Ten Globalization Challenges for Higher Education

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Proposition 1: Demographic dynamics in part created by and in part articulated through globalization affect the ability of countries to meet Higher Education access and capacity challenges.
Demographics

- Three modal patterns:
  - Aging populations with declining university cohorts
  - Stable populations with repeatable birth rates
  - Enlarging populations

- Resulting Capacity issues
  - Overshoot
  - Stability and build-out
  - Undershoot

- Resulting quality issues
Proposition 2: Shifting patterns of production and consumption make the role of higher education in responding to employment alignment issues uncertain—what kinds of workers does a society need?
Alignment Issue

- Common to all societies
- More a predicament or a dilemma than a problem
- Three “moving parts” that complicate the policy issue:
  - Changing demands from the economic sector for skills
  - Inherent “lag” in HEIs to develop programs to produce those skills
  - Knowledge society demands that learners acquire job skills for jobs that don’t yet exist, employing skills that are not fully known yet, to address problems that have not yet been identified.
Proposition 3. Interdependence dynamics overwhelm national policy capabilities, in finance, migration, government revenues, and education.

No state, no government can stand aside from the impact of global dynamics. The U.S. and European financial crises demonstrate what we saw twice before in the past 25 years in Asia—namely that finance, and capital are authentically global.

Higher education throughout the world is still highly dependent on government support. When government budgets decline, so does university finance. Where HE is increasingly privatized, greater relative burdens are placed on students for tuition and/or fees...with resulting social dislocation.
Generalized Systemic Effects

- **Proposition 4.** Disruptions in the global system produce unintended consequences such as climate change, pollution, etc.—which in turn affect curricular responsibilities.

- Higher education has a public good function that mandates that it study, research, teach, and propose solutions to such issues.

- However, because the crises tend to be man-made and favor large-scale capital, they are controversial, hard to fund, and can lead to retribution.

- Disciplinary organization of research aligns poorly with such public value problems.
Neoliberalism’s Legacy

- Proposition 5. Neoliberalism’s promotion of market solutions and autonomy has resulted in expansion of private HE markets often in situations of insufficient regulation, thus affecting quality.

- Neo-liberal policy structures invite profit taking into the higher education marketplace, and weaken structures of regulation, including quality assurance.
Knowledge Issues

- Proposition 6. Globalization’s stimulus for and embodiment of knowledge dynamics have created information singularity thereby eroding traditional sources of knowledge and standards, with consequences for teaching methodology and student responsibility.

- The 21st century university is emerging with faculty being asked to face different issues about how knowledge is created, transmitted and conserved. Further, a profound tension exists between how students learn in 21st century knowledge environments.

- Six Drivers: Computational World, extreme longevity, rise of smart machines and systems, new medial ecology, globally connected world, superstructured world

- Ten skills: Sense Making, Social Intelligence, Transdisciplinarity, Computational thinking, New Media Literacy, Design mindset, Virtual Collaboration, Cross Cultural Competency, Cognitive Load Management (Institute for the Future.)
Income Inequality

- Proposition 7. Income inequalities affect resources for education. When combined with the ideology of neoliberalism and private sector realization, they exhaust commitments to education as a public good, and make education a commodity available only to those with means.

- Income inequality has growth throughout the past four decades, within countries and between countries. Income inequality in the US is the greatest it has been in a century.

- When income is held in such unequal ways, the ability of government to stimulate and “run” the economy can be severely threatened, e.g. the U.S. in the current crisis. Namely, businesses hold $2.5 Trillion dollars in cash but are not investing in the economy.
Proposition 8. Instability and change within economic production systems produce instability within job systems, thereby aggravating the misalignment between higher education and job markets.

A special version of the alignment proposition, this focuses on the interdependence of the global supply and consumption chains, and the reduction of effect of individual firm decision making, or even that of nation states.
Global Rankings

- Proposition 9. Notions of global competitiveness produce dynamics such as rankings, which are inherently reductionist.

- Ranking are a symptom of global exchange dynamics. They represent a market without an agreed-on, stable currently. Rankings are a first approximation to produce such a market, one that could function the way a global currently market does. As Marginson argues, the currency of higher education in a global market is status, which functions as a marker for quality (and price).
Culture, English, and Media

- **Proposition 10.** The communication and cultural construction mechanisms of media and mass consumption, so much a part of contemporary globalization coupled with other dynamics such as English primacy, erode higher education’s traditional role of cultural preservation.

- **This observation follows the rule that complexity (cultural particularity) always exists in dynamic tension with reductionist simplification (cultural dominance.)** Linguistic primacy always carries cultural loading. As Foucault famously said: “Language does not take place behind our backs.”
What courses of action are proposed in this situation? Some suggestions:

- Work with inventing the new 21st century learner, recognizing that we are within a new and changing ecology of learning. Empower students as carriers of innovation. “Innovation is the scarce capital of the 21st century.”

- Work to change HEI’s into 21st century organizations: flatter, more innovative, more adaptive.

- Work to change curricula to align them with changing global problems—emphasize not just multi-disciplinary work, but trans-disciplinary work.

- Promote cooperative education at all levels, within countries and cross border as a model consistent with simultaneity.