

HIGHER EDUCATION GLOBALIZATION: TO LIVE OR TO SURVIVE?

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The higher education sphere is undergoing transformations, stimulated by globalization, that are mostly similar to economic and cultural ones, but with some delay (for 15-25 years), which is associated with the traditional conservatism and bureaucratization of the higher education. The paper assesses the prospects for the educational services globalization associated with the elimination of national competitive advantages, the formation of a global pyramid of educational institutions, the monopolization of the educational content distribution, and the main principles for modernizing the system of national higher education in the context of its globalization.

Keywords: higher education, globalization, standards, digitalization

Introduction

Higher education, being a system-forming institution of modern society, reflecting all results of social transformations, is forced to accept and quickly respond to the challenges of the development of social relations in all their diversity from purely identified by political motives and cultural characteristics to only economic activities associated with them.

At the same time, the strategic and national significance of the traditional functions of higher education and universities as the main generators of these functions, in the context of the required transformations, actualizes and often dramatizes the problems of matching the short-term tasks of the accelerated (especially in the context of the coronavirus pandemic) modernization of the higher education system with long-term national priorities, including, of course, one of the most important which is the guarantee of ensuring the autonomy and sovereignty of the state in the process of training qualified, erudite and competitive generations in the world labor market, as well as the system of this training itself, including the infrastructure of educational institutions, faculty, an effective management system of an educational institution, integrated with labor markets and public authorities responsible for the strategic planning processes.



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Main focus of the study

Globalization in its broadest sense, often idealized since the end of the 20th century, has also affected the educational sphere, which in most countries of the world has become a very effective conductor of the ideas of universalization and unification of the standards for specialist training systems, methods of recognizing and evaluating the achievements of both ordinary students and applicants for scientific degrees and academic titles (Jahanian & Soleymani, 2013; Nicodim et al., 2015).

At the initial stage, the states actively recognized foreign methods and standards of higher education, joined international conventions and agreements, assumed obligations to modernize the higher education system, bringing it to unusual standards and principles (Andone, 2021). The voices of the protesters were not heard against the background of radiant confidence in the coming global recognition of national diplomas, and, consequently, their holders; the possibility of embedding national universities in international flows of knowledge, innovation, technology, as well as foreign students, scientists, grant funds.

At the same time, as in the economic sphere, no alignment of world education has occurred, moreover, the gap in the development of national higher education systems has increased dramatically, which is demonstrated by the dynamics of various expert indices, from the index of the state of human capital and human development to the comparison of indicators of the higher education system in the countries of the world (Beck, 2006; Rashova, 2019; Pacrgaru et al., 2019). Having agreed to “play” according to the imposed rules, the countries not only recognized the secondary importance and backwardness of their own traditional education, but also became dependent on those who create these very rules and monitor their thorough implementation.

Playing by someone else's rules every year only leads to the fact that the costs of educational activities (and, consequently, the costs of the states) grow, but at the same time, the increase in costs is not associated and is not justified by the growth of wages of the workers in the sphere (with rare exceptions in the form of officials responsible for these reforms). And this is the main trap, a loop from which a university or a whole sphere of national higher education, trying to actively integrate into international educational structures, simply cannot escape.

The unification of educational standards, which was highly believed in, did not imply the unification (for example, complete "de-identification", elimination of binding to a particular university or country) of diplomas (for example, by creating a worldwide database of diplomas in various majors).

Moreover, the actively enforced ranking system of universities (without inclusion into which a university is simply not considered worthy of attention and/or funding even within national borders) and even countries of the world tightly linked a diploma with a specific place of a university in the ranking, depriving even successful graduates and university professors with a low rating of opportunities for global recognition and just earning money (Hromcová & Agnese, 2019; Baskaran & Hessami, 2010).

Today the world university rankings with a very non-transparent assessment and methodology for their determination are the main motivator of the leadership of universities and ministries of education (Manole, 2013). Both universities and states are spending more and more funds to achieve the values of indicators, to improve their position, to maintain leadership (starting from the often redundant publication of research results of their

employees in highly cited and prestigious publications, ending with granting foreign students and the maintenance of entire departments responsible for scientometric measurements or an audit of university readiness for annual assessment).

At the same time, the workload on teachers increases sharply, they are forced to concentrate more and more on publications abroad (which implies high financial costs), the development of international relations, relations with representatives of the profession (business, specialists), the preparation of numerous reports and plans which are obligatory to determine the rating and so on. Often, the increase in the workload is not accompanied by an increase in the financial support of the professors (Bernaldo & Fernandez-Sanchez, 2022; Marszowski et al., 2020).

A situation when the costs of universities are growing, but the motivation of professors' remains at the same level, or even decreases, is emerging overseas.

The opposite (predictable, quite) reaction is also manifested in the form of publications in "junk" journals, the recruitment of students from among foreign labor migrants wishing to legalize themselves (while it would be more logical to spend these funds on supporting their own talented youth), the employment of market professionals who do not only have teaching experience, but are generally not interested in conducting classes for students for the money paid by universities, spending money on maintaining student infrastructure (which, perhaps, students never need), digitalization and virtualization of education (which is also one of the indicators of the "success and global efficiency" of the university), up to attempts to corrupt the experts from international rating systems in order to obtain the desired results, and so on. Obviously, this practice, which is typical for many countries of the world that have embarked on the path of globalization of education, is degradation.

The sphere of higher education in the countries of the world is determined by the level of economic development of these countries, but now, due to the ratings and the need to meet international standards, already meager budgets are being reduced, the salaries of university professors, which the competitiveness of graduates mainly depends on, are not growing, moreover, the stiff competition among colleagues is growing (the intra-university systems of attestation and evaluation of work, which determine the amount of allowances, put university functionaries in a deliberately more advantageous position, and often deprive elderly, but experienced professors and associate professors of decent wages) (Baskaran & Hessami, 2010a).

