

## About

This essay forum strives to build an integrative discussion for what is a fragmented interdisciplinary field of study on the public sphere. It is meant to accompany a mapping project we are calling the Public Sphere Guide. The forum provides a platform for discussions around current or emerging projects in this area and serves as a gateway to ongoing conversations around sub-themes that have resulted in other stand-alone forums or blogs at the SSRC. Andreas Koller is the editor of this essay forum. Contact us at [publicsphere@ssrc.org](mailto:publicsphere@ssrc.org).

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## A New Vision of the Public University

**Michael Burawoy, University of California, Berkeley**

The university is in crisis everywhere.[1] In the broadest terms, the university's position as simultaneously inside and outside society, simultaneously participant in and observer of society, – always precarious – is being eroded. With the exception of a few antiquated hold outs the idea of the ivory tower has gone. We no longer can hold on to a position of splendid isolation. We may think of the era gone by as the Golden Age of the University, but in reality it was a Fool's Paradise that simply couldn't last. Today, the academy has no option but to engage with the wider society, the question is how.

We face enormous pressures of instrumentalization, turning the university into a means for someone's else's end. These pressures come in two forms – commodification and regulation. I teach at the University of California, which, with its seven plus campuses, is (or was) surely one of the shining examples of public education in the world. This last year it was hit with a 25% cut in public funding. This is a sizeable chunk of money. The university has never faced such a financial crisis and it has taken correspondingly drastic steps – laying off unknown numbers of non-academic staff, putting pressure on already outsourced low paid service workers, furloughing academics that include world renown figures. Most significantly it involved a 30% increase in student fees, so that they now rise to over \$10,000 a year, but still this is only a quarter of the price of the best private universities. These are drastic measures indeed, and a

violation of California's Master Plan for higher education, a vision of free higher education for all who desired it, orchestrated through a system that integrated two year community colleges, the state system of higher education and then, at the pinnacle, the University of California. All this is now turning to ruins.

But it has not been an overnight process. The state has been withdrawing funds from higher education for over three decades so that before last year's cuts it supplied roughly 30% of the university's budget. So a 25% reduction is more like a 7% cut in the University's budget, still sizeable. The cuts began in the 1980s with the new era of marketization. Reflecting that broader shift was a change in how society viewed intellectual property rights, a change marked by the Bayh-Dole legislation on patents of 1980. Before then, patenting was seen as an infringement of the market. Knowledge was a public good that should be available to all and, no one should have monopoly access to its revenues. That changed and today a patenting mania lies at the bottom of expanding industry-university collaboration, including some \$500 million from British Petroleum (!) for research into non-fossil fuels at Berkeley (in partnership with the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign). As leading public universities cashed in on their research so the government saw less need to pour funds into higher education, which only further intensified the commercialization of knowledge, with all sorts of implications for those disciplines that could not convert their knowledge into tangible assets. They were told they had to find alumni or corporate donors to support their enterprise! The university came to look more and more like a corporation, and its managerial ranks expanded rapidly. At my university, within the last two decades, the ratio of faculty to senior administrators has fallen from 3 to 1, to 1 to 1! And the salary structure has been distorted accordingly. The President of the University is supposed to earn a corporate executive salary – he actually earns in excess of \$800,000, which is twice the President of the country! All managerial and administrative salaries are stretched accordingly, and salaries within the university become ever more unequal, varying with the marketability of the associated knowledge and the credentials they produce. At every level inequalities have run amok – between universities and within universities, between schools and within schools, between disciplines and within disciplines, between departments and within departments. At a global level we are also getting differentiation at the behest of international ranking schemes – Times Higher Education (once working with QS, now working with Thomson Reuters) or Shanghai – indicating the “world class” universities where investments are likely to yield the greatest returns. Markets have invaded every dimension of university life, but its “autonomy” remains – it can choose the way to tackle its budget deficits – through restructuring its faculties, employing temporary instructors, outsourcing service work, raising student fees, move to distance learning.

This was the commercial model, now let me turn to the second model – the regulatory model. The source of this model, we might say, was the Thatcher Revolution in England. Here the strategy is not to commercialize the production of knowledge (or at least not immediately), that is, not to bring the still public university directly into the market, but instead to make it more efficient, more productive, and more accountable. The Thatcher Regime introduced the notorious Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – an elaborate scheme of evaluation based on faculty research output as measured by publications. An elaborate incentive scheme was introduced, with the collaboration of the universities, to simulate market competition but, in reality, it generated something more like Soviet planning. Just as the Soviet planners had to decide how to

measure the output of their factories, how to develop measures of plan fulfillment, so now universities have to develop elaborate indices of output, KPIs (key performance indicators), reducing research to publications, and publications to refereed journals, and refereed journals to impact factors. Just as Soviet planning produced absurd distortions, heating that could never be switched off, shoes that were supposed to fit everyone but fit no-one, tractors that were too heavy because targets were in tons, and glass was too thick because targets were in volume, so now the monitoring of higher education is replete with parallel distortions that obstruct both production (research) and dissemination (teaching) of knowledge.

British higher education has developed an elaborate auditing culture that has led academics to devote themselves to gaming the system, distorting their output – such as publishing essentially the same article in different venues, the devaluation of books, importing into departments academic rock stars, even on a short term basis – all to boost RAE ratings. The University of Manchester, for example, imports Joseph Stiglitz for three weeks every year! Perhaps, the most debilitating consequence has been the shortening of time horizons of research, so that it becomes ever more trivial and superficial. Basic research gives way to contract research. This Soviet model has been exported to Europe with the Bologna Process that homogenizes and dilutes higher education across countries, all in the name of the transferability of knowledge and the mobility of students, making the university a tool of the knowledge economy.

The Soviet model is especially applicable, therefore, to those states that want to hold onto public higher education, but seek to rationalize it by monitoring the pursuit of short term goals. What is happening today, I fear, may be more sinister. As fiscal austerity grips Britain, and indeed much of Europe, the auditing system is now deployed against those disciplines, such as philosophy or sociology, which are the least profitable. State subsidies per student are not only cut, but they are made to vary by discipline. Those with the lowest price – “Band D” – are most at risk. As we saw in the Soviet Union, planning turned to shock therapy, which proved to be all shock and no therapy. We should be aware of what has happened in Russia. Its universities became commercial operations – selling student places, diplomas, real estate on the one side and buying academic labor at ever low prices under ever-worse conditions on the other. Education and research were after-thoughts, side-benefits. Artemy Magun rightly sees this as not just a Russian problem but a national expression of a global crisis in higher education, while Alexander Bikbov makes the point even stronger by provocatively asking whether the Russian University is the future university of the world.

More generally, and less alarmist, we can say that the two models – commercial and regulatory – combine in different ways in different countries, but together or individually they conspire to instrumentalize higher education, subjecting our disciplines to formal rationality and exaggerating the importance of policy research. All this comes at the expense of *critical thinking* that makes academic knowledge accountable to academics, and at the expense of *public engagement* that make higher education responsive to the wider society.

Is there an alternative model? I was recently in South Africa attending a Summit on Higher Education organized by the Ministry of Higher Education. It was called a stakeholder conference, which already implies that the university is of as well as in society. The summit brought together some 400 delegates from all over the country, but not just the usual suspects –

Vice-Chancellors, managers, government bodies, academics – but also students, a wide range of civil society organizations and non-academic staff represented by their unions. The summit opened with stakeholders sharing their views, and then broke up into parallel commissions on the academic experience, on the student experience, on differentiation and on governance – reporting back on their deliberations the following day. It was often the students, the NGOs and the unions who were the most articulate in discussing the problems facing South Africa's universities – and enormous problems they are: unequal student access and alarming rates of attrition, lack of preparedness of students on the one side and faculty on the other, the drain of faculty from the university into other areas of employment, the differentiation of the whole system of higher education that had inherited the structures of apartheid. The challenge of South African education is to simultaneously overcome inequalities from the past without creating new ones, while also meeting the immediate pressures of social transformation in a globalizing world.

What I witnessed those two days was something rather rare but inspiring – a reflexive model of higher education. It was a dialogue that was both internal to higher education between for example managers who pointed their fingers at out-of-touch academics and academics who pointed their fingers at corporatization, but also a dialogue between government, civil society and the institutions of higher education. What emerged was neither government regulation nor commercialization but a model of deliberative democracy, in which the stakeholders are participants in a political process. Following Fung and Wright, we can call this a model of empowered participatory governance, but we can only do so if there is more than talk and more than token participation; if there is, in other words, a genuine empowerment.[2]

While it takes courage for the state to engage in such open dialogue as it can so easily escalate unrealistic expectations, it is nonetheless quite rational because it allows the articulation of interests – articulation in the sense of voicing, but also in the sense of mutually adjusting – rather than every group pursuing its own concerns, responding to the exigencies of the day, oblivious to the perspectives of others. As the borders between the inside and outside of the university become shallow, as the boundaries become porous the academy can either retreat into its shell, sabotaging outside interests while protecting its turf within the university, or it can take a more outward looking approach that seeks to tackle challenges together and in public. We are arriving, therefore, at a new vision of the public university, one that is publicly accountable, that engages with publics rather than simply with itself. This does not preclude relations with business or the development of incentive structure but subjects them to open discussion, a discussion that includes all the stakeholders, a discussion that recognizes the tradeoffs at stake!

When, subsequently, I spoke about this vision in South African academic venues, I was often greeted with cynical voices. We've tried this all before. In the 1990s we had our summits and nothing came of them. Nothing? They got bogged down in futile debates over principles of representation. Futile or frustrating? I was told that this summit was just an exercise in legitimating state policies and the government will simply pursue whatever suits it. It was just another staged ritual of the state unresponsive to the interests of society. But rituals have their own logic, they can be turned on their head. Academics would say this lofty discussion has nothing to do with them, nothing to do with teaching. Really? This cynicism, this defeatism overlooks the uniqueness of South Africa, its long history of negotiated politics and dialogue,

and thus misses an opportunity – a new public debate concerned less with transition and more with transformation.

But, in any case, what alternative is there? To refuse this opportunity for dialogue, retreating behind the screens of academic freedom and autonomy, is to invite invading regulation and commercialization, accelerating privatization – in the political, moral as well economic sense – of the public university. The alternative is to seize this opportunity, exploit the space for deliberation while it exists, call upon the state to honor its commitments, open up debate both within and outside the academy, a debate about the meaning of the public university, especially in the South, and its place in transformation.

The irony is that the university protests that have spread across the Global North during the last year – United States, England, France, Germany, Austria, and beyond – are all groping toward a model of deliberative democracy in public education, a model that South Africa almost takes for granted, a model that it inherits from its past struggles. Whatever else, South Africa is fighting for a future not for a past. We need to do the same – the ivory tower has gone and so has the Master Plan, and the future is up for grabs. South Africa’s approach is not perfect, it is certainly not consensual, and ultimately it will have to deliver reform if not transformation, but it is an important beginning from which we can all learn.

