

# **Globalization, higher education and inequalities: problems and prospects**

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## Introduction

At the end of the twentieth century, globalization was associated with new and enormously expansive forms of capitalist growth. For higher education it offered many opportunities for innovation and networking. However, from the beginning of the twenty-first century, globalization has become as much associated with danger, threat, and crisis – for example in relation to the financial system and climate change - as with opportunity and endeavor. The ‘dark’ side of globalization is seen as both cause and effect of global and local social division. For higher education institutions these processes of inequality entail a complex intermingling of opportunity, risk, and social injustice (Unterhalter and Carpentier 2010).

Problems of global inequality require both transnational and sub-national responses. But higher education institutions and systems find it difficult to respond in both registers. Global inequalities present both problems and prospects for higher education. They constitute a distinctive location for research, teaching, learning, and organizational formation. In this chapter we consider global inequalities as a major site of injustice that confronts higher education institutions, and we attempt to assess the prospects for change that the sector offers.

Much of the scholarship on inequality and higher education discusses the topic in relation to national contexts (Archer and Leathwood 2003; Bourdieu and Passeron 1964; Duru-Bellat et al. 2008). However, as we show below, a number of drivers of inequality have long been associated with global processes. Nationally-located higher education institutions reproduce practices associated with global inequality - either unwittingly, because these practices are often taken-for-granted, or through strategies that promote the practice of particular nations or socioeconomic or cultural groups. The first part of this chapter examines this historically. From the 1990s a range of new forms of higher education emerged which

entailed changes in higher education institutions' relationship with the nation-state and with each other. The second part of the chapter considers the ways this process is enmeshed both with national and global inequalities. The third part reviews problems associated with inequalities and the prospects of achieving justice.

### Dimensions of inequality

#### *Definitions*

Before we discuss global higher education and inequalities it is necessary to consider definitions of inequality and their global dimensions. Jacob and Holsinger (2008: 4) define 'equality as the state of being equal in terms of quantity, rank, status, value or degree; while 'equity considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to fairness, justness, and impartiality of its distribution at all levels of educational subsectors'. A wide-ranging debate exists on how to understand aspects of equality in education: in relation to school choice; the treatment of children in school; and gender, disability, and cultural identity. This work discusses the salience of childhood, family life, and the conditions of learning (for example Lynch and Lodge 2002; Brighouse 2000; Swift 2003; Ball 2006; Eisenberg 2006; Gereluk 2006; Terzi 2008; Unterhalter 2007). Much of the literature on equality in higher education has focused on widening participation, bringing into play questions of equity and fairness (Burke 2005; Reay et al. 2005; David 2009). However, like the literature on equality and schooling, virtually all these studies consider equality and equity in terms of national processes of distribution or appraisal. There are few works which define equality and equity in relation to global processes.

In a recent work co-edited by this chapter's authors (Unterhalter and Carpentier 2010) some pieces start to do so (Naidoo 2010; Luke 2010; Unterhalter 2010). Similarly Marginson (2006: 35) argues that 'global hierarchy in higher education is not fixed for all time but subject to continual movement and flux', while Currie and Newson (1998: 1) analyse the impact on higher education of a narrow 'conception of globalization that combines a market ideology with a corresponding material set of practices drawn from the world of business'. Inequalities are a feature both of opportunities and outcome. Individuals, groups, and countries do not have the same histories, contemporary social relations, or prospects. Inequality is one feature of diversity but inequity partly lies in processes that do not

recognize this diversity or attempt to change its unjust consequences. Inequity can entail reproducing, exacerbating, or extending inequalities associated with one historical period, a particular region, or field of educational work into another. Within a 'capabilities' approach, inequalities can be defined in the 'space' of opportunities or outcomes and in their interconnections (Sen 1993; Robeyns 2006). In the analysis that follows our understanding of inequity partly draws on Harvey's (2005) account of neoliberalism and the use of both coercive and discursive forms.

This chapter also partly builds on the distinctions used by Unterhalter in writing about equity (Unterhalter 2009; 2010). This work highlights different processes to establish equity - but similar points can be made about structures and actions associated with inequity. Forms of inequity may be established 'from above' through structures of political economy and institutional formation. These processes are somewhat different but connected to inequity maintained 'from below', for example research or pedagogy that fails to engage equitably with issues of poverty or injustice. Unterhalter also suggests there is a third form of inequity, associated with processes which flow 'from the middle'. These last processes may be particularly salient to global increases in the speed, range, and mobility of ideas and people and the discourses associated with programs and institutions which make claims about partnership (which often mask continued inequities). In considering problems and prospects for change in global higher education we will touch on all three forms of inequity: from above, from below, and from the middle.

### *Indicators of inequality*

Manifestations and 'measures' of inequalities in higher education are multiple. Perceptions about these have evolved across space and time. While initially the focus of much research and action on inequalities was on access, there is now increasing awareness of inequalities relating to participation and academic achievements. The ways in which higher education does or does not translate into socioeconomic benefits include social networks, labor market advantages, and the nature of employment and pay. There have been gradual changes in the way inequalities have been defined; and this is reflected in the indicators used. The current indicators used to frame, drive, and monitor higher education policies and practices tend to give inadequate insight into the multidimensionality of inequality.