Therefore, the unification of educational programs and standards has not led to the formation of a single, global educational space, but to the fact that all universities in the world must comply with a list of recommendations for the sake of a place in the world pyramid, without taking into account the profile of educational programs provided and national characteristics, while the fees for ongoing participation in this annual "elephant giveaway" by global agencies and expert groups is growing, devaluing salaries and destroying the motivation of the direct implementers of educational services.

However, unified standards and a global rating are by no means all of the tried-and-tested tools of globalization.

Another challenge is the fragmentation of higher education with the help of the so-called MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), which are protected by copyright, are in paid online access, are based on the widespread use of modern educational technologies, including student assessment (there can be up to several thousand in one group), however, the system is able to evaluate tests, essays, and even scientific projects automatically).

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This type of course is actively popularized as more practice-oriented, compiled by leading experts, and easy to learn. Some employers accept certificates from these courses as proof of completion of advanced training.

At first glance, nothing threatens higher education. In the context of a pandemic and the need to study all your life, these courses are very relevant, useful, and it is a personal matter for everyone what and where to study.

The fact is that world rankings now take into account and evaluate the fact that there are MOOCs created by university professors, and some especially innovative universities today give students the opportunity to take a course on an online platform (recommended by the university, read 'the world rating agency') instead of the traditional and receive not only a certificate of completion of the course, but also official credits.

Obviously, in the near future, all professors will be required to create their own online courses, with the possibility of being included in the world educational platforms (as the evidence of the high quality of the program) such as Udemy, Coursera or leading American or European universities. The students will be offered the MOOC instead of lectures and seminars (the classes are now being held online in most countries of the world due to coronavirus restrictions), reducing the functionality of the universities to the services of the world educational platforms, collecting information about the students taking various selected or assigned courses, and, probably, organizing student leisure and personal growth activities (when/if the pandemic ends).

In this case, the "golden age" of global higher education will come soon. It will be unified rules of the game with destroyed national (local) advantages (for example, the geographical proximity of the university to the place of residence, the positioning of the country in the world market of technologies, innovations; the quality of local research and the needs of the local labor market; the local cost of a professor's work, and so on), with maximum monopolization of the flow of information and the process of providing educational services (including the global cost of education).

This transformation will finally consolidate the global pyramid of higher education with the "elite" universities at the top it, tightly localized, using the advantages of their innovative, technological, and educational systems, providing the world with expensive, inaccessible to most of the people on Earth, comprehensive academic education which is necessary for the formation of future creativity and determinants of world development trajectories.

"Elite" universities will also actively distribute their own or carefully selected educational content from less prestigious universities, earning more on the access to it from any location in the world.

At the second level of the pyramid there will be highly specialized or affiliated with corporations (research centers) educational institutions, which also actively form and distribute educational content of a certain field, develop international technical and research cooperation.

A huge number of other universities will remain at the third level, trying not to lose their own staff and students in the context of the spreading online courses, the purpose of the very existence of which will be determined, to a greater extent, by their ability to adapt online content to local realities (for example, by grouping several courses into one online course), and organize conditions for leisure and personal growth activities for students (it is obvious that in the context of the devaluation of the work of teaching staff, last one will be

completely lost. Professors will change their profile activity or will be completely affiliated with global educational platforms, trying to compete on the global level, and, consequently, any serious R&D at a third-level university will be forgotten).

It is likely that the universities in the future will have to have comfortable dormitories, sports complexes, venues for mass events, as well as co-working spaces with high-speed Internet connection, and professors in the future will have to be something between an animator and a business coach who is able to motivate, organize, actively communicate, but not to teach, not to form new knowledge, not to engage in scientific activities.

And, it can be noted that the “campusization” of universities (which is within the context of the above perspectives) is already a trend!

Of course, within the framework of such an educational pyramid, universities located at the upper levels will do everything to prevent sharing this position with the universities of the “third level”. Although, in general, in the context of the teaching staff erosion, the rising cost of participation in international ratings, the monopolization of intellectual property rights on educational content, this will be extremely easy to do.

Conclusions and recommendations

In view of the foregoing, discarding alarmism, taking into account the inappropriateness of conscious disintegration and isolation from global trends in educational services, several points should be taken into consideration:

- awareness and preservation of national, local characteristics, traditions of higher education, the trends of the global labor market, the dynamics of the scientific and technological revolution, the spread of modern ICT, without blindly and mandatory following the latest changes in higher education;

- creation and prioritization of national ratings (for example, in the field of budgetary financing) of higher education institutions;

- analogy of the rating and development prospects of universities and their teaching staff (the minimum share of the budget spent on teaching staff, excluding university functionaries; the average salary of teaching staff, excluding university functionaries; the number of grants and scholarships issued by the university; publication activity, not only in foreign journals, funded by the university, the innovative activity of professors, funded by the university, an analogue of contractual work, but between the university and its professor), and not just infrastructure and the number of foreign students, etc.;

- independence of universities in the field of defining their own educational standards to provide opportunities for increasing competitiveness in the market of educational services, creating more demanded graduates for the local employment market (debureaucratization of the development and adoption of new educational programs, greater autonomy in the process of distributing academic hours for students and professors, and etc).

We believe that the introduction of these conditions will contribute to the transformation of the university of the future into a predictable, fair, motivating employer, in the struggle for the right to work which will unite professors who can help universities not only survive and perform its social functions, but also ensure a constant influx of students.

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