*[This essay is based on concluding reflections addressed to the South African Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation held at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, April 22-23, 2010. ]*

#### FOOTNOTES

1. If you are in doubt about this take a look at the “Universities in Crisis” blogsite of the International Sociological Association at <http://isacna.wordpress.com/> with over 50 reports from some 35 countries.↑
2. Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. (London and New York, Verso, 2003).↑

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# Universities in Crisis

## About CNA

The CNA (Council of National (Sociological) Associations) has representation from 57 countries. It is one branch of the ISA (International Sociological Association), the other branch being the Research Council with delegates from the 55 Research Committees. At its last four-yearly conference in Taipei (March 23-25, 2009), the CNA discussed the challenges of building a global sociology in an unequal world, especially those emanating from the privatization of research and government auditing of universities. You can view a short film of the conference as well as the papers delivered. This blog takes the project forward by developing an account of the specific challenges faced by universities around the world. If you want to post a contribution, dealing with your own university, wherever you may be, then send it to Michael Burawoy <burawoy@berkeley.edu> ISA Vice President for National Associations. Or you can contribute directly with your own comments on someone else's post. To meet threats to higher education, particularly the social sciences, now occurring everywhere — albeit in different permutations — we need to build global communities of concerned academics. That's what we are trying to do through the ISA/CNA network connecting sociologists from all corners of the planet.

## Returning to the Past: Central Planning Plays Havoc with Finnish Universities

*In Finland on July 27, 2010 at 8:14 am*

Pekka Sulkunen, University of Helsinki

The new Estonian Museum of Art hosts a very beautiful painting by Elmar Kits of 1956, showing young women and strong men harvesting grain in a yellow autumn field in Soviet Estonia. They look happy and proud. In the foreground, two women seem to be talking, one with a notebook and a pencil in her hand. There is a weighing scale at the side.

When I saw the picture could not help thinking about the university reform Finland is going through at the moment. State universities that earlier were an integral part of the state bureaucracy, controlled financially by the Ministry of Education and in the last instance by the parliament, have become financially “autonomous” units, still mostly financed by the Ministry of Education but no longer within its budget. Instead, the universities now have their own budgets, with contributions from the state to cover immediate costs due to teaching and some research. Additional funds are sought at the Finnish national research council (misleadingly called the Academy of Finland), the national fund for science and technology, several ministries and private sources. The model is much the same as in American state universities.

The objective of the reform was to improve the universities' capacity to compete for research funding, their responsiveness to societal needs and their strategic specialisation. The administrative structures were streamlined so that the idea of representativeness through democratic elections was replaced by increased power of the university presidents (called Rectors in Finland) and an appointed Board with significant personalities from outside of the academic world: (ex)politicians, businessmen and other authorities. Faculties are led by deans, and amalgamated units that combine what used to be disciplinary autonomous departments are led by directors. Deans and directors have consulting bodies to support them but they are personally responsible for the management of the system. The old disciplinary departments are to go for good.

The management structures were changed to stress strategic agility of the units in selecting their strengths and to eliminate unproductive diversity and amateurishness. The expressed targets of the reform policy have from the beginning been international competitiveness and quality. For example the University of Helsinki seeks to become one of the world's twenty-five best universities.

All this sounds very good, even inspiring. The old bureaucratic structures were stiff, not very dynamic and very individualistic, measuring merits and allocating resources mainly on the basis of personal achievements, whereas the new system encourages collaboration and strategic planning.

What in theory makes sense, stumbles on what seems to be an epidemic of counting in the academic world in widely different contexts. What is this counting for? What function does the counting serve in Elmar Kits' painting? It does not add to the grain, it does not seem to have anything to do with agricultural technology (the level of agricultural productivity dropped to one third of the pre-war level after the collectivisation), and it is not part of the distributional system either. It is needed for, and symbolizes the presence of the Central Planning Agency, whose only contact with the production and distribution process is mediated by numbers produced by people like the women in the middle of the painting. The academic system likewise seems to be on its way back to the managerial organization of the second industrial revolution. The expansion of mass production and immense speed of social change was based on huge singular production units of mass-consumables, centrally planned labour power policies, regional coordination and nationally regulated energy supply and logistic systems (railways, roads, harbours). These were dreams of such men and women as William Beveridge, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal or Pierre Mendes-France. For these people the success of the invasion of Normandy probably was the most admirable achievement of planned social organization in human history, with two million men operating in concert under one centralised leadership.

In this discussion forum we have already read about the numerous disadvantages that evaluations based on numbers carry for knowledge production: the supremacy of form over content in the refereed article, linguistic distortions in favour of English, a world view in which relevance is measured by the local standards of Western Europe, and others related to the thin ritualism of enumerating outputs rather than assessing the worth of research results. My comment on this adds one problem that has been much less discussed: the growing distance of planning, resourcing and strategic management from knowledge production itself. This distance is apparent

in the hostility towards disciplinary organization, indeed, disciplinary identities at large, demonstrated by the reformers.

It seems that the radical programme of Mode 2 science as knowledge production in the context of application that Gibbons, Nowotny and others proposed twenty years ago does not seem to lead away from centralism, as was the original intention. Mode 1 science, they argued, was based on academic disciplinary authority, and for this reason not accountable by any objective outsiders' criteria. The Finnish science and technology policy, which aims at competitiveness and quality, is hostile to disciplinary identities, because they are seen as obstacles to usefulness. This is what the proponents of Mode 2 science also argued. It appears, though, that the true discomfort that disciplinary identities causes for the new funding and reporting system is resistance to measurable homogeneity and quantification. Respect for disciplinary differences is hostile to such quantification.

The Estonian Museum for Art houses another beautiful picture from the same era, by the first President of the Artists' Union of the Estonian SSR, Adamson-Eric. The painting is called "Exemplary brigade of Young Communists", showing seven female textile workers and their supervisor, also a notebook and a pencil in her hand, "discussing the details of the socialist competition of labour", as the gallery text informs us. This, it seems, is also the fate of the new brave university structure. As we are seriously under-resourced, we are obliged to seek "efficiency" from coordinating activities, harmonising practices, writing up rules – and reporting, of course. We have been given new administrative staff to help, but what in fact happens is that before they can help us they need to know what university teachers and researchers do, individually and as a group, and for that we must deliver information to them. And that information must also be homogeneous, preferably in numeric form. This means that the organisation has indeed become leaner: not by reducing administrative workloads but by adding new organisational levels to old ones by replacing teaching and research staff with administrators, and filling up academics' time with bureaucratic communication. We sit in meetings, discussing details, collecting information, writing up plans and priorities, procedural rules and evaluation criteria — interpreting plans sent forth to us by the Rector, the Board, the Administrative and Fiscal departments, and the university lawyers.

Universities are fragile and ambiguous organizations. The three golden As – Autonomy, Accountability and Authority – are difficult to combine. The centralized managerialism of the current Finnish reform seems to be a much worse solution than I personally expected. Its worst outcome is not that it encourages to the production of trivia; it may bury itself altogether in its own bureaucracy that increases its own resources at the expense of the productive classes in the name of "administrative efficiency"



# Zur Krise der deutschen Universität

*In Germany on July 7, 2010 at 1:02 am*

Eris J. Keim und Wiebke Keim

Im föderativ verfassten Deutschland fanden in letzter Zeit an den Hochschulen verschiedener Bundesländer Proteste gegen die Bildungs- und Hochschulpolitik des Bundes und der Länder statt, die sich gegen die miserablen Studienbedingungen, Studiengebühren, die chronische Unterfinanzierung, die Kürzung von Hochschulgeldern und gegen den so genannten „Bologna-Prozess“ richteten und die – anders als bei früheren Protestbewegungen – von Studenten und Professoren gemeinsam getragen wurden. Diese Kundgebungen sind Anzeichen einer tief sitzenden Krise des Bildungswesens im Allgemeinen und der Universitäten im Besonderen, ebenso wie das jüngste Scheitern des „Bildungsgipfels“, bei dem Bund und Länder sich vor allem über die künftige Finanzierung der Bildungsaufgaben verständigen wollten. Das einmal angestrebte Ziel, die Ausgaben für Bildung und Forschung, die 2008 bei rund 8 Prozent des Bruttoinlandsproduktes lagen, bis zum Jahre 2015 auf zehn Prozent zu steigern, ist fallen gelassen worden.

Damit erlebt Deutschland zum zweiten Male innerhalb des letzten halben Jahrhunderts eine Krise der Universität, ja eine zweite Bildungsmisere überhaupt. Neben einigen Parallelen, wie etwa die Forderung nach mehr Mitbestimmung der Studentenschaft, gibt es gravierende Unterschiede. Während die erste „Bildungskatastrophe“, die in den 1960er Jahren von Georg Picht und Ralf Dahrendorf konstatiert worden war, eine umfassende Reform der Hochschulen und des Studiums hervorrief, die unter dem Signum der Einheit und Freiheit von Forschung Lehre und der „Bildung für alle“ stand und vor allem seitens der Studenten mit gesamtgesellschaftlichen und historisch-kritischen Perspektiven begleitet war, hat nun geradezu umgekehrt ein Reformprozeß, der so genannte Bologna-Prozeß – die 1999 einsetzende Organisierung eines europäischen Hochschulraumes nach angelsächsischem Vorbild mit dem Fokus auf „Ausbildung“ nach ökonomischem Nutzen – die zweite Bildungskatastrophe wenn nicht hervorgerufen, so doch maßgeblich verstärkt. Und dies angesichts der schwersten Finanz- und Wirtschaftskrise, die die Bundesrepublik erlebt hat – wobei vieles dafür spricht, dass sich die verschiedenen Krisen gegenseitig bedingen und verschärfen. Zu der komplexen Problematik können hier nur einige Aspekte thematisiert werden.

## *1. Statistische Daten und aktuelle Lage*

Vorab sollen einige nüchterne Zahlen einen ersten Eindruck von der bundesrepublikanischen Hochschullandschaft vermitteln: Derzeit gibt es – der Übersicht „Hochschulrektorenkonferenz: Hochschulen in Zahlen 2009“ zufolge – 355 Hochschulen insgesamt, davon 118 Universitäten, 182 Fachhochschulen, 55 Kunst- und Musikhochschulen; 233 befinden sich in staatlicher, 122 in nichtstaatlicher aber staatlich anerkannter, 82 in privater und 40 in kirchlicher Trägerschaft. Die Zahl der an den Hochschulen Beschäftigten belief sich im Jahre 2009 auf insgesamt 518 613, davon gehören 260 064 Personen zum wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Personal. Dieses gliedert sich wie folgt auf: 38 020 sind ProfessorInnen, 6 157 DozentInnen und AssistentInnen, 123 545 sonstige wissenschaftliche und künstlerische MitarbeiterInnen und 7 231 Lehrkräfte für

besondere Aufgaben. Zu den Finanzen sei hier soviel angeführt: Die Gesamteinnahmen der Hochschulen beliefen sich 2009 auf 32 Milliarden Euro; 3,9 Milliarden davon stammen aus sogenannten Drittmitteln, von denen wiederum die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft 1,1 und die Wirtschaft 1,0 Milliarden beisteuern.

Im Zeichen neoliberaler Politik und zunehmend globalisierter Ökonomie sind die alten Vorstellungen von der Staats- wie Marktferne der Forschung und Lehre vielerorts aufgegeben worden. Die Universitäten sind funktionieren nunmehr oftmals als staatliche oder private Infrastruktureinrichtungen, die marktnahen Wissens- und Technologietransfer für die nationalen und internationalen Märkte liefern. In vielen Studiengängen ist nicht mehr „Bildung“, sondern „Ausbildung“ gefragt, die sich an Arbeitsplätzen orientiert, und die damit den wirtschaftlichen Bedarf zum Bezugspunkt macht.