The most widely-used indicator of access seeks to estimate the ratio of students to the population: the gross enrollment ratio (GER) for higher education. This indicator is traditionally used to estimate expansion of higher education systems across the world. It enables the mapping of inequalities between countries and trends over time. More refined indicators compare enrollment by age group. For example, in the UK, the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) measures the number in the age group of 18-30 years who entered a higher education course. This reached 43 percent in 2006 (DIUS 2008). The Labour government aimed to increase the HEIPR to 50 percent by 2010 but this target was not met. Such aggregate indicators are less useful in understanding inequalities between groups, for example the ways that an overall GER enrollment may not translate into engaged participation or valued outcomes for some groups. They focus on access and do not provide data on processes in relation to retention, outcomes, and experience. Brennan and Naidoo (2008: 299) stress the 'need for greater attention to be given to the end products of higher education. Does greater equity at the point of entry to higher education necessarily provide greater equity at exit?' Another limitation of aggregate participation indicators is they do not offer information on the social structuring of access and the inclusion/exclusion of particular groups. We need to understand how social divisions shape each other in patterns of enrollment and to explore inequalities and unpack the crucial difference between expansion and democratization of higher education.

### *International comparisons*

In a summary overview of the global picture, Philip Altbach and colleagues (Altbach et al. 2009: iv) note that worldwide 'the percentage of the age cohort enrolled in tertiary education has grown from 19 percent in 2000 to 26 percent in 2007... There are some 150.6 million tertiary students globally', about a 53 percent increase since 2000. However 'the most dramatic gains' have been in 'upper middle- and upper-income countries'. Further;

In low-income countries tertiary-level participation has improved only marginally, from 5 percent in 2000 to 7 percent in 2007. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest participation rate in the world (5 percent). In Latin America, enrollment is still less than half that of high-income countries.

**Table 1. Comparative worldwide tertiary participation rates (GER) and Gender Parity indicators (GPI), by region, 1999 and 2007**

	Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)		Gender Parity Indicator (GPI)	
	1999	2007	1999	2007
World	18	26	0.96	1.08
Highest	North America / W. Europe (61)	North America / W. Europe (70)	North America / W. Europe (1.23)	North America / W. Europe (1.33)
Average	Central Asia (18)	East Asia / the Pacific (26)	Central Asia (0.93)	Central Asia (1.10)
Lowest	Sub-Saharan Africa (4)	Sub-Saharan Africa (6)	Sub-Saharan Africa (0.67)	Sub-Saharan Africa (0.66)
Arab States	19	22	0.74	1.05
Highest	Egypt (37)	Lebanon (54)	Qatar (3.82)	Qatar (2.87)
Average	UAE (18)	UAE (24)	Morocco(0.71)	Jordan (1.1)
Lowest	Mauritania (5)	Djibouti (3)	Yemen (0.28)	Yemen (0.37)
Central and Eastern	38	62	1.18	1.25

Europe				
Highest	Slovenia (53)	Slovenia (86)	Latvia (1.65)	Latvia (1.8)
Average	Hungary/ Moldova (33)	Estonia (65)	Croatia (1.16)	Ukraine (1.24)
Lowest	Albania (15)	Macedonia/ Turkey (36)	Turkey (0.68)	Turkey (0.76)
Central Asia	18	24	0.93	1.1
Highest	Georgia (36)	Mongolia (48)	Mongolia (1.88)	Mongolia (1.56)
Average	Azerbaijan (16)	Tajikistan (20)	Uzbekistan (0.82)	Georgia (1.12)
Lowest	Uzbekistan (14)	Uzbekistan (10)	Tajikistan (0.35)	Tajikistan (0.35)
East Asia and the Pacific	14	26	not available	1
Highest	Australia (65)	New Zealand (80)	Palau (2.35)	Brunei (1.88)
Average	Micronesia (14)	China (23)		China (1.01)
Lowest	Cambodia/Laos (2)	Cambodia (5)	Cambodia (0.35)	Cambodia (0.56)
Latin America	21	34	1.12	1.19

/the Caribbean				
Highest	British Virgin Island (60)	Cuba (109)	Cayman Island (2.79)	British Virgin Island (2.28)
Average	Cuba (21)	Ecuador/Peru (35)	Colombia/Nicaragua (1.11)	Ecuador/El Salvador (1.22)
Lowest	Trinidad and Tobago (6)	Saint Lucia (9)	Chile/Mexico (0.91)	Mexico (0.93)
North America / W. Europe	61	70	1.23	1.33
Highest	Finland (82)	Finland (94)	Iceland (1.69)	Iceland(1.86)
Average	Belgium / UK (60)	Iceland (73)	Finland (1.23)	Israel (1.32)
Lowest	Luxembourg (11) Cyprus (21)	Andorra / Luxembourg (10)	Switzerland (0.73)	Liechtenstein (0.49)
South Asia / West Asia	not available	11	not available	0.77
Highest	Iran (19)	Iran (31)	Iran (0.8)	Iran (1.15)
Average	not available	Nepal (11)	not available	India (0.72)

Lowest	Bhutan (3)	Bhutan/Pakistan (5)	Nepal (0.4)	Bhutan (0.51)
Sub-Saharan Africa	4	6	0.67	0.66
Highest	South Africa (14)	South Africa (15)	Lesotho (1.65)	South Africa (1.24)
Average	Congo (4)	Ghana/Namibia (6)	Angola (0.63)	Nigeria (0.69)
Lowest	12 countries (1)	5 countries (1)	Chad (0.18)	Chad (0.14)

Source: UNESCO (2009), Global Education Digest, Paris: UNESCO.

