



education review // reseñas educativas
a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

**editors: gustavo e. fischman /
melissa cast-brede / gene v glass**

Supported by the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University

March 1, 2017

ISSN 1094-5296

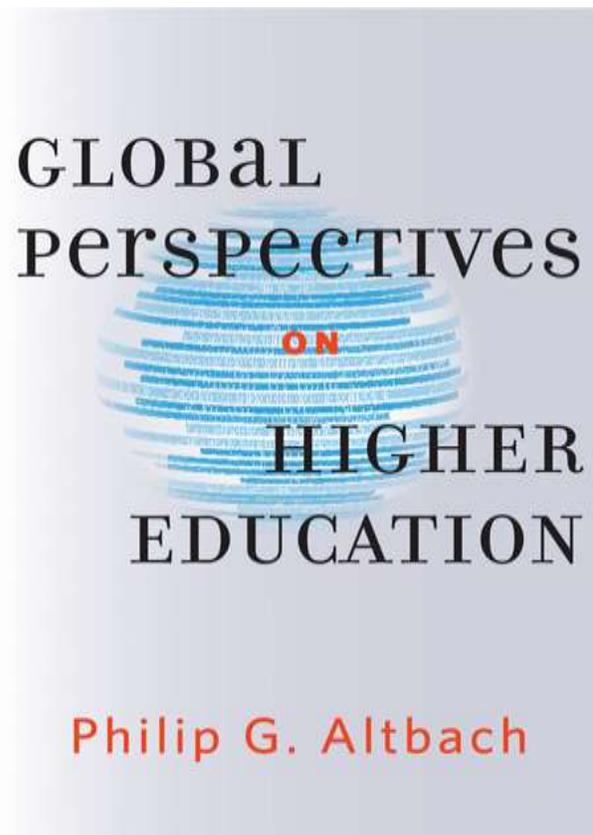
Altbach, P. (2016). *Global perspectives on higher education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Pp. 352

ISBN: 9781421419268

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Globalization in the 21st century has had profound consequences on almost all aspects of life, and the higher education sector is no exception. Mass student access to postsecondary education has put significant strains on institutions and governments to keep up with demand. Greater internet access worldwide has rapidly increased the availability of degrees by distance. Increased international student enrolments, particularly students from China and India, have put further pressure on institutions in both developed and developing countries. Running alongside these challenges are concerns about the ‘center-periphery’ dynamic, in which premier universities and first-world countries attract top academic staff and students at the expense of less prestigious institutions. The higher education sector, in short, faces a number of challenges, and globalization has not always had a positive impact. Indeed, as Val Rust and Joseph Zajda recently pointed out, the effects of globalization are ‘so profound that many of



the basic assumptions about higher education are being called into question', such as the damaging impact of commercialism on academic freedom (Rust & Zajda, 2016, p. 2).

Culminating years of research as a preeminent academic on international higher education, Philip Altbach's *Global Perspective on Higher Education* critically examines the current system and the key issues that affect its development. Along with several other co-authors, his birds-eye view of the international system is a valuable contribution to the literature and provides a much needed focus on the inequality between higher education providers across borders. Several interesting themes emerge, especially surrounding the role of globalization and commercialization in higher education. While this review takes a holistic view of this book's contribution to the literature, it specifically focuses on the key themes that Altbach raises: Massification, the center-periphery/brain-drain dynamic, commercialization and privatization, and the rise of non-Western academic institutions. It also offers some thoughts about where this book could have strengthened its analysis of key issues and improved its general readability.

Massification, the large increase in enrolment and student access to higher education, is one major factor that is changing the landscape of postsecondary institutions. Altbach dedicates Chapters Two and Three to examining this issue, describing the phenomenon as the 'central driving force' in global higher education (p. 7). More specifically, he outlines seven key challenges that arise from Massification: funding, new sectors such as private and vocational, distance learning, differentiation and complexity of institutions, managerialisation of academic institutions, the changing nature of the academic profession, and new student diversity and culture (pp. 31-45). While providing solutions to an exponential increase in student access to higher education is undoubtedly complex, Altbach convincingly suggests that non-traditional private higher education providers can help meet the demand

of increased student numbers. Citing the rising costs of public education and overcrowding in these institutions, he points out that the private sector is 'demand absorbing'—offering access to students who did not meet entry requirements or cannot otherwise be accommodated in traditional universities. The problem, however, is that the growth of the private sector also reduces the general quality of education provided to students. In some cases, such as in Sub-Saharan Africa, the privatization of higher education has had a 'crippling' effect on the quality of institutions in this region (pp. 23-24).