Die aktuelle bildungs- und hochschulpolitische Situation ist nun derart verworren, ja desolat, stellt überdies zugleich die Funktionalität des tradierten föderativen Systems infrage und erweist sich als Hindernis für die Entwicklung der Hochschulen. So hat vor kurzem die Bundeskanzlerin verwegen die „Bildungsrepublik Deutschland“ ausgerufen und die CDU-FDP-Koalition in Berlin propagiert in der Debatte um die Sanierung der Staatsfinanzen und um Sparprogramme den „Vorrang für Bildung und Forschung“ (Frankfurter Rundschau vom 10.6.2010). Da der Bund jedoch nur über geringe Kompetenzen auf dem Gebiet von Bildung und Kultur verfügt, die Länder hingegen die Kulturhoheit innehaben, kommt es entscheidend darauf an, was dort geschieht und was für eine Politik namentlich CDU-geführte Landesregierungen betreiben. So hat kürzlich der Ministerpräsident von Hessen und stellvertretende CDU-Vorsitzende erklärt, dass Kürzungen bei Schule und Universität kein Tabu seien. Dementsprechend streicht das Land den Hochschulen bis 2015 jährlich 30 Millionen Euro. In Sachsen stehen gewaltige Kürzungen von 24 Millionen im Jahre 2010 an, womit sich die Lage zuspitzt, nachdem seit 2003 bereits 1 200 Stellen, darunter allein 400 Professuren, gestrichen wurden. Ein anderes Beispiel: Im hochverschuldeten Schleswig-Holstein erfährt der Präsident der Universität Lübeck, dass die Schließung der renommierten und durchaus erfolgreichen medizinischen Fakultät anstehe (Frankfurter Rundschau vom 10.06.2010).

## 2. Bologna-Reform

Im Jahre 1999 vereinbarten im italienischen Bologna zunächst 29 Wissenschaftsminister, für Europa einen gemeinsamen Hochschulraum zu schaffen. Das Kernstück besteht in einer einheitlichen Studienstruktur mit den aufeinander aufbauenden Abschlüssen Bachelor, Master und Promotion. Mittlerweile haben etwa 95 Prozent der europäischen Hochschulen auf das neue System umgestellt. Für Deutschland bedeutet die Übernahme der am angelsächsischen Modell orientierten Reform die Abkehr von einer 200 jährigen Tradition und von einer im Großen und Ganzen bewährten Studienstruktur mit anerkannten Abschlüssen. Bei einer Zwischenbilanz, die die *European University Association* mit einer Studie vorgelegt hat (vgl: Frankfurter Rundschau vom 10. und 13/14.3.2010) und die zum Teil sehr widersprüchlich ausfällt, treten deutlich die Schwächen des Bologna-Prozesses beziehungsweise seiner Umsetzung in der Bundesrepublik zutage.

Es sieht so aus, als wären zwei Kernziele der Reform verfehlt worden. Zum einen sollte die Mobilität der Studierenden und der WissenschaftlerInnen erhöht werden. Selbst nach zehn Jahren können die Universitäten nicht eindeutig festmachen, ob der Wechsel von Land und Hochschule erleichtert worden ist. Zwischen 2007 und 2009 stieg die Zahl deutscher Studierender mit Auslandserfahrung gerade mal von 23 auf 26 Prozent – gemessen an den Vorstellung des Bundesbildungsministeriums von 50 Prozent ein nicht gerade berauschendes Ergebnis – zumal es primär die Studierenden der alten Magister- und Diplomstudiengänge sind, die die Muße zum Studium in einem anderen Lande haben. Zum anderen stellt sich die Lage beim zweiten Hauptziel, junge Leute früher in Lohn und Brot zu bringen, ebenfalls nicht rosig dar. So hapert es bei der Akzeptanz der Bachelor-Abschlüsse im Lager der Arbeitgeber, die diese neue Qualifikation oft nicht voll anerkennen, so dass hier der Master als die Eingangsqualifikation für den Beruf betrachtet wird. Und nicht zuletzt ist mit Blick auf die zunehmend verschulte Hochschullehre längst klar geworden, dass der Bologna-Prozeß ohne zusätzliches Personal und Aufstockung der Finanzen nicht zu bewältigen ist.

### *3. Bildung und soziale Herkunft*

Neuere Studien zum Bildungssystem und zu den Bildungswegen in Deutschland haben wieder gezeigt, dass ein unmittelbarer Zusammenhang zwischen sozialer Herkunft und Bildungschancen besteht, der wohl in kaum einem anderen Land größer ist. Kinder aus „gutem Hause“ gelangen eher an das Gymnasium und an die Universität als Kinder, deren Eltern nicht studiert haben und über keinen gehoben sozialen Status verfügen. Angehörige der Arbeiterschaft sind an den Hochschulen nach wie vor unterrepräsentiert. Während von 100 Akademikerkindern 83 auf eine Fachhochschule oder eine Universität gehen, sind es bei Nichtakademikerkindern lediglich 23, so die 18. Sozialerhebung des Deutschen Studentenwerkes. Hierher gehört auch, dass nicht einmal jeder zweite Abiturient, der aus ärmeren Verhältnissen stammt, ein Studium anvisiert. Generell rangiert die Studienanfängerquote in Deutschland unter dem OECD-Durchschnitt. Der Bildungsgipfel vom Juni 2010 hat nun ins Auge gefasst, dass nicht 35 Prozent wie bisher, sondern 40 Prozent der Hochschulberechtigten ein Studium aufnehmen sollen. Wo die Studienplätze herkommen, wie das zusätzliche Lehrpersonal finanziert wird und wo die künftigen AkademikerInnen dann Arbeitsplätze finden sollen, steht jedoch dahin.

Eine weitere Diskriminierung besteht bei Kindern mit so genanntem „Migrationshintergrund“, von denen nur 13 Prozent ein Gymnasium besuchen; bei den anderen Kindern sind es 40 Prozent. Diese Tendenzen setzen sich an den Hochschulen fort. Junge Menschen, die Migrantenfamilien angehören, haben auch an den Hochschulen hohe Hürden zu überwinden, obwohl sie ein riesiges Potential darstellen. Immerhin bieten, wie 4ING, der Dachverein der Fakultätentage der Ingenieurwissenschaften und der Informatik an Universitäten in einer unveröffentlichten Studie feststellt (vgl. Frankfurter Rundschau vom 20.05.2010), technische Disziplinen, die nicht so hohe sprachliche Anforderungen stellen, gute Chancen. Brachten die Ingenieurwissenschaften früher soziale Aufsteiger aus der Arbeiterschaft hervor, sind es heute eher junge Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund.

### *4. Soziale Schieflagen bei der Studienförderung*

In der Bundesrepublik erhalten von den rund 2 Millionen Studierenden lediglich 2 Prozent ein Stipendium. Diese werden in der Hauptsache von den zwölf Begabtenförderwerken vergeben, wie etwa von der Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes oder von den Stiftungen der politischen Parteien. Davon profitieren bislang jedoch nicht etwa die weniger gut gestellten StudentInnen, sondern die Nachkommen bildungsnahe und einkommensstärkerer Familien, die finanzielle Unterstützung weniger nötig haben. Das jetzt von der Bundesregierung geplante nationale Stipendienprogramm, mit dem künftig bis zu acht Prozent der besten StudentInnen mit monatlich 300 Euro gefördert werden sollen, dürfte nach Ansicht von Kritikern die soziale Auslese an den Hochschulen noch verschärfen anstatt sie zu mildern. Allerdings hat der Bundesrat dieses Programm fürs Erste blockiert.

Ungleichgewichte und Defizite in der Gleichstellung gibt es nach wie vor zwischen den Geschlechtern, wie aus dem Material der „Hochschulrektorenkonferenz: Hochschulen in Zahlen 2009“, anhand von Veröffentlichungen des Statistischen Bundesamtes ersichtlich. Zwar sind Frauen generell auf dem Vormarsch, aber es bleiben gravierende Benachteiligungen. So hat sich der Anteil der Studentinnen, der Anfang der 1990er Jahre noch bei rund 40 Prozent lag, bis zum Jahre 2009 bei 2,01 Millionen Studierenden insgesamt und 0,96 Millionen Frauen auf annähernd 48 Prozent erhöht. Und bei den AbsolventInnen – 286 391 gesamt, 145 380 weibliche und 141 011 männliche – haben die Frauen mittlerweile die Männer überflügelt. Aber bei den Promotionen (Gesamt 23 843; Frauen 10 068; Männer 13 775) und noch eklatanter bei den Habilitationen (Gesamt 1 881; Frauen 457; 1 424 Männer) schneiden die Frauen weitaus schlechter ab. Nimmt man die Verhältnisse bei den Professuren hinzu, wird deutlich, dass das weibliche Geschlecht hierbei seit Beginn der 1990er Jahre, als es etwa 7 Prozent dieser Stellen innehatten, ebenfalls Boden gutmachen konnten, aber mit rund 17 Prozent im Jahre 2008 immer noch weitaus geringere Chancen hatte, gut dotierte und sichere Positionen zu erlangen. Insgesamt wird ein beträchtliches intellektuelles Potential von Frauen für die Wissenschaft und Hochschule vergeudet, während aus dem Pool der männlichen Kandidaten im Umkehrschluss notwendigerweise auch weniger gut qualifizierte ausgewählt werden.

### *5. Prekäre Arbeitsbedingungen an den Universitäten*

Große Probleme tun sich sodann auf hinsichtlich der Beschäftigungsverhältnisse des wissenschaftlichen Personals. Da ist Deutschland etwa im Vergleich zu den USA oder zu anderen europäischen Ländern ein „ziemlicher Ausreißer“, so der Hochschulforscher Reinhard Kreckel. Während anderswo ein sehr viel höherer Anteil – in den USA die Hälfte – der WissenschaftlerInnen festbestallte Professorenstellen innehat, sind es hier nur rund 17 Prozent. Dem akademischen Mittelbau stehen dagegen in der Regel nur befristete Stellen zur Verfügung mit einer maximalen Laufzeit von zwölf Jahren, während anderswo befristete Posten bei Bewährung entfristet werden. Nach Ablauf der 12-jährigen sogenannten Qualifizierungsphase besteht keine Möglichkeit einer Weiterbeschäftigung auf befristeten Stellen mehr. Betroffene haben es ab diesem Zeitpunkt denkbar schwer, noch in anderen als dem wissenschaftlichen Sektor eine Beschäftigung zu finden. Vielfach liegen prekäre Arbeitsbedingungen vor, befristete Drittmittelstellen und Teilzeitbeschäftigung, die lange eine Frauendomäne war, neuerdings aber auch bei Männern rasant zugenommen hat – und das Ganze bei bescheidenen Gehältern, hohem bürokratischen Aufwand, hoher Arbeitsbelastung über die tariflichen Arbeitszeiten hinaus. So endet für viele NachwuchswissenschaftlerInnen die Tätigkeit an der Hochschule in einer

„Karrieresackgasse“, es sei denn, es gelingt der Absprung in andere Bereiche oder ins Ausland, wo vielfach attraktivere Bedingungen gegeben sind. Zahlen Auswanderung CH, USA?

Auch derzeitige Fördermaßnahmen wie die Exzellenzinitiative oder die BMBF-Initiative „Förderung für die Geisteswissenschaften“, die vorübergehend die finanziellen Bedingungen in einigen, auf Wettbewerbsbasis ausgewählten Institutionen, Programmen oder Projekten erheblich verbessern, sorgen nicht für die Etablierung langfristiger, nachhaltiger Strukturen und gesicherter Arbeitsverhältnisse. Denn auch hier handelt es sich um zeitlich begrenzte Fördermaßnahmen.