Table 9.1 summarizes the worldwide picture. As Altbach and colleagues note, quantitative analysis offers a mixed picture of inequalities in higher education. There has been overall worldwide progress, but inequalities between nations have persisted.

#### Historical contexts and drivers: constructing forms and sites of inequalities

Historically, global political economy and associated sociocultural divisions (colonialism, slavery, and the diversity between states) have shaped inequalities in higher education within and between nations. Inequalities of class, race, ethnicity, and gender intersect and map onto divisions between higher education institutions. From the eighteenth century onwards the most well-endowed and prestigious universities were located in countries that formed the centers of empires, benefited from slavery, and imposed sharp social divisions in access to what was deemed by ruling elites to be the most powerful forms of knowledge.

In the dominated countries the colonial powers did not have an interest in expanding higher education much beyond training a small elite (Saïd 1993). In the African context Teferra and Altbach (2004: 23) note that ‘colonial authorities feared widespread access to higher

education. They were interested in training limited numbers of African nationals to assist in administering the colonies'. The elitist higher education models of the nineteenth century (Lowe 2008) were reproduced in countries subject to colonial rule. Limited access to study, preference for the language of the colonial ruling group, and limited freedom of association and freedom of curricula (Teferra and Altbach 2004: 24) rendered higher education complicit in the imperial project. It was not well-placed to generate change. Britain's will to shape and monitor higher education across its empire was symbolized by 'the creation of the Asquith Commission which prepared a seminal report on the future of higher education in the colonies' (Whitehead 2003: 192). In Indonesia in the 1950s:

The teaching and learning methods were entirely based on the Dutch or continental style of higher education, characterized by emphasis on the education of a few individuals with little attention given to the need for a more systematic approach to mass education. The teaching staff was primarily Dutch professors but included also a few Indonesians educated in the Dutch tradition (UNESCO 1991: 39).

When Algeria gained independence from France in 1962, in the University of Algiers there were only 557 Muslims to 4548 Europeans (Gordon 1985: 137).

From the late 1940s decolonization provided an opportunity for higher education institutions to reshape themselves as projects associated with newly-formed governments. But particular local challenges, combined with the changing form of the global relationships between countries, meant that the expansion and democratization of higher education was not easy to achieve. Political independence, whether absolute or relative, has not solved economic dependence. Unequal economic development, which was for many countries a by-product of colonialism, survived in the post-colonial era and has exacerbated inequalities between higher education systems worldwide. Post-world war two strategies of growth based on the development of educational systems depended on the financial might of particular countries (Schultz 1961; Denison 1967). This led to significant differentials in investment in human capital and brought further inequalities in the development of higher education systems, exacerbating the economic gaps between countries established in the colonial era. Most developed countries benefited from the knowledge-driven post-war

economy. These outcomes were felt in a few developing countries: 'Higher education has expanded well in the east Asian tiger economies and a few central and west Asian countries, the gross enrollment ratio being comparable to that in some of the developed countries' (Tilak 2003: 155). But for many developing countries knowledge-driven catching up was not translated into practice (Jomo and Fine 2006; Wallerstein 1976). Global inequalities inherited from the colonial era imposed a mode of expansion of higher education which reproduced local inequalities and severely constrained newly formed institutions in closing gaps in relation to research and teaching. Why did this happen?

### Mapping drivers, sites, and forms of inequality: the connections between the global and the local

A first site of inequality is the world order at the global level. Education reflects inequalities between and within countries. However, it is also important to recognize that education not only reflects social, political, and economic inequalities but also reproduces and sometimes accentuates national inequalities according to class (Ball 2006), race or ethnicity (Gillborn 2008), gender (Unterhalter 2007), and disability (Barton and Armstrong 2008). National inequalities are often, at least in part, the outcome of global processes associated with the form of the labor market, ideas about national competition, and assumptions about processes of decision making. Policies and practices in compulsory education explain a great deal of the inequalities in higher education. But unequal opportunities of access, participation, and success in higher education between and within countries are not just a backwash from these practices in schools, but also reflect policies and practices that avoid challenging the existing structures of inequality. Limited or ineffective government legislation is found in mechanisms to widen participation (Greenbank 2006), efforts to reduce unfair or inadequate practices on admission and recruitment (Leathwood 2004), and support for the most vulnerable students (Burke 2005).

Understanding higher education as a site of inequality necessitates a shift of focus from 'who' access to 'what kind' of access. The segmentation of higher education systems within countries and between countries is an important determinant of the inequalities that stratify access, experience, achievement, and the capacity to transfer a qualification socially and economically. Worldwide expansion of higher education has been filtered by the

construction of tier systems and unequal access to institutions of higher education. Sites of inequalities emerge across institutions (elite-non elite/academic-vocational/research-teaching/public/private) and of course between countries (elite universities in the global North/ poorly equipped universities in the global South). However, there are subtle layers of inequalities within particular sites. Thus elite institutions in the global North have long been the setting for the education of minorities from higher professional and ruling groups in the global South. Depending on the country, elite higher education institutions may be public and private, as in the USA (Bastedo and Gumport 2003), or highly-competitive public institutions, as in France (Albouy and Vanecq 2003) and China (Ding 2007). In countries like Brazil, some private providers target the richer parts of the population while others may enroll the less wealthy parts of the society unable to access the free but highly-selective public system of higher education (McCowan 2007).