While globalization can facilitate the development of a global knowledge economy and freer exchange of staff and students, it can also increase inequality between international institutions. World-class academic staff are drawn to institutions that can provide higher salaries, better working conditions and greater research facilities. Similarly, students want to study at the most prestigious institutions, most of which are located in first world countries. Established academic powers, in short, tend to 'dominate' over second tier or developing institutions (p. 18). Altbach describes this phenomenon as the 'center-periphery' or 'brain drain' dynamic, highlighting it as a key issue affecting global access to top quality higher education. While providing no clear solutions—Altbach even concedes that it is 'extraordinarily difficult' for institutions to move from the periphery to the center—he does suggest that neo-colonialism is an underlying cause for how inequality in the system has developed over time (pp. 151, 166). In other words, the current state of international higher education has been shaped by universities from industrialized nations maintaining dominance over the Third World. This conclusion is clearly evident in Africa and some parts of Asia, although institutions in countries like Singapore and South Korea have made impressive steps towards developing world-class research universities. Nevertheless, it does support another one of Altbach's arguments: regardless of country, the higher

education market grows out of its socio-economic and political context. Even the United States—the world’s most influential academic power—faces greater inequality between its own higher education institutions (Ionescu & Polgreen, 2009).

Another critical issue that Altbach explores is the impact of commercialism on the higher education sector. A heavy focus on enrolment growth, the rapid rise of private for-profit providers and corporate funding for research activity are just three key factors that have drastically changed the nature of higher education. For Altbach, increased funding can naturally provide greater teaching and research resources but can also compromise the foundations of academic integrity and freedom. In other words, the pursuit of profit over knowledge and the restrictions of research production that might clash with the interests of corporate funding sources undermine the key purpose of any educational institution. Altbach explicitly argues that commercialization in higher education is a threat to academic freedom, suggesting that the values of the corporation and the marketplace are ‘at odds’ with the traditional values of the university (p. 236). This is one of Altbach’s most convincing arguments, particularly in light of his detailed discussion about the relationship between increased private providers and maintaining high academic standards in Chapter Fourteen.

As a final key theme, the rise of academic institutions in the developing world—particularly China and India, but also the other BRIC countries such as Brazil and Russia—play a monumental role in shaping the future of higher education. China and India enroll the greatest number of higher education students in their own institutions and also send the greatest number of students overseas to study at international universities. As Altbach astutely points out, these segments of the higher education sector are large, growing and increasingly powerful but still strive to occupy a more important position. In many ways, these countries still remain on the

periphery as they struggle to deal with increased numbers alongside raising the standard of education across all of their respective providers (p. 51). China has made the most impressive gains toward establishing world-class status for its respective universities, yet India has not made the same investment in higher education and struggles to cope with domestic demand (Agarwal & Altbach, 2012). Other developing countries also struggle to compete against international universities and with other domestic issues such as political instability and restrictions to academic freedom. Examples of periphery countries that face such issues include Malaysia, Myanmar and Nigeria, which are discussed intermittently in Chapters 11, 12, 13, 15, and 16. In these cases, Altbach suggests that both restrictions on academic freedom and inadequate funding places significant strain on improving the quality of higher education in developing countries (pp. 216, 243).

While Altbach’s book provides many incisive conclusions about the current state of higher education, this reviewer thought that there were a few areas in which his arguments could be strengthened. Needless to say one book could never address all pertinent issues in higher education (Altbach concedes this fact in the preface), yet given the focus on global issues and the exponential increase of students from a non-Western background, an examination into academic literacy and integrity issues was a noticeable oversight. International students—particularly those originating from Asia, Africa and the Middle East—generally struggle to grasp concepts such as plagiarism, referencing and academic writing, thereby placing a larger burden on institutions to teach these skills. Altbach, for instance, raised concerns about questionable academic standards in private for-profit institutions, and a discussion of academic literacy issues in a global context would have made for a more compelling argument about the need for greater regulatory oversight. Similar issues, such as reviewing potential

plagiarism through programs like *Turnitin* and the rise of ‘contract cheating’, were not mentioned in the discussion about the impact of advancements in information technology on higher education.

This reviewer also felt that the final chapter, ‘Student Political Activism’, was a strange and somewhat confusing choice for the conclusion to this book. Altbach spends the preceding 300 pages developing a convincing case about the key issues affecting the current state of higher education in a global context, yet this chapter focuses mainly on the historical impact of student activists and even suggests that their ability to compel change in universities or governments was not entirely effective. Instead, a summarized concluding chapter about the key issues addressed—such as Massification, the impact of commercialism and the rise of non-Western academic institutions—as well as predictions

for the future would have been a more appropriate and fitting end to such an otherwise fantastic book.

Overall, *Global Perspectives in Higher Education* is a compelling and convincing contribution to the literature on modern higher education. It appeals not only to academics but for anyone that works in or has a general interest in the changing landscape of international higher education. Outside of academe, policymakers, public policy advisers and political commentators would be especially interested in its contents. Even though it is written primarily for an academic audience, the book is certainly accessible to general readers as it develops convincing arguments about key challenges in the field. It is indeed a fitting testament to Altbach’s overall contribution to the field of higher education for over half a century.

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