for students to obtain the badge. This is then sold around the world as a means of generating income for Western business schools and spreading Western business ideals.

The export of the MBA can at best be interpreted in terms of the world systems perspective outlined by Spring (2008), but is more likely to be an example of the post-colonial perspective. Western schools sell the MBA overseas because it makes economic sense for them to do so. Multinationals sponsor students to study the MBA overseas because it allows them to function as Western business executives in non-Western cultures. This in turn drives local organisations to shift to Western patterns of business and management in order to secure the lucrative contracts from the multinationals, and hence the capitalist ideal spreads its grip over more and more of the worlds trade systems.

Globalisation as a concept has resulted in Higher Education institutions behaving as business enterprises much like any other capitalist business in the Western world. Rather than embracing the opportunities for diversity that internationalisation offers, it is falling prey to the dominant economic discourse through the development of strategies that exploit market opportunities.

Sentamu (2000:51) argues that we should be valuing cultural diversity in education, presenting a relatively liberal view that offers a more inclusive view of globalisation. ‘Education must challenge our complacency, our prejudices and our misconceptions.’ To him globalisation is an opportunity for further development and exchange of ideas, rather than the one way opportunistic approach currently being practised.

The cultural perspective offered by Spring (2008) may appear naive and idealistic, but it offers a more sustainable future for the development of global Higher Education than the post-colonial perspective currently dominating the horizon. If we are to create a model of globalisation that has a liberal, meaningful purpose with regard to pedagogy, curriculum and educational philosophy, we need to move away from a market driven approach and revisit the roots of university as a place of moral development (Newman, 1853). Higher Education is in a unique position in that it has the opportunity to contribute to democracy as well as economy. Globalisation is driving the economic agenda over the democratic agenda, and this cannot be good in the long term for the health of the planet. The two, of course, need not be mutually exclusive, as economic success can develop from the success of democracy; it is questionable whether or not it can be achieved the other way round.

There is a very real opportunity here for Higher Education to promote the cultural perspective outlined by Spring (2008) for a more sustainable, democratic future for our planet through the embracement of internationalisation and inclusion and promotion of diversity through
collaborations and partnerships. There is a real danger that Higher Education will continue
to fool itself that is heading down the path of the world systems perspective based on free-
market principles, when the reality is that it is a post-colonial ‘wolf’ dressed in world-systems
‘sheep’ clothing. This is an exclusive model of Higher Education that supports Western he-
gemony and suppresses diversity and democracy.

This paper is presented in the spirit of contributing to, or indeed re-starting, a conversation
about the potential impact of Higher Education on the ideals of democracy, liberal education,
and promotion of cultural inclusiveness, and the extent to which the development and practice
of institutional strategies is supporting to or indeed hindering the achievement of these aims.
The economics of globalisation are in danger of marketising Higher Education to the point
that it actively inhibits the process of internationalisation rather than contributing to it.

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About the Author

Dr. Eddie Blass

Having started life as a training and development specialist in industry, Eddie moved into Academia teaching HRM before completing her Doctorate in Education and merging the work-place with education in her current role in Professional Learning.