The main features of elite higher education include the staff resources provided - both the experience of staff and the level of student access to staff - and the quality of libraries, laboratories, and research communities. Hassim (2009: 71) notes in the case of South Africa 'massive imbalances in resource allocations by government to different institutions intensified disadvantage historically as well as into the contemporary era'.

Consequently there are many forms of inequality in higher education. What follows cannot be exhaustive. Inequality characterizes social division along lines of gender, social class, disability, nationality and ethnicity, political belief, religion, and so on. Studies show that inequalities shape each other. Archer and Leathwood (2003: 175), for example, commenting on the UK, underline 'the importance of recognizing how multiple identities and inequalities of race, ethnicity, social class, and gender (amongst others) affect the way in which people construct, experience, and negotiate different educational opportunities and routes'. Expansion of higher education has historically been the result of a gradual and hierarchically-inflected process. Expansion admits the previously excluded, such as lower-income groups, women, ethnic minorities, or castes, but many national studies offer a mixed story: the expansion of higher education is based on widening participation together with persistence of inequalities (Volkman et al. 2009). This exclusion is associated with global as well as national processes of class formation that are difficult to disentangle.

The expansion of universities has only partially removed the strong relationship between social class and access, participation, experience, and achievement in higher education. For example, in the UK and France one can observe growing numbers of working-class students entering higher education from the 1960s onwards but differences in participation rates have persisted (Bourdieu and Passeron 1964; Reay et al. 2005; Archer et al. 2003). Since the 1980s the proportion of British students from the lowest social group has only slightly increased compared to higher-income groups (Galindo-Rueda et al 2004: 86). Similar gaps are confirmed in most developing countries. Altbach and colleagues (2009: v) note that 'despite many policy initiatives in recent years broader postsecondary participation has not benefited all sectors of society equally. A recent comparative study of 15 countries shows that despite greater inclusion, the privileged classes have retained their relative advantage in nearly all nations'.

When assessing the expansion of higher education, gender inequalities cross-cut class. The expansion of higher education in many developed countries in the post-war era has been largely driven by the integration of middle-class women (Dyhouse 2006). Global gender parity in higher education was reached in 2003 but there remain important differences between countries. In sub-Saharan Africa in 2007 the tertiary GER for men was 6.8 percent, 1.5 times as high as that for women (4.5 percent). Women were also strongly disadvantaged in terms of access to tertiary education in south and west Asia where in 2007 the GER for men (13 percent) was one-third higher than that of women (10 percent) (UNESCO 2009: 15). In other regions like the USA, Europe, Latin America, and the Arab states participation rates are higher for women. Unterhalter argues that the politics of inclusion, whereby numbers of women students and staff have increased, should be complemented by concerns with 'the relations of power, both overt and covert, that exclude women from realising their full potential' (Unterhalter 2006: 623). Morley and Lugg's (2009: 46) research on Tanzania shows that when gender and class are taken together, gender inequality is greater within groups that are already under-represented. Thus, in some countries women's access to higher education has expanded but this is by no means universal and in many countries, even those that enroll large numbers of women students, explicit and implicit forms of gender inequality persist.

Nationality, race, and ethnicity shape inequalities. Given that much global injustice has been associated with these factors, it is no surprise that their traces are found in higher education throughout the world. 'In many countries, racial, ethnic, or religious minorities play a role in shaping higher education policy. Issues of access will be amongst the most controversial in debates concerning higher education', notes Altbach (1998: 15). Across the world substantial inequalities on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, or caste remain. These are sometimes associated with particular explicit forms of discrimination, such as apartheid in South Africa; or, more often, simply with a lack of commitment to social justice (Reay et al. 2005). The participation figures for ethnic groups in a particular country reveal differences between minorities. For example, Tomlinson (2005: 163) notes that in the UK, 'Indian, Chinese and black African groups are well represented in higher education. African-Caribbean men, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are represented least well'. In India, where caste and class intersect, notwithstanding governmental policies of reserved spaces (Carpentier, et al, forthcoming), in higher education 'there has been modest improvement in the participation of lower castes; rural populations and Muslims lag behind the general population while lower castes tend to be clustered in less expensive programs' (Altbach et al. 2009: iv).

The increase in the numbers of disabled students hides the fact that in OECD countries their participation rates are still far lower than those of non-disabled students (Ebersold and Evans 2003). In the UK it was recently estimated by government that 'by age 19, the proportion of disabled people that have participated in HE courses is around 30 percent, as opposed to 45 percent of those without disabilities (DIUS 2009: 13). Similar problems exist in developing countries such as South Africa (Matshedisho 2007).

Across the world, some progress has been made in addressing some forms of social inequality. But many inequalities persist. These manifest themselves in patterns of participation as well as assumptions about the nature of the university and its reflection on and engagement with global inequalities.

#### *International pressure from economic globalization*

One way of understanding the persistence of inequalities and the inability to close the gap within and between countries is to look at the connection (or rather the clash) between

funding and access policies which followed from the response of neoliberal globalization to the 1970s structural crisis of the economy (Carpentier 2010). While funding does not explain everything, there is a good case to be made that the public funding constraints that arose in the 1970s affected the mission of higher education, including its attitude to discriminated groups. This was a global trend in the sense it was intensified by international pressure on funding and policy borrowing.

Those historical inequalities which survived - and to a certain extent shaped - the 'golden age' of the post-war higher education expansion became more of a problem after the 1973 structural crisis of the capitalist economy (Carpentier 2006b; Fontvieille and Michel 2002). In many countries the sustained public investment which drove post- Second World War higher education was brought to a halt by the 1970s crisis. Spending per student was caught between, on one side the expectation of continuous expansion of enrollment to feed the knowledge economy and on the other the reluctance to increase public funding in the context of neoliberal anti-taxation policies (Carpentier 2010). The tensions between these conflicting agendas led to intense political debates across the globe on questions of funding and equity. Who benefits from higher education? Who should pay for it? The neoliberal response to the 1970s crisis was not necessarily based on a return to a minimal state but rather on a reorientation of the role of the state in favor of market expansion and individual choice making. In this ideological framework higher education was considered a semi-public or even semi-private good and its funding an individual rather than state responsibility. This neoliberal strategy overlooked social groups and the inequalities between them.

These austerity policies preceded globalization but were strengthened by it. The policies were exported from high-income countries to developing countries under the banner of imposed structural adjustment policies. 'The development of higher education in low-income countries has been framed in general by a neoliberal paradigm' (Naidoo 2010: 66). This led to changes in higher education funding policies at national and global levels.

Funding austerity led governments to tough choices: should they roll back their enrollment and inclusion policies?; should they maintain access with shrinking budgets and jeopardize quality?; should they increase private funding (fees)?; and should they welcome new providers? The responses to these dilemmas strongly impacted access, student experience,

and student achievement. They also affected individuals and their families differently according to socioeconomic background. Affordability readily led families and governments to consciously or unconsciously prioritize the access of certain groups over others (for example, by gender, age, and so on). If for most countries the reduction of public funding meant big tensions between access and funding policies, these were felt more strongly in developing countries whose higher education systems were generally smaller than at an earlier stage of development (Tiyambe Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004). For example, structural adjustment policies particularly hit disadvantaged socioeconomic groups in Chile (Espinoza 2008) and 'eroded the opportunities for the higher education of many women' in Nigeria (Obasi 1997: 171). Decreasing public resources led to quality shortcomings and/or the uneven spread of spending across institutions, with strong implications for equal access, student experience, retention, and outcomes from higher education. One consequence of globalization was diminishing public resources. This led some countries to opt for sending more students abroad rather than developing a national higher education system.

Many countries sought to solve underfunding while building capacity and while welcoming in new providers (Altbach 1999). These providers could be domestic private providers, but also foreign (private or public) providers, so driving the internationalization of higher education (see next section). King (2003: 4) observes that the fastest growing segment of higher education worldwide is private higher education. According to Levy (2003: 3), this 'adds enrolment capacity to the higher education system, mostly escaping the constraints about public expenditures that now restricts public expansion'. While most of these factors relate to all countries the pressure was (and is) more pronounced for developing countries. The effect is often to exacerbate rather than dissolve older social divisions. Altbach (2004: 22) states that while growth of enrollment 'has slowed in many industrialized countries, expansion continues in the developing nations, and will remain the factor in shaping academic realities in the coming period'. This is confirmed by Banya (2001: 1), who, although he recognizes the achievement of state universities in sub-Saharan countries, argues that 'increased enrollments, fiscal challenges, quality issues, and rising graduate unemployment make the recourse to private higher education necessary'.

That private institutions are interested in profit has raised questions about access in relation to quality, and generated concerns about the overall impact on host countries' social

structure. Welch (2007: 681) notes with regard to Indonesia that 'if funding to public-sector higher education institutions continues to be seriously constrained over the next few years and, at the same time, high-quality private institutions are restricted to the wealthy, this will likely lead to a significant decline in equitable access to higher education'. McCowan notes that in Brazil many private higher education providers for students from lower social backgrounds are increasing inequalities by offering study of dubious quality (2007). However, a concomitant trend is that in many countries state universities are also working with private-sector organizations closely linked with global corporations. As remarked by Altbach (1999: 1), 'with tuition and other charges rising, public and private institutions look more and more similar'. Ball (2010: 21) notes of public institutions that many 'are no longer in any straightforward sense national public universities, they are transnational, corporate, profit-oriented, and they are positioned on the boundaries between academia and business – they are hybrids'. In many countries public universities are acting as international providers and, outside their own countries, work in ways that are indistinguishable from private institutions.

Global pressure on resources has also led many countries to develop fee policies in public universities based on cost-sharing with students and their family contributing to the cost of their studies in order to make up for declining public funding. The impact of these policies on inequalities depends on the balance between fees, grants, and loans (Teixeira et al. 2006). It is therefore crucial to have sufficient grants and scholarships from government and institutions to ensure fair access. The ongoing debates in the UK about the increase in fees and its potential impact on inequalities address issues that were already generated by the increasing contribution of non-EU international students since the 1980s (Carpentier 2010). But rather than raising concerns about inequality, fee-paying international students have been seen increasingly in developed countries as an income-generating opportunity. All of these policies together are exacerbating concerns about equity: increased private funding and provision; marketization; higher fees; inadequate student support; and international education (Carpentier 2006a). Countries are at varying stages of the process of public/private substitution, with more or less impact on inequalities; and they also vary in the extent to which they benefit or suffer from global higher education – whether they are importers or providers.

Economic globalization is implicated in the shrinking base of public funding and the marketization and commodification of higher education. The question, however, is whether the construction of global higher education arenas simply accelerates global inequalities or also has the potential to offer alternatives.

### Global higher education and inequalities

Universities have from their creation been worldwide institutions with international activities, including highly mobile staff and students (Geuna 1998). However international activities have often been seen as complementing other activities and driving political and cultural interests. Historically they have not necessarily been considered as ways to solve financial problems. However, economic globalization, with its stress on free trade and low taxation, has offered a new space for internationalization. A convenient marriage has occurred. Pressures for private-income generation in some of advanced higher education systems have coincided with the need for capacity-building in higher education from other countries.

The quantitative intensification of international exchanges under pressure from economic globalization has been complemented by a qualitative change in the forms of global higher education. The sites of inequity are thus not only associated with economic decisions at the top but with shifts concerning pedagogic and administrative practices in the middle. Changes include those following the implementation of the Bologna Process (a roadmap towards a European Higher Education Area), and the World Trade Organization's adoption in 2000 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (a driver of global free trade including education). New practices and actors include the acceleration of older forms of student and staff mobility, the emergence of new forms of institution - franchises, satellite campuses, and e-learning. Global developments in higher education constitute a space for institutions where national systems attempt to solve their domestic problems concerning, funding, quality, and access. This provides very little ground on which to address problems of national or global inequity.

### *Globalization and inequalities*

Analysis and criticisms of the current model of global higher education are prompted by its uncritical acceptance of neoliberal discourses and practices. The state is being used to promote the market in all spheres of society including public services. In the last twenty years globalization has been driven by market competition on a global scale. As Galbraith (2002: 11) puts it 'the doctrine of globalization as it is understood in elite circles contains the curious assumption that the global market is itself beyond reproach'. However, the positive story of economic globalization and the belief in the superiority of the market over public sector practices has been undermined by recurrent global crises in the capitalist economy. The 1991 financial crisis in East Asia, referred to as the first crisis of globalization, was surpassed by the strength and speed of propagation of the global financial crisis that started in 2008. This socioeconomic crisis has been the biggest challenge to the current model of globalization (though not necessarily to the idea of globalization itself). It questions the assumption that globalization necessarily alleviates inequalities, and raises serious concerns about the ways we produce and distribute wealth (Carpentier 2009) at both national and global levels.

Connections, or rather disconnections, between production and redistribution were being debated well before the recent global financial crisis. Debates over the impact of globalization on inequalities within and between countries echo many earlier debates on industrialization. The hypothesis of a Kuznets curve (1955) - the idea that the development process initially produces greater income inequalities but these eventually reduce - has generated intense discussions since the observation of a resurgence of international inequalities from the 1980s onwards. This debate has been linked with sharply different positions on globalization (Aghion and Williamson 1998; Held and Kaya 2007). So does globalization increase or reduce inequalities? Basu (2006) reminds us that we need to take into account both inequality between countries as measured by GDP per head, and inequalities within countries as measured by the Gini Index, and between the two it is hard to trace the impact of globalization. The dimension of time is important as well. Looking back to the 1820s Lindert and Williamson (2005: 228) conclude that 'world incomes would still be unequal under complete global integration, as they are in any large integrated national economy. But they would be less unequal in a fully-integrated world economy than in one fully segmented'.

The neoliberal 'Washington Consensus' which has driven economic globalization at the policy level largely overlooks the question of inequality. This is seen to be automatically resolved by global free trade (Serra and Stiglitz 2008). Growing income inequality observed worldwide (Atkinson and Piketty 2007) suggests that neoliberal policies are associated with increased not decreased inequalities. In response Krugman argues that 'distribution deserves to be treated as an issue as important as growth' (2008: 33). Could we consider the global economic downturn that started in 2008 as the decisive moment of a crisis of the model of globalization and an opportunity to address the disconnections between wealth production and redistribution?

The tensions between globalization and economic inequalities have dominated the public debates but it is also important to consider the impact of globalization on other categories of inequalities. Global processes have differentially affected women across the world, depending on country and social class. Globalization has increased the feminization of the labor force, leading to different outcomes: in some cases emancipation, in others low-skills work and pay (Benería 2003). Other studies have shown that neoliberal policies on the social safety net particularly disadvantage women (Seguino and Grown 2006). Clarke and Thomas (2006: 1) note that 'because globalization today is facilitated by the transmission and reproduction of deeply embedded social prejudices rooted in a past characterised by territorial concepts of belonging that both generated and were generated by racial inequalities, the contemporary redistribution of wealth has exacerbated historically entrenched racial hierarchies'. Moreover in some cases economic globalization in particular has contributed to the development of ethnic strains in developing states and regions (Held and McGrew 2007: 63).