Etwas anderes kommt noch hinzu, nämlich die auffallend hohe Kinderlosigkeit im akademischen Mittelbau, die in der Altersgruppe der 20-40Jährigen bei über 70 Prozent liegt. Bei der Professorenschaft verhält es sich so, dass zwei Drittel der Männer Väter sind, während nur ein Drittel der Professorinnen Kinder hat. Es ist offensichtlich, dass sich Professoren wegen der gesicherten Zukunft und wegen der finanziellen Möglichkeiten sich zu entlasten, Kinder eher leisten können. Indessen betrachten es die Bildungsforscherinnen Ingrid Metz-Göckel und Inken Lind als eine „kleine kulturelle Sensation“, dass es überhaupt Mütter in der Wissenschaft gibt, die nicht weniger erfolgreich sind als andere.

Die eingangs erwähnten Proteste nun scheinen nicht ganz spurlos an der Hochschulpolitik vorbeigegangen zu sein. Korrekturen etwa bei den Studienplänen sind hie und da geplant, die Erhöhung der Mittel für die Lehre ist im Gespräch. Ob damit die „gewachsenen Fachstandards und Diskursfelder“ wiederhergestellt und der von Ulrich Beck konstatierten „McDonaldisierung der deutschen Universität“ Einhalt geboten werden kann, wird zu bezweifeln sein. Die Bologna-Reform jedenfalls, die mit Tendenzen der „Uniformierung, Zeitbeschränkung, Fremdbestimmung und Bagatellisierung der freien Wissenschaft“, wie Peter Finke konstatiert, verbunden ist, beschleunigt die Ökonomisierung und Bürokratisierung der Universität. Wolfgang Eßbach bietet rückblickend auf die letzten Reformen einen Ausblick: „Jetzt sagen viele, das haben wir nicht gewollt. Das stimmt mich optimistisch“.

# Danish Universities Face Cutbacks and Intensified Regulation[1]

*In Denmark on June 22, 2010 at 5:21 am*

Kristoffer Kropp, University of Copenhagen

Since the national-liberal government started reforming the university system in the 1980's the Danish university system has to some degree been a research laboratory for NPM (New Public Management) university system reforms. Students and university staff are thus well acquainted with major changes in managerial and financial structure of their institutions. They know that the political discourse about knowledge economy and the importance of education and research, which emanates from the highest levels, generally seems more like hot air.

The first round of major educational reforms hit the universities in the 1980s in a period of national conservative rule. These changes were responsible for major cut backs in research and educational budgets and for attempts to direct university education and research toward the private sector. To the social sciences education this meant a very rapid and high growth business and management studies and a relative stagnation of the other major social science disciplines. In the late 1980's it involved the closing of the two sociological departments in Denmark. Through the 1990s funding for social science research rose, but mostly allocated through various politically and bureaucratically controlled pools and projects that directed research towards specific topics and research areas or as evaluations and development projects within the public sector. In short, one can say that the tools of NPM of the market oriented neo-liberal government were developed in the 1980's under national conservative governance, but were enlarged and implemented throughout the educational and research sectors in the 1990's under social democratic rule.

The last ten years, once again under national conservative government, have continued the changes and in the same direction. Regarding higher education, the last ten years, just as in the rest of Europe, have been marked by the Bologna Process. Education has been oriented more toward future employment (employability) and less toward academic 'Bildung' and there has been an increasing emphasis on getting the students through their education faster and cheaper. On an organisational level the authority to approve the supervision of education has been relocated from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation into a newly created institution – ACE Denmark – which should oversee higher education in Denmark through a comprehensive evaluation every five years. Organisational changes have weakened the autonomy of the university in relation to the bureaucratic field and required the expansion of bureaucratic structures at universities in order to fulfil the demands for documentation and evaluation.

When looking at the organisation of the research, the major trends are striking. The first is the increasing centralisation and 'professionalization' of the university administration and second the increasing competition for funds and positions. The major changes came in 2003 with the passing of a new university law (Wright and Ørberg 2008), which removed the last bit of democratic influence gained in the early 1970's over the management of universities. From then

on managers at all levels where 'professionalized', meaning that new 'leaders' were hired and made responsible to (and mainly focused on) managerial levels above and not to staff and students.

But centralisation can not only be found within universities. In the same period Danish universities and governmental research institutions have been forced to merge, leading to large centralised agencies. The latest event in this process of centralisation and race for 'efficiency' has been the re-organisation of the independent Danish Research Councils, reducing the amount of research in the independent councils and the tying them more closely to the strategic and applied part of public funding.

In the same period the competition for funds has increased both on an institutional and an individual level. In order to increase the efficiency of the universities, two measures have been taken in the last years. A growing part of public funding to the universities is being allocated through a system much like the Norwegian one (see Karin Widerberg's post on this side), on the basis of relative productivity measured by the amount and quality of publications, patents, etc. This kind of reform, of course, leads managers to focus on the productivity of individual researchers in order to secure the budget and the relative position of the institution (university, faculty, department or section). But simultaneously it leads to an increased competition between researchers and may lead to a devaluation of activities other than those leading directly to publications.

To this end the Ministry of Science has put together 62 different specialist working groups to produce 'accreditation lists', containing 'authorised' journals and publishers divided in to two categories. According to the now former chairman for the working group for sociology and social work, Professor Annic Prieur, this job has been both thankless and almost senseless due to its bureaucratic setup and due to the likely effects both on the allocation of funds between institutions and the relations among researchers (Dansk Sociologi, nr. 4 vol. 20, 2009, p. 99-106).

On top these planned administrative and financial changes the Danish economy has, like the rest of the world, been seriously affected by the financial crisis. To avoid budget deficits the government has made major cutbacks that will also hit research and educational institutions. As a result of the announced budget reductions, which are equally distributed among the Danish universities, the University of Copenhagen (Denmark's largest research institution at the moment) will have to lay off between 400 and 700 employees or some where between 5 and 10 % of its total employees, according to the president of the university. In the end, how many people the universities will have to fire or how the cut backs will be carried through is still unclear, but that it will effect both teaching and research is certain.

But have these multiple changes, leading to the deterioration of conditions for students and researchers led to any major protests? No, not really. There have, of course, been spontaneous protests and demonstrations arranged by students and unions, but none of these initiatives have had any visible effects. So, interesting enough, despite the strong concentration of 'cultural capital' at the universities, no common movement has been mobilised and few alternatives have been formulated. The reasons for this surprising silence from, in other situations, a very

outspoken university community, may be the unclear consequences of the changes, but also the fact that the reforms have beneficiaries within academia. Many of the changes within the research institutions have been used to strengthen specific managerial positions and research on politically hot topics. The reforms are, thus, not only administrative changes, but reflect changes in power relations within academia, that can also shape the knowledge that is produced. We must not ignore these changes – neither the academic nor the political – but instead we need to scrutinise and discuss their consequences and formulate possible countermeasures.

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[1] For a more comprehensive history of changes in the organization of Danish social science, and especially Danish sociology, please see Kropp and Blok (2009))



# Bulldozing Indian Universities in the Name of Reform

*In India on June 15, 2010 at 4:44 am*

By Bula Bhadra, University of Calcutta

All is never well in the Universities of India. Since independence (1947) experiments with structure and content of university/higher education system has been interminable. The abysmal disparity in terms of access to higher education and availability of everything else necessary to attain quality higher education is disappointing to say the least. The hangover of the colonial proclivity and its associated predicaments coupled with the culture of control by the state and the political parties in power made the higher education system of India a chronically suffering one.

Most significantly, in India, the growth of first-rate institutions of higher learning has been negligible, except of course some institutes in Science and Technology. As a result, Indian higher education has often been characterized as a sea of mediocrity containing only a few isles of distinction. Aside from concerns of access and quality is also the issue of equity. Socially and economically disadvantaged groups e.g. especially women in the system are under-represented and their educational attainments tend to be below average. The key problems faced by Indian higher education pertain to issues of *access, equity, and quality; rural-urban and regional imbalances; and without a shadow of doubt centralization, bureaucratization and politicization of the whole education system.*

Although estimates vary, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education can be estimated at somewhere between 7 and 11 percent. According to the National Knowledge Commission it is only seven per cent of the population i.e., between the age group of 18-24 who enter higher education.[1] Even those who have access are not ensured of quality. Despite having over 350 universities, not a single Indian university is listed in the top 100 universities of the world.

The enrolment of women in higher education is traditionally measured by the Gender Parity Index (GPI), which is a ratio of female GER to male GER. The GPI in 2005 using Indian Census and UGC (University Grants Commission, the apex body responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards, and release of grants) data is calculated to be 0.75.[2] When compared to a relevant-age population ratio of 0.91 (i.e. female population aged 18-24 as a ratio of male population aged 18-24), it appears that women are significantly under-represented in higher education. It is especially pertinent that the GPI throughout school (grades I to XII) is 0.91.[3] This suggests a tendency for women to drop out of the education system after grade XII, exposing the false promises of so-called “women’s empowerment” in higher education.

Regional inequalities in higher education also deserve mention in order to highlight the uneven nature of growth in this sector over the last few years. Approximately 58 percent of all higher education institutions are located in only six states – Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu[4] – which are also among the ten most populated states of India[5]. This selection of states reflects the considerable growth of institutions in South and West India relative to other regions. In case of gender parity, states and

Union Territories like Goa, Chandigarh, Kerala, Delhi, Punjab and Pondicherry are most favorable for women relative to men, whereas Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Rajasthan are at the opposite end of the spectrum. Regional data within India, suggest significant imbalances in the capacity and sophistication of systems for higher education between the South and West on the one hand, and the North, East and Northeast on the other.

The symptoms are so grievous that in order to revamp the higher education system two sets of recommendations were recently made by the *National Knowledge Commission* (NKC) formed in 2005 and the *Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education*, formed in 2008. In response to these reports, the government drafted a Bill on higher education and put it in the public domain. The draft *National Commission for Higher Education and Research Bill, 2010*(NCHER) seeks to establish the National Commission for Higher Education and Research whose members shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the selection committee (which includes the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, and the Speaker). The Commission shall take measures to promote the autonomy of higher education and for facilitating access, inclusion and opportunities to all. It may specify norms for granting authorization to a university, develop a national curriculum framework, specify requirements of academic quality for awarding a degree, specify minimum eligibility conditions for appointment of Vice Chancellors, maintain a national registry, and encourage universities to become self regulatory. Vice Chancellors shall be appointed on the recommendation of collegiums of eminent personalities. The national registry shall be maintained with the names of persons eligible for appointment as Vice Chancellor or head of institution of national importance. Any person can appeal a decision of the Commission to the National Educational Tribunal.

Unfortunately, for all Indians, this bill seems to bring another nightmare, if not a catastrophe. The NCHER represents the most extreme proposal to centralize power in higher education that could be imagined. Instead of rationalizing regulation, it creates a structure that makes the UGC Act look positively innocuous. The commission is entrusted with promoting university autonomy but instead of freeing the universities/ higher education from culture of control, it drops the word autonomy on occasion as icing on the cake. It is paradoxical, to say the least, to require a central regulatory agency to promote autonomy. The very section that talks of autonomy gives the commission a blanket mandate to regulate everything from syllabi, course structures, appointments, rules, administrative protocols etc. The Bill does not distinguish between public and private universities and fuses funding and regulatory agencies, which is nothing less than catastrophic.