All this suggests that the benefits of economic globalization have not been equitably distributed and have tended to reinforce inequalities along the lines of social class, gender, and ethnicity. Similar questions need to be asked about the impact of globalization in relation to higher education and inequalities. Can global higher education increase or redress inequalities created by economic globalization? Will global higher education benefit from free trade and deregulation? Or will the disconnections observed in other sectors appear? Will this increase or reduce inequalities within and between higher education systems?

### *From international to global higher education*

While internationalization is generally used to define increasing links or exchanges between nations, globalization tends to refer to practices adopted across nation states (Held and McGrew 2002). In the context of higher education similar differences are expressed between internationalization and globalization. We consider here that internationalization is based on a particular nationally-situated higher education institution, while globalization entails a range of practices across and between differently-situated higher education institutions. This represents a shift in the practices and relations that construct the nation states. According to Knight (2006: 209) globalization includes 'the knowledge society, information and communication technologies, the market economy, trade liberalization and changes in governance structures'. It entails a shift in practices and forms of regulation in higher education. Altbach and Knight (2007: 290) define globalization as 'the economic, political, and societal forces pushing twenty-first century higher education towards greater international involvement'. They see internationalization as the policies and practices of higher education that have been developed to deal with this. Globalization can thus be seen as a process entailing particular socioeconomic practices and forms of (de)regulation, which in turn require and drive an intensification of internationalization of higher education.

The transition to global higher education involves new sites, new actors, and new policies and practices. These shifts present many challenges in relation to inequalities within and between countries. Scott (1998: 111) underlines the difficulty for universities of articulating equity at the national level with equity at the international level. New actors are emerging through the open market for private or public foreign providers of higher education. In this context new practices must be carefully assessed as to whether they reproduce existing inequalities within countries or are associated with process of transformation.

Contemporary globalization has a different relationship with nation-states and higher education systems. The global trend to limit public funding of universities and promote institutional autonomy preceded global higher education but generated numerous opportunities for its development. In a context of funding pressure, the transition from international to global higher education is a shift from political and cultural rationales to an

economic one. This mirrors the wider pre-eminence of economic globalization over political, geopolitical, and social justice.

Some shifts from international to global practices in higher education are closely linked to free trade policies. For example, controversies exist over GATS, which includes education as a domain. Debates about the liberalization of higher education mirror those on the impact on globalization. Economic globalization and global higher education are subject to criticisms about their exclusive economic dimension and the focus on free trade, and the deregulation of nation states' prerogatives with potential impacts on inequities. Robertson (2006a: 14) notes that 'when member states allow education to be included and traded in global agreements like GATS, member state's ability to ensure that education is a right for all, rather than a commodity to be purchased by the well off, is considerably diminished. There are no global structures ensuring legal requirements for equality'.

Under the frame of global higher education some countries become importers of global higher education while others with developed higher education systems but also under public funding constrains become exporters. Both are responding to fiscal austerity. The increased demand for and supply of global higher education has been generated by the global agendas of the knowledge economy - the need to educate the workforce at higher levels to compete internationally - and also the need to top-up public funding. Resources from global higher education potentially accelerate the trend to public/ private substitution in funding. It is possible that extra international resources will merely substitute for public funding, changing the structure of funding and provision without raising total resources available to higher education, and with the risk of increasing levels of inequalities even further (Carpentier 2010).

#### New trends, new forms and new actors in global higher education and their impact on equity

Global higher education is associated with an acceleration of old practices, such as student and staff mobility. According to UNESCO (2009: 36), in 2007 more than 2.8 million students enrolled in educational institutions outside of their country of origin, an increase of 53 percent since 1999. Student mobility mostly moves in one direction. 68 percent of mobile students are registered in universities from north America and western Europe. The USA

with 21 percent and the UK with 12 percent are the major host countries. Australia is a leading host if one considers the number of international student as a proportion of total enrollment. There is a strong intra-mobility within western countries, and an increasing number from outside the western sphere. 15 percent of students come from China, followed proportionally by India and Korea. This trend corresponds to the old political and cultural rationales for internationalization which have long led students worldwide to study in developed countries. It also increasingly reflects the emergence of the income-generation rationale. For example, in the UK from the 1970s 'the share of enrolment by overseas students doubled while their contribution to income grew eightfold' (Carpentier 2010: 158).

The growing contribution of international students through fees raises numerous problems with respect to public / private funds substitution and inequalities in connection to the host countries. Is the importation of global higher education part of a strategy from host governments to externalize funding in higher education? How does this fit with national strategies of fair and widening participation in quality higher education? Can new providers destabilise existing institutions of higher education? Does substitution put domestic and home students into competition with each other? Substitution raises the issue of sufficient and adequate funding for teaching and learning support for an increasing number of international students (Luke 2010). Scarcity of public resources available for scholarships combined with higher fees also raise global social justice issues in relation to the reproduction of a worldwide elite of mobile students (Carpentier 2010). Brooks and Waters have shown that UK students going abroad are from the most advantaged socioeconomic categories (2009). This suggests that internationalization in this form does not reduce inequalities.

While worldwide student mobility has reached gender parity (UNESCO 2009: 36) it is still difficult to assess the extent to which student mobility offer opportunities to groups which could not have enrolled in their own countries for socioeconomic or discriminatory reasons. In terms of inequalities between countries, one question to consider is whether student mobility leads to capacity-building or brain drain. Studies report some positives (remittances) and some negatives (loss of skills) for the country of origin (Spring 2008; Robertson 2006b). The capacity of student mobility to address inequalities at national and global levels depends in part on financial practices.

Global higher education also involves new kinds of mobility such as offshore and franchise activities, which are developing quickly. Many institutions are opening 'subsidiaries abroad or offering their educational programmes or qualifications via partnership with host-country institutions' (Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2002: 21). There are important debates about whether borderless higher education represents an opportunity for capacity-building or a return to academic, cultural, political, and economic neo-imperialism which could increase further inequalities within and between nations (Chan and Lo 2008). There are questions about whether a purely mercantile activity ranging from very expensive to low-cost forms of higher education could ultimately lead to increase or reduce inequalities within host nations.

A recent study identified 162 international branch campuses in the world in 2009, compared to 24 in 2002 and 82 in 2006 (Becker 2009: 6). Nearly 70 percent of these offshore campuses are from Anglophone nations (48 percent from the USA, 9 percent from Australia, 8 percent from the UK and 7 percent from France). India is a strong provider (7 percent) followed by several other countries, including Mexico, The Netherlands, Malaysia, Canada, and Ireland. Interestingly, since 2006 new international branch campuses have been created by institutions from Lebanon, Malaysia, South Korea, and Sri Lanka. There were 51 host countries in 2009 but most institutions are located in the United Arab Emirates (25 percent), China (9 percent), Singapore (7 percent), and Qatar (6 percent). The flows are still dominated by South to North mobility (51 percent) but North to North provision has increased (30 percent). South to South provision constitutes 16 percent, a five-fold increase since 2006. North to South is lagging behind at 3 percent. A third of Malaysian students are enrolled in transnational programs. On the providers' side, it is important to note that these programs are costly and it is difficult to make a profit. There are doubts whether it contributes to solving inequalities as 'cross border higher education tends to only be affordable for students from affluent families, particularly if it is provided on revenue-generating basis' (Vincent-Lancrin, 2007: 101).

Another aspect of global higher education is virtual learning. This has also been presented as an opportunity to reduce inequalities at national and global levels. However, some studies argue that the move towards information and communications technologies in higher education should be driven by pedagogic not economic concerns (Clegg et al. 2003).

Paradoxically, Carnoy observes that distance learning is not as cost-effective as often assumed (2004). Some research questions the impacts on equity between nations. Gulati states that

Although these developments aim for equitable and extended educational opportunities that extend to disadvantaged and poor populations, the lack of educational and technology infrastructures, lack of trained teachers, negative attitudes towards distance learning, social and cultural restrictions imposed on girls and women, and inappropriate policy and funding decisions, have all resulted in furthering the gap between the rich and poor, rural and urban, and between genders (Gulati 2008: 11).

Ekundayo and Ekundayo (2009) consider the barriers to e-learning in Nigeria as being associated with unequal access to technology among students and involving the cost of internet connectivity; inconsistent power supplies; and the limited expertise of technical staff.

### Conclusion

Inequalities in higher education are multidimensional. They result in substantial differences in access, participation, completion, and success between different groups (gender, social class, caste, disability, and religion) within and amongst countries. These differences should not be understood only as the reflection of entrenched inequalities within and between societies. They are also produced by the problematic higher education policies and practices of governments and institutions. Political and economic imbalances between and within nations are not new, but have been enhanced by neoliberal economic globalization. The pressure on public resources has produced tensions between funding policies and access policies and redefined the role of the state in relation to the funding, organization, and regulation of higher education.

This has also shifted the internationalization agenda in higher education from traditional political and cultural rationales to a growing economic one. In a context of declining public funding, the demand for global higher education from countries seeking to build capacity is met by institutions searching for income generation. This has accelerated old forms of internationalization such as student mobility, but generated new global practices and rules (such as GATS), new activities (such as offshore and program mobility, and distance

education) and new actors (such as private providers). There are polarized debates about the impact of these components of global higher education on the different forms of inequality. It remains to be seen whether global higher education can be separated from the economic globalization agenda (GATS) and integrate other global values such as social justice. It is notable that in many respects global higher education has developed in response to national problems rather than in terms of the global challenges ahead.

In a recent book we engaged with colleagues in a reflection on how higher education systems and their institutions could address these multiple global challenges. The fight for social justice in higher education was seen as crucial to aspirations for combining economic growth, equity, democracy, and sustainability (Unterhalter and Carpentier 2010). We argued that changes in higher education policies and practices towards social justice could contribute to making these goals - which too often in the world of policymaking became conflicting agendas – into complementary objectives. This will require new thinking in the way global higher education is constructed, beyond solely responding to economic globalization. The question about ‘education as a public good and/or a private commodity’ should be placed in ‘a different analytical framework which is not only based on economic theory and has at its core the breadth of contribution that higher education makes to both society as a whole and to the individual’ (Knight 2008: 185). This will also require new structures and organization. While global legislation and agreements such as GATS have a strong impact on the organization and funding of higher education, there is lack of global organizations concerned with quality and equity.

Another area of change is related to policies and practices. This will require a shift in the ways forms of equity are constructed (Unterhalter 2010) and in changes to pedagogic practices (Walker 2010). Sometimes this takes place in small initiatives. The challenge is to understand this better and connect up practices so that global inequality in higher education is not just reproduced by default, but is clear-sightedly confronted with a view to effecting change.

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