The idea of co-option permeates the collegium and the national registry and consequently there will be intense political intrigue to secure nominations as a co-opted fellow at different state levels. If this bill goes through, we will get centralization instead of decentralization, control instead of autonomy, homogenization instead of variety, bureaucratization instead of flexibility, institutional rigidity instead of novelty and a winner takes all approach to regulation. And nepotism will undeniably have its heyday. The *hegemonic mediocrity*, backed by state power, is seeking to control the universities/higher education in order to carry out their agenda in the most stealthy way – all in the name of reform. We have already experienced this sort of political control in many faculty appointments, especially in the so-called left-liberal states of India,

decade after decade. Are we again going to get a travesty wearing the mantle of reform which reward those who can memorize and parrot information but cannot decipher or apply knowledge while suffocating those with analytical and independent minds and those who question the status-quo?

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[1] 7 percent from National Knowledge Commission, *Compilation of Recommendations on Education* (New Delhi, NKC, 2007); 8 percent calculated by author using Census of India 2001, Census Data Online, Population, accessible via [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in); Registrar General, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, *Population Projections for India and the States 1996-2016* (New Delhi, Registrar General, 1996) and UGC, *UGC Annual Report 2005-06* (New Delhi, UGC); 10 percent from Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), *National Level Educational Statistics at a Glance (2004-05)* (New Delhi, MHRD); 11 percent from ICRIER, *Higher Education in India*.

[2] The MHRD estimate for the same year is 0.71. See MHRD, *Selected Educational Statistics 2004-2005*, (New Delhi, MHRD, 2007), p.71.

[3] MHRD, *Selected Educational Statistics 2004-2005*.

[4] MHRD, *Selected Educational Statistics 2004-2005*.

[5] Census of India 2001, Census Data Online.

# Higher Education in Post-Soviet Russia and the Global Crisis of the University

*In Russia on June 4, 2010 at 10:46 pm*

By Artemy Magun, European University, St. Petersburg

Reduced Russian Version [Follows]

The essential paradox to all education consists of a tension between the autonomous moment of thought that inevitably makes learning *authoritarian* and non-democratic and the moment of dialogue with the *free* thought of a student who demands that the university be an open and ultra-democratic space. This tension has always existed but is particularly relevant today as democratization and commercialization threaten the autonomy of universities, as the political and economic ideology of our world (calculative liberalism and discipline) remains a theoretical product, an example of what Lacan called the “academic discourse”. [1] In what follows, I will show how, in contemporary Russia, this tension produces a situation that is both critical and symptomatic.

## **A global crisis of the university**

Current global trends in the sphere of higher education are characterized, as we know, by the dismantling of the “German” system of specialized education that mainly consisted of professors offering monologue courses. In reality, this system was already inadequate in the 1950-60s when higher education became a mass institution and, moreover, when these “masses” no longer wanted to be “instructed” in an authoritarian manner. Universities became factories, increasingly “postindustrial”. The student movement was no doubt progressive in its demands for democratization and opening of education to new ideas. However, it also created a tension within the core of the institution: by definition, education cannot be completely “democratic” for it requires the autonomy and freedom of teachers who must *guide* students through a critique of their preexisting opinions.

Today, following the democratic revolution of universities, there is a new revolution in Europe: *the commercial revolution*. Universities are required to meet the demands and questionings of society, which are expressed, for example, in the economic sphere. This, again, is not completely false. Ideas of social or practical relevance are more likely to thrive. Yet the danger is, of course, that the idea may become too dependent on other “demands” and “interests”. The university must keep its right to ask questions and not only to give *answers*. [2] This can only be possible if the university is not enclosed in a “ghetto” but remains a public institution where scholars participate in social practices themselves and where, ideally, they divide their time between “real” practice and teaching.

The “Bologna process” has had important consequences for the reform of higher education in Europe. There has been nothing like it over the course of the last 50 years. The main task of this “process” was to introduce the Anglo-American model with its system of “credits” and to standardize courses in two levels: “bachelor” and “master”. In itself, this reform could be useful

and provide, for example, greater mobility for students from different countries in Europe. However, in the last few years we have seen how this reform involved unstated measures that “spontaneously” corresponded to the neoliberal politics of several European governments. The Bologna process allows governments to reintroduce fees for education, at least at its higher level (MA), which not only lead to increased inequalities but also transform the social function and content of education. Students who plunge into debt in order to finance their education will seek a program that will later allow them to get a well-paid job and pay off their debt. The formalization and standardization of courses has increased administrative control over the teaching body, making the latter more fragile and vulnerable. The “bachelor” level aims explicitly at providing basic general education (not specialized). In reality, with the exception of technological research, more specialized college education is of little use for the contemporary labor market, which requires general communication and organizational skills. The process of Bologna thus follows these lines, even though it does not explicitly deal with the radical transformation of the content of education or the reduction of funding for universities.

It is thus not surprising that this “process” has led to protests, especially on behalf of the teaching body and of students themselves. Perceived within the framework of “neoliberal” reforms aiming to privatize the social sector, this process simultaneously introduces standardized commercial formalities in all spheres of society. Nevertheless, the need to reform education institutions in Europe is obvious: in France, for example, universities have been underfinanced for decades, remain relatively closed to young professors and often continue to apply the old model of “unilateral” lectures given by professors to students. The risk is that the reform may not only lead to transforming the system, but also and especially to destroy the intellectual character of French education and its exceptionally high effectiveness in the reproduction of knowledge. It would be even worse if the university were to lose the public role it plays in French society.

Although the Bologna process is *global* (countries outside of the EU such as Russia are also included and it brings the European system closer to its North-American homologue), this does not imply that its effects, including the specific content of the changes it brings about, are everywhere the same. In the United States, for example, a system that is similar to that of “Bologna” has been in place for a long time, yet universities (at least the “top” ones) are usually able to keep their autonomy and the informality of their teaching (even if an applied and pragmatic approach to science is profoundly characteristic of American culture). Nevertheless, in the last few years, the American university has also undergone a neoliberal transformation: fewer professors are reaching tenure and academic work is becoming more precarious and less autonomous. An example of the direct consequences of these changes can be found in the recent conflict (December 2008) at the New School of Social Research in New York where professors and students lead a public protest against the commercialization of the school by their president.[3] In this sense, this is not a case of the Americanization of Europe, but rather a global crisis of the university.

### **Higher education in Russia**

This is the context necessary for a discussion of higher education in Russia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, higher education was radically transformed through an *extreme neoliberal reform*. As a vanguard of neoliberalism (I will explain this later), Russia remains a

symptom of what neoliberals could and would like to achieve elsewhere, if only they were not limited by social inertia and the resistance put forth by civil society. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that neoliberalism in Russia is the same as in Europe or North America. In those countries, “neoliberalism” exists within a system of forces that are located somewhere between old conservatism and social democracy and while it may, in part, represent their synthesis, it also cancels them out. In Russia, neoliberalism exists only to the extent to which it is fused with the institutions of the post-soviet state that have kept their structure, institutional culture and a large part of their staff. Thus, in contrast to Europe and the United States, neoliberalism in Russia is rarely recognized or criticized as such: the opposition perceives the regime as corrupt and authoritarian and the liberal-democratic opposition often combines the language of neoliberalism (denouncing economic inefficiency or the lack of transparency) with slogans of “liberal” democracy (e.g. the “Other Russia”).

Indeed, the neoliberal reforms that took place in the 1990s and 2000s were not fully carried out. Instead, they created an odd society where neoliberalism was a *form* that allowed (post)soviet institutions to continue to exist—on condition that they reorient themselves towards making business. Social security remained well protected by law but this did not prevent its destruction in practice. The extreme precariousness of work (a large mass of workers did not have a permanent contract, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants) coexists with a rather solid system of social security that is imposed by the state. Due to this system, employers prefer to avoid it, often through informal means.

Moreover, the collapse of communist ideology created a climate of *anomie* where corruption or at least tax avoidance was not generally perceived as reprehensible. For example, beginning in the 1990s, health is both public and private but doctors are not well paid by the state. Thus, they tend to use their positions and the infrastructure of their clinics to offer profitable services to those in need and with the means to pay for them, although not always in an official manner.

Universities went through a similar process. Education remained free for those who passed the entrance examination but several deans established a system of bribes that parents must pay to enroll students. Furthermore, other official means of seeking revenues were developed including increasing the number of students who pay fees (for those who did not pass the entrance examination) and renting university buildings to firms.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of students has increased from approximately 3 to 6 million, which represents more than half of the population aged between 17 and 22. The number of educational institutions has also doubled since 1990, mainly due to the emergence of private institutions.[4] Meanwhile, professors employed by the state received miniscule salaries during the 1990s—in average, around 100 dollars per month. If one was not corrupt, then one had to teach several courses in several institutions. However, a position at the State University that was not well paid might still give a professor access to teaching less prestigious but better paid courses. Even today, the salary of a lecturer at the State University is insufficient and most people rely on taking on 2 or 3 positions.

### **The changing hierarchy among disciplines**

Change in the *content* of what is taught in higher education varies across institutions and disciplines. In the Soviet Union, natural sciences were the most highly developed worldwide. In the 1990s, specialists in these disciplines (math, physics) massively fled the country. The collapse of the Russian economy destroyed the demand for scientists and these disciplines lost their prestige. The humanities taught in the Soviet Union were strongly ideological and their status was inferior to that of the natural sciences. However, there was a strong philology tradition of authors that were known in the West such as the “Tartu-Moscou” school of semiotics (Yu. Lotman, M. Gasparov, among others). In the 1990s, the members of this school also fled the country.

With regards to the social sciences, their situation in the USSR was the saddest of all: a dogmatic version of Marxism-Leninism dominated philosophy, the political sciences did not exist and sociology did not have its own department. Psychology was the exception as it had its own faculty within universities and developed a true school of Marxist psychology (ideologically close to the trend officially referred to as socialist “humanities”). Despite their rather mediocre level, the study of “ideological” disciplines was an important part of a bureaucratic career in the USSR.

Most of the western classics of social thought of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were forbidden. Numerous intellectuals, who were critical of the regime and had no access to what was being produced and discussed at a global level, abandoned Marxism and turned to either classic liberalism or national conservatism. The mandatory teaching of marxism nevertheless contributed to the general intellectual culture of soviet officials who were given special perks if they seriously studied Hegel and Marx.

The humanities and social sciences nevertheless became the most popular and prestigious disciplines in the 1990s. This change was partially brought about due to the role sociology played in the perestroika by calling attention to protests and public opinion. This shift was also linked to the “boom” of previously forbidden writings from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that suddenly became accessible. Yet this transformation was mainly tied to the changing structure of the economy. The Russian industry suffered greatly throughout the neoliberal reforms: the reorientation towards a service economy or “immaterial work” was inevitable and was bizarrely simultaneous to the crash of the economy.

There was no work in the factory (and when there was, salaries were not really paid) and the money that circulated in the economy was invested in consumption and services that were unheard of before such as psychotherapy. The commercialization of products of mass consumption was new to Russia and developed a demand for studies in marketing and advertising, which relied on sociological methods. Finally, democratic elections at all levels with no parties or stable voters relied heavily on their public relations specialists who were referred to as “political technicians” in Russian. Towards the end of the 1990s, with the gradual recovery of the economy, there was a rise in the number of “firms” and positions for managers (often with an unspecified degree).

Thus, many students thought their choice of discipline would have little influence over their future career. Students chose social sciences and humanities because they were relatively easy.

All of the above changed the hierarchy of disciplines of the soviet era and made social sciences and humanities popular and prestigious—even profitable for corrupt officials. The most popular disciplines then (and now) are law and economy.

The reform changed the content of degrees in sociology, political sciences, psychology and philosophy. The massive import of western theories and the abandonment (often demonization) of Marxism lead to a spectacular ideological disorientation as well as the destruction of the existing Soviet schools. Yet the teaching staff was practically the same since the state did not dare reduce the number of professors and researchers. The state kept all teaching staff, including orthodox Marxist-Leninists who in several cases became orthodox liberals and then orthodox nationalists.

Thus, the opening-up to the West produced an import and not an *export* of social knowledge. Contrary to natural sciences and even humanities, few Russian scholars in the social sciences are well-known in the West—with the exception of area specialists or Russian specialists working on Russia and living “in the field”. [5] Language barriers, the selectiveness of translations and above all, the lack of understanding of current debates in the West as well as the lack of interest from the West (with its “market” closed to competing texts and individuals) have made it difficult to have a productive dialogue between Russian traditions and American and European ones. As a result, the Russian academia is becoming increasingly closed; nationalism is becoming more and more popular among social sciences professors, while rare and exotic debates lead to the emergence of “new” endemic disciplines. Indeed, we have seen the emergence of “synergism” (a theoretical framework that is very popular in the Russian social sciences and that explains the functioning of society through the laws of cybernetics), “imagology” (the theory of “political technology”), “socionics”; “acmeology”, etc. That said, the autonomy given to the *content* of thought has allowed serious and original thinkers to benefit from the “luxury” that their young colleagues in Western countries often lack—the luxury to make progress at ones own pace without the pressure of competitors or “peer reviewers” who carry out disciplinary “censorship”.

Teaching methods have also changed. Although the structure of study programs has largely remained the same, the general social atmosphere, low salaries and even lower scholarships have created a new culture: students do not feel forced to attend class and instructors have no motivation to evaluate them rigorously. Under the Soviet and post-Soviet system, if a student received a “2” (a failing grade), the student had the right to take the exam again. This involved extra work for the instructor who also felt guilty since he knew he could ruin the life of an individual by giving him a bad grade. The number of low grades and especially failing ones has greatly diminished since the reforms.

### **The symptomatic case of the “OD-group” protests**

What then was the result of these transformations? A very particular symbiosis emerged from the combination of a commercial logic and the logic of a self-sufficient institution. In a recent article, Mikhail Sokolov notes:



Higher education offers its clients a set of services that paradoxically exclude each other. On one side, it offers (or pretends to) a skill that is necessary for a career. On the other, it guarantees a moratorium, a period during which the youth can seek adventures, partners, and/or work that is not linked to the discipline they study. These two goods contradict each other: the higher the skill, the less the time for everything else. [In Russia], in all departments of Sociology, most students pay for this moratorium and not the skill and the institution, following the economic logic, must orient itself to the needs of the majority.[6]

Sokolov's article was written on the occasion of a student movement that emerged in 2007 against the administration of the Sociological Faculty in the State University of Moscow (MGU), more specifically, against its dean M. Dobrenkov. A group of students, the "OD-group" (20 to 30 out of the 2000 students in the faculty), engaged in public resistance in the spring of 2007. The immediate pretext was the student cafeteria where prices were as high as those of a good restaurant. However, students were mainly concerned with the quality of their education, as well as their lack of participation in research. The administration did not agree to the students' demands. The dean called the police when the group organized a public protest and expelled most of the members of the group. During the scandal that followed, a commission of the Russian Social Chamber evaluated its teaching quite negatively and found several cases of plagiarism in a manual of sociology written by Dobrenkov. Despite all of this, the dean has kept his position and the students of the OD group had to continue their studies elsewhere.

The case of the Sociology Faculty at MGU is an extreme case. The dean's personal convictions can be characterized as of extreme-right: he launched a campaign for the reinstatement of the death penalty and the prohibition of abortion. He also created a new discipline within his faculty called "orthodox sociology". This is nevertheless a case that is symptomatic of what is happening more generally in the country. Sokolov, in the previously cited article, considers it symptomatic and elaborates a rather pessimistic diagnosis of the state of affairs of higher education in Russia and student mobilization based on a series of interviews carried out in different Russian universities.

One could first object that the situation in other institutions is different, especially if we do not limit ourselves to the faculties of social sciences of state universities. What is common and widespread is the priority given to administrative and commercial tasks over teaching and research. This means that an effective control over knowledge and intellectual skills is missing among students and professors. As everywhere in the Russian State, it is the inertia of the status quo, clientelism and commercial effectiveness that determine hiring policies. Yet Sokolov forgets that the university is not a commercial institution by its essence and even the reforms of the 1990s have not succeeded in transforming it to that extent. One does not usually choose a career in philosophy or sociology to make money or accumulate prestige. Furthermore, students are spontaneously interested in the subjects they study even if their interest is moderate. It is also true that the faculties of social sciences have several lecturers and researchers who are quite dedicated and sometimes even brilliant. They *make the most* of this state of relative anarchy and carry out their research without much trouble from the administration and without a constant pressure to publish. Given the widespread anarchy that dominates almost everything, a lot depends on the personality of the dean or the chair (the basic subdivision of Russian faculties).

## **Neoliberal reforms: the cure is worse than the disease**

This leads us to another objection. We can tell from Sokolov's choice of words that he relies on an *economic* approach to all social relations. This method implicitly draws from neoliberalism: it rests on the belief that the creation of formal and anonymous institutions (such as peer-reviewed journals) and researchers' "rational choice" will make them good sociologists, political scientists or philosophers.[7] There is a Russian intellectual "party" (found on the website *polit.ru*) that is currently fighting for a radical reform of education in the Russian social sciences following the Anglo-American model. The government has already accepted some of their propositions. For example, for the last few years, the same written exam has been implemented to all high school students in order to determine their admission to the university. This measure aims to avoid corruption and it may be efficient. However, major universities (Moscow and St. Petersburg) have succeeded in resisting this measure on the grounds that this abstract and impersonal exam cannot allow them to determine a student's talent in a specific area, especially if it is not taught in high school.

From my point of view, this institutional economics analysis and the technocratic measures mentioned above are only formal. These authors are not taking into account that corruption and plagiarism among university instructors does not only stem from "rational choice" but also from the *extreme state of anomie* these instructors find themselves in. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ideological and ethical crisis that followed have transformed them into solitary and desperate individuals who focus only on their survival and do not believe in the possibility of an intellectual debate (although they may be strict in their convictions which has nothing to do with critical thinking).

The neoliberal technocratic reform that has already taken off in Russia with the Bologna process will not achieve radical change. In the best scenario, it will contribute to spread an annoying "normal science" where formal criteria will be respected at the cost of critical thinking. The few who will be able to publish in western journals will receive tenure and a disproportionately high salary, while other positions will decrease in number and pay. This will create a competitive spirit that will not always benefit research or intellectual institutions. Access to positions will be more difficult for young researchers. In the worst scenario, which is the most likely to occur, rules will be adapted to each situation. The rules established by peer-reviews will be followed, but the mandatory references will derive from "orthodox sociology". The administration's control over teaching will lead to bureaucratic authoritarianism over instructors. In the end, all will depend on the intellectual motivation and solidarity of researchers.

It is important to note that neoliberal measures aiming to avoid corruption can have consequences that are as harmful as or even worse than corruption: the formalization and standardization of intellectual life. In reality, *these kinds of measures are based on the same principles as corruption*: intellectuals' anomic and cynical selfishness. Thus, it is not surprising that the formal technocratic measures that have been implemented have been unable to solve the problem of corruption, not to mention their inadequacy in taking on the task of mobilizing universities and society as a whole towards critical thinking.

## **The case of the European University of Saint-Petersburg**

There was another case of student mobilization, this time around the closing of the European University of Saint-Petersburg. This is a special institution, one of the four *new* higher education institutions that were created in Russia in the 1990s with the support of American foundations that aimed at reproducing the institutional model of American universities. The European University offers postgraduate programs (M.A. and Ph.D.) as a replica of American graduate schools where students take a series of courses before writing their dissertations. The university is not part of the state and is not authorized to give out any official MA or PhD diploma. Nevertheless, students are attracted to the high quality of teaching and its relations with Western universities that may grant researchers access to an international network. The university was able to attract numerous Russian scholars with foreign diplomas. Scholars are mostly interested in studying different aspects of Russian society (e.g. the Russian mafia in the 1990s, the electoral process, the role of women in Russian society, the concept of the republic applied to the Russian case, etc.). In the beginning, the university could offer its employees a significant salary that was above average in Russia. However, in the 2000s, the Russian economy expanded, the cost of living increased and this financial difference was no longer significant; for many scholars, this became one workplace among others.

On February 8, 2008, firemen shut down the university for “security reasons” linked to irregularities in the building and all teaching was banned. It was quite obvious for anyone following Russian politics that the shutting down of the university was political. In 2007, the university opened a center for electoral studies financed by the European Union. High officials took notice of this institution created on the eve of parliamentary and presidential elections; President Putin and his assistant S. Yastrzhembsky made reference to the university in their speeches. Following a series of informal exchanges, the board of the university closed the “electoral” subdivision but by then, it was already too late: the university was closed by Russian authorities using the common method of relying on administrative law for political aims. The regime was visibly seeking to avoid a Western intervention in the electoral process as shown by the cases of Serbia or Ukraine. A series of public protests followed involving three main actions: informal negotiations with elites, open letters (one was signed by the members of the Russian Academy of Sciences) and, last but not least, public protests disguised as a series of “performances” organized by students. Students created a “University of the Streets” where they offered short conferences every week mainly focused on the history of student movements. Authorities finally agreed to their demands, maybe due to the political character of the university or perhaps out of fear of further student mobilization. On March 21, 2008 the university was reopened.

Three aspects of this history are symptomatic. First, authorities focused on an institution that has not been politically radical: most of its members defend objectivist positions in relation to society and their actions go no further than liberal criticism against any regime in power, which is representative of intelligentsia in general. The danger seemed to come from the West via its “foundations” although the university is currently seeking its funding from Russia. Those in charge of the secret police in Russia do not understand how Western foundations operate. They wanted to know what these foundations wanted in exchange for their financial support and were suspicious when told there was no real control over what knowledge was being produced. We know foundations have little interest in the *content* of academic work and are mostly interested in the general topic and the opinions of experts. Thus, the university was able to keep its freedom

juggling its existence between two *masters* and avoiding complete submissiveness to capital's demands on one side and the submission to the government on the other. It is thus interesting and paradoxical to see how *an essentially neoliberal institution* (a private university) could become one of the rare sites in Russia where free, innovative and internationally respected research is carried out.

What we can learn from this particular case of the European University is quite complex. The university's position in the periphery might offer a perspective that encompasses a full vision of the global situation. Nevertheless, there are still strong limitations in attempting to create a synthesis between Russian and Western traditions or in making generalizations due to the fact that Russian intellectuals are only welcome in the West as Russian specialists. As a consequence of this demand and the popularity of positivist ideology (linked to neoliberalism), most of the research that is carried out at the European University is *objectivist*, i.e. centered around the study of effective causes and the analysis of external relations. Thus, the questions that are raised are more about tactics and less about strategy.

Second, student mobilization from the beginning was strongly linked to supporting a *profession*. There were slogans and public conferences but once the university was reopened, students "reentered the audience" and refused to continue their political activity. The other young activists that supported the movement continued to hold regular sessions at the "University of the Streets"[8] but the students from the European University stopped going. Reopening the university was thus effective in demobilizing students in protest. Thus, the situation is quite different from the OD-group: not only did this group lose its battle, many of its members became politically active in a sustained manner, developing an interest in sociology that is less objectivist and more activist in nature.

Third, the European University that struggled to survive its political crisis is currently plunged into a financial one. International foundations can no longer support the university to the same degree as they did before and the university is seeking support from Russian firms. This reorientation calls for an internal reform that is parallel to the most radical projects of neoliberal reform in Europe. The university's restructuring proposition will make it more dependent on the market. One of its important measures is the introduction of the position of "endowed professor", a professor who is personally funded by a foundation. The salary for this professor, according to the plan, will be three times greater than an ordinary member of the faculty and candidates will essentially be chosen on the basis of their publications and international citations (in peer-reviewed Anglophone journals). This reform may create a motivation towards excellence, but it will destroy a spirit of collective work and the democratic environment of the university. Such a reform echoes the neoliberal politics of constructing post-communist cities: instead of developing an urban project as whole, we build an enormous and solitary skyscraper. Thus, the live tensions between bureaucratic barbarism and objectivist technocracy tend to be resolved in the direction of neoliberalism.

### **What reform for the (Russian) university?**

From these examples, we can draw a general idea of the current situation of higher education in Russia. To conclude, I would like to go back to my first statement. It is too simple to seek to

describe a global political and economic situation through a model such as “neoliberal reform” or “postfordism and immaterial work”. These trends exist globally but they are constantly confronting different forces and often produce contradictory effects. In Russia, the emergence of the service economy and numerous firms in the 1990s coincided with the destruction of industry, the impoverishment of most of the population and a general increase of anarchy and anomie in society. In the 2000s, growth in certain sectors of the economy (natural resources, commerce, construction) brought wealth to the state and allowed it to raise living standards. Nevertheless, this reconstruction was partial and unilateral. Neoliberal policies in the tax system and general management coexisted with monopoly, corporatism and corruption that seeped through all the economy as well as with conservatism in the social sectors (including social security, medicine and education).

In the educational sphere, neoliberal measures such as the strict formalization of management, the introduction of standardized admission examinations for universities, the investment in the technological base of education are supposed to accomplish a reform in the system, yet through reinforcing the power of the administration without looking into the content or framework of education, they actually reproduce the status quo. The service economy does not demand high quality education; its demand for social sciences and humanities actually contributes to stagger them and continues to isolate the Russian university from the rest of the world. The quality of the educational offer is unequal across universities, and even when professors are well prepared, this does not guarantee that the quality of the education they offer will be as high as it could be, due to a lack of motivation and inadequate means of evaluating knowledge transmission.

In such a context, the only solution for the state (considering for a moment that bureaucrats are well-intentioned) would be to create new international institutions and to invite professional scholars and “organic” intellectuals (critical individuals who are embedded in practice) of an international reputation (or at least national) who are able to raise questions of general interest to society and to rethink certain types of social and material practices. We would have to give them funding and the freedom to manage these “teams” that could welcome and fund scholars from abroad, edit bilingual journals, etc.

Even if the opening of universities to the logics of the market may be harmful to the production of knowledge, *some* opening towards society is necessary. The reproduction of ivory towers is a mistake. The integration of universities with other social institutions can only take place through a temporary *exchange* of officials between universities (professors should be sent to industries, firms, etc.) and these institutions (where “organic” intellectuals should be forced to spend at least one semester in a university to systematize their thinking and exchange ideas with intellectual professionals). The *media* should of course be part of this system. Furthermore, large industries and corporations should develop small autonomous “universities”—as several firms in the West have done, although they are often too focused on applied research to consider public discussion.

Thus, this is a call for the abandonment of isolating narcissism and of a commercial approach to education. Anarchic “democratism” or the auto-education of students (echoing the “spirit of 1968”) is no longer an option, even if a certain democratization of the mode of operation of universities is absolutely necessary. The main task of the reform is to fight *anomie* and to rebuild

the spirit of free thought and of collective work. This is only possible if we combine autonomy with the public opening of universities.

If education in Russia continues to be subordinate to the logics of bureaucracy and commerce, it will continue to deteriorate and lead to a deepening of the current solidarity crisis, the loss of creative spirit and the widespread of repressive violence as the only means to “hold” society together. It goes without saying that *Russia is a global socio-political laboratory* where current trends and dangers are more visible than elsewhere, giving every scholar the time and place to start to think globally.

We are located in the semi-periphery with no direct access to global power, with a certain distance from it. We can thus develop, from this position, close knowledge of the frontiers of “globalization” that draw multiple divisions between the North and the South as well as within them. A universal point of view emerges between the masters of the world and its frontiers and learning to see globally from this perspective could become the basis for teaching in our universities.

Translation from French by Ana Villarreal

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[1] See Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire 17, L'envers de la psychanalyse* (P. : Seuil, 1991).

[2] This, we know, is Heidegger’s argument in his “Nazi” discourse of 1933 (Martin Heidegger, *L’auto-affirmation de l’Université allemande*, Paris : TER, 1982). Heidegger is right with regards to the autonomy and power of questioning, but he ignores the dialectic between theory and practice: the theoretical and contemplative position of the university limits the power of thought. Through enclosing herself, it becomes “ideological” in Marx and Engel’s original sense. Thought can only be a *laboratory, training* for practice.

[3] <http://www.newschoolinexile.com/>

[4] For a good analysis of education in Russia (a little outdated but still valid) see: Anna Smolentseva, « Challenges to the Russian Academic Profession », in *Higher Education*, # 45, 2003 : pp. 391-424.

[5] Alexei Penzin uses the “postcolonial” framework to write the following: “when we invite Russian scholars to colloquia in Europe or the United States, we often ask them to tell us their local histories as we are interested in anything that is uncommon or abnormal. Postcolonial theorists describe this position as “subaltern”, i.e. a subordinate and objectified position where individuals have a very limited repertoire of private enunciations on universalism.” A. Penzin, « Zateriannyi mir, ili o dekolonizatsii rossiiskikh obstchestvennykh nauk », *Ab Imperio*, #3, 2008, pp. 341-348.

[6] Mikhail Sokolov, “Reformiruem li sozfak MGU? Institucionalnye bariery na puti studencheskoy revoliuzii,” <http://www.polit.ru/analytics/2007/05/25/socfak.html> , visited 14.12.08

[7] For a similar argument, see a recent conference by Mikhail Sokolov, "Akademicheskie diszipliny kak politicheskie systemy: predislovie k sravnitel'nomu analizu", Malye Bannye Chteniya, Saint-Petersbourg, 31.10.2008.

[8] For further reference on this point see [www.streetuniver.narod.ru](http://www.streetuniver.narod.ru).

## **«Не университеты должны стать корпорациями, а корпорации – частично превратиться в университеты»**

*In Russia on April 20, 2010 at 2:16 am*

Артемий Магун, Европейского университета (Санкт-Петербург)

Университет как социальная структура существует со времен создания в средние века двух противоположных сил, которые, собственно, и определяют его сложную, двусмысленную роль.

Во-первых, университет с самого начала автономен от общества, в котором он находится. Вначале он выделился как сфера влияния церкви и Римского папы в трансформирующемся средневековом обществе, где светская жизнь, светская сфера приобретала все большее значение.

Университет Средних веков – это, фактически, монастырь, монастырь, существующий не на отшибе, а в центре городской жизни. Поэтому в самом начале он был автономен. Автономия эта была амбивалентна. С одной стороны, она подразумевала вседозволенность, и Папа даже выручал студентов, если они производили слишком большие разрушения в городе. Эта академическая свобода с самого начала, по идее, должна была обеспечивать смелость исследований, свободу мысли.

Но, с другой стороны, автономия университета – это всегда властная позиция, которая с самого начала заложила основу для появления того, что мы сегодня называем «свободно парящей интеллигенцией», которая обслуживает власть, действует в некоторой отстраненной, полусакральной зоне. И поэтому же, с третьей стороны, автономия – это всегда путь к консервации. Наука, которая преподавалась [в университетах], была подчеркнута условна, и уже в Средние века она была синонимом догматизма, который не принимал (по крайней мере, до XIX века) достижений новых наук.

Отсюда следует другое противоречие – между демократическими и авторитарными аспектами университета. Вообще, по логике своей, университет, как и школа в целом, должен быть авторитарным. Он даже более авторитарен, чем государство и общество. Особенно если взять наше современное, либерально-демократическое общество. Университет противопоставляет отношения воспитания, наставничества более эгалитарным гражданским отношениям. И поскольку государство Нового времени отказалось от прямого воспитания своих граждан, университет стал пространством для этого не совсем легитимного процесса, который несколько постыл и поэтому обставляется множеством ритуалов и ограничений.

Однако в то же время университет в Средние века был вольницей для имеющих особые права школяров, объединенных с профессорами и магистрами в университетскую корпорацию. Теоретические споры схоластов, обвинявших друг друга в ереси, вызывали бурные дискуссии студентов и преподавателей, давая и тем и другим пространство для



самоутверждения и в науке, и в политике. Фактически, университет был площадкой для появления совершенно нового типа субъекта.

Поскольку воспитательная функция общества явно представлена в университете, именно здесь бунт и самоопределение могут предстать наиболее явно. То есть именно здесь возможен бунт, поскольку здесь есть отношения подчинения. Наука порождает иерархию знаний, но она же дает субъекту критическое оружие. И поэтому в XIX – XX веках складывается парадоксальная ситуация, в которой государство поддерживает и насаждает рациональность, способную обратиться против его же структур, против его же системы власти.

Показателен здесь нынешний антиинтеллектуализм (особенно в англосаксонских странах), который рассматривает ученость – особенно философию и историю культуры – как неоправданную претензию на недемократический вождизм. На деле, здесь как раз под видом борьбы за демократию разрушается субъект, способный к принципиальной оппозиции режиму и к тому, чтобы насильственно взламывать у себя и у своих потенциальных учеников привычки и формы мысли и действия. Потому что простым убеждением и рациональной дискуссией они не взламываются. Для этого нужен авторитет.

Итак, университет всегда существует между этими полюсами. Его эволюционное развитие осложняется потребностью в автономии и верой в автономию интеллектуального труда. Его анархизм гасится рациональностью. Его идеологичный авторитаризм сочетается с оторванностью университета от властных институтов государства, ослабляется тем, что любой идеолог всегда представляет опасность для реальных практик, которые стоят у кормила власти.

Университет подчиняет человека существующей системе, как это хорошо в свое время показал Луи Альтюссер, но в то же время по самому типу своей двусмысленной причастности к власти это зона хрупкости системы и рассадник анархии. Поэтому исторически университет менялся вместе с современным обществом. Он всегда был зоной смещения сословий.

Когда в XIX веке в университет вошла новая наука, с одной стороны, и националистическая наука, с другой, он стал рассматриваться как двигатель социальной и интеллектуальной реформации, как создатель новой национальной интеллигенции, которая творит государственную идеологию и материальную мощь, не имея при этом прямой власти.

Университет стал в этот период центральным институтом современного государства. Идеология современного государства – это университетский дискурс. Но университет – это не только университетский дискурс. Это и анархическое студенчество, которое сыграло особую роль в революционном движении, особенно там, где это движение шло под просвещенческими, интеллигентскими лозунгами.

В середине XX века европейские и американские университеты радикально трансформировались, они становятся массовыми. Соответственно, меняются функции университета и меняется социальная обстановка внутри и вокруг него. Университет теперь не столько производит ученых или специалистов, сколько дает молодежи путевку в жизнь и обеспечивает социальную мобильность – правда, ценой задержки с выходом на рынок труда.

Традиционно эгалитарно-анархические настроения студенчества соединились здесь с падением престижа профессорского знания. В 1960-е университетский дискурс стал уходить из самих университетов. И этот процесс означал трансформацию для всего общества. По всему миру в этот период прокатываются студенческо-профессорские волнения, которые вовлекают в протестное движение другие социальные группы и атакуют под анархическими лозунгами этатистскую бюрократию и ее консервативную идеологию, провозглашаемую, правда, от имени просвещения.

Но университет амбивалентен, как мы видим: выступая против просвещения, он говорит от лица другого просвещения, от лица автономной интеллигентской структуры. Поэтому революция 1968 года не удалась. Студенты не смогли предложить по-настоящему альтернативной политической программы и последовательно бороться за нее, поскольку автономия университетов оставалась для них ценностью.

Тем не менее, в этот период произошла очень важная трансформация: эгалитарная, анархическая структура университета изменила семью, средства массовой информации, отношения на предприятиях и т.д. Возник даже так называемый новый дух капитализма. Но сами университеты в это время входят в кризисный период: эта массовая модель угрожает содержанию, знанию и авторитету преподавателей.

В США этот кризис был преодолен наиболее успешно. Но преодолен за счет прагматической переориентации университетского преподавания и превращения университетов в своего рода капиталистические фабрики. Критическая мысль вошла в университет, демократизировала его, но не поменяла общество в целом. И поэтому демократизация выразилась в разрушении и в подчинении свободной мысли, в исчезновении ее автономии.

Правда, в США трансформация была проведена очень умно и мягко, так что новое менеджериальное устройство университета не разрушило традиционные академические свободы. Деньги благотворительных организаций и вклады за образование со стороны студентов создали почву для развития научных исследований, подчиненных, правда, нейтральным и формальным стандартам качества, а также тому или иному социальному заказу.

В континентальной Европе последствия 1968 года были более радикальными, во многом из-за того, что ни один из противоборствующих принципов полностью не победил. Университеты остались государственными, причем поступление в них было максимально облегчено, в основных странах континентальной Европы оно даже стало бесплатным. Во

Франции отменили вступительные экзамены в университеты. Последствием этого шага стала дальнейшая потеря университетами статуса ведущих научных центров.

Усилился и до сих пор существовавший перевес в сторону *escole* – школ высшего образования, а университеты все больше превращались в массовые фабрики. При этом, правда, поколение студентов, профессоров 1968 года заняло ведущие позиции в некоторых университетах. Но интересно, что революция не ослабила, а во многом усилила консервативные тенденции в европейских университетах. Их автономия только усилилась, и они успешно сопротивлялись изменению лекционно-семинарской структуры преподавания и глобализации академической карьеры.

При этом, несмотря на свой массовый характер и функции социализации, которые они выполняют, университеты продолжают преподавать высокую академическую науку. Это, с одной стороны, поддерживает в обществе высокий уровень образованности, а с другой – создает безработицу в академической сфере. Под влиянием своих преподавателей студенты хотят продолжать заниматься наукой всерьез, но денег у государства на это нет, и мы имеем ситуацию, где конкурс на место преподавателя философии в лицее составляет 100 человек на место. А первую постоянную должность университетского преподавателя во Франции, в Германии и в других европейских странах человек занимает, в лучшем случае, только к 40 годам.

В результате, в 2000-е годы университеты континентальной Европы переживают масштабную трансформацию в сторону американской модели. И это новая революция. Если в 1960-х годах мы имели демократическую революцию, то сегодня происходит менеджериальная революция. И эта часть более масштабного наступления неolibеральной модели – точнее, менеджерской, бюрократической и авторитарной модели общества – на старую модель государства благоденствия, которое опиралось на демократическую публичную сферу.

Болонский процесс – основной двигатель этого менеджериального поворота – заключается в унификации высшего образования. И это хороший стимул к интеграции мировой культуры, хотя на практике он может вести к разрушению существующих научных школ и исторически укорененных интеллектуальных традиций. Однако одно из главных последствий Болонского процесса – это хозяйственная автономия университетов.

И вот эта хозяйственная автономия противоречит традиционной автономии университета как социального института. Она означает утрату автономии и переориентацию университета на общественный запрос, как правило, коммерческого толка. То есть это изменение, затрагивающее сам принцип университета, который действует еще со времени его основания.

Это изменение во многом понятно и оправдано, его цель – уменьшить разрыв между интеллектуальным и материальным трудом, особенно в обществе, где, собственно, производительный труд становится все более интеллектуально емким. Но при сохранении существующих общественных отношений потеря университетами автономии не ведет к какому-либо переустройству бизнеса. Бизнес не становится более свободным и

интеллектуально автономным от того, что интеллектуальный труд и автономия уходят из университетов. Напротив, интеллектуальный труд в реальной экономике стандартизируется и подчиняется интересам извлечения прибыли.

Поэтому подчинение университета бизнесу и бизнес-модели будет означать потерю обществом в лице университета автономии как таковой. В этой модели студенты будут вынуждены брать кредит на образование и постоянно думать о материальной отдаче от получаемого образования. Это означает дальнейшее падение престижа профессоров, перевес прикладных дисциплин и рост духа социального заказа в науке.

Поэтому по всей континентальной Европе идут забастовки профессоров и студентов, направленные против этой политики, против сокращения гуманитарных наук, урезания государственного финансирования и против введения платы за обучение в магистратуре. Тем не менее, неолиберальная реформа медленно, но верно прокладывает себе путь, поскольку противники этой реформы пока занимают непродуктивную консервативную позицию.

Вот в этом контексте мы должны рассматривать российские университеты. Ситуация у нас во многом похожа на континентально-европейскую, но в отличие от нее, несет в себе в большей степени наследие университетов «домассового» типа, университетов XIX века. К этому добавляется полупериферийное положение России в современном мире.

Советский университет был идеологическим авторитарным проектом. Поэтому он и научная интеллигенция в целом играли в советском обществе центральную роль. В этой сфере сочетались догматический идеологизм, идущий от партии, и корпоративное сознание интеллигенции, которая использовала свои солидные властные позиции в университетах для того, чтобы противопоставить коммунистической идеологии консервативные ценности, высокую культуру и гуманистическую мораль.

Высшее образование было широко доступно, но настоящий массовый университет по образцу западного возник только после распада СССР – в 1990-е годы. Именно тогда количество студентов удвоилось. Возникли десятки и сотни негосударственных вузов, то есть случилось то, что на Западе уже произошло в 1960-е – 1970-е годы.

В результате, понижение качества образования и его прагматизация, связанная с переходом на массовую модель, совпали с отсутствием финансирования высшей школы и моральным банкротством советской гуманитарной и социальной науки перед лицом западной. При этом не произошло никакой реформы, связанной с качеством или хотя бы апдейтом существующих программ. Университет стал массовым и одновременно анархическим. Профессора и студенты оказались бесконтрольны.

Но это, к сожалению, привело лишь к потере интереса к учебе со стороны студентов, а, соответственно, и к массовой коррупции при поступлении в вузы. Университет свелся к функции карьерной отсрочки, к функции социализации и даже к функции передачи существующей интеллигентской культуры (но это интеллигентская культура в ее третьем разбавлении – это уже не высокая культура и не серьезная наука).

При этом российский университет, как и старый университет, остается зоной автономии, пригодной для деятельности творческих интеллектуалов, если такие находятся. Островки прогрессивного знания в России, конечно, существуют. Но связаны они исключительно с изучением России, которая востребована западными специалистами по России и, соответственно, вписана в глобальный контекст изучения России.

В остальном гуманитарные и социальные ученые в подавляющем большинстве случаев лишены и стимулов, и возможности конкурировать и на равных дискутировать с западными коллегами. Российские социальные науки растут из принципиально другого общества, опираясь на другие ценности. И общий консерватизм, и консервативный либерализм российской интеллигенции трудно переводим на леволиберальный, демократичный, политкорректный язык западных социальных наук.

Как и во всем мире, функция идеологии перешла от университетов к СМИ, а само ее содержание приобрело антиинтеллектуалистский флер. Поэтому, в принципе, существующая модель университета могла бы в России никого и не волновать – если бы не общее падение российской культуры, и если бы не усилия тех интеллектуалов и студентов, которые сохранили хоть какие-то критерии качества, во многом благодаря взаимодействию с западными учеными и институтами.

Поэтому в 2000-е годы возник разговор о реформе. И, конечно, путь реформы был очевиден – это была нелиберальная реформа болонского образца. То есть превращение университета в корпорацию, отработка административно-финансовых механизмов контроля. Реформа, которая привлекательна своей формальностью. Для нее не надо менять мировоззрение, кадры. Нужно просто усилить рабочую дисциплину, увеличить бумагооборот, ввести критерии оценки преподавателей, – и машина заработала!

Но что она будет изучать? Чему учить? Как она может заинтересовать западных коллег? Как она будет воспитывать молодежь? Это в реформе никого не волнует. Поэтому подобная менеджерская реформа, при всех ее преимуществах в ситуации российской консервативной инерции, – это лекарство, которое хуже, чем болезнь. Потому что такого рода формализация и бюрократизация исходят на самом деле из тех же предпосылок, что и консерватизм. А именно: из предпосылки оптимистического эгоизма каждого ученого, который способен что-либо делать, если мы вводим для него дисциплинирующие критерии.

Формальная реформа, проведенная в России, в лучшем случае зафиксирует существующий уровень исследований и сделает его нормативным. То есть, например, рецензенты будут упрекать людей, что они не сослались на последнюю книгу [декана социологического факультета МГУ Владимира] Добренькова. Мы здесь не получим никакой дополнительной ценности. При этом формальная реформа не отступится от общего принципа демпинга в отношении преподавательских зарплат. А это тоже очень важный фактор снижения качества образования.

За что в этой ситуации могут бороться студенты? Хорошо, когда есть очевидная интеллигентская солидарность против идеологического государства, как это было в

случае с атакой на «Европейский университет в Санкт-Петербурге». Однако тот раскол, который произошел после победы студенческого движения в борьбе за ЕУ, и нежелание студентов дальше участвовать в каких-то социальных студенческих движениях показали, что передовое российское студенчество, так же, как и советская интеллигенция в целом, готово бунтовать только в определенных рамках. Это студенчество идеализирует исторически сложившийся университет. Это студенчество довольно экспертной ролью, которое выпадает на его долю в современном обществе.

Однако проблема в том, что эксперт в социальных науках – это всегда идеолог, идеолог власти своей или чужой. Так что в России профессиональный, по-настоящему образованный социолог может быть только экспертом западного или западно-ориентированного бизнеса. А экспертом существующей российской власти будет социолог, выращенный Добренковым.

За какую реформу можно бороться? За демократию в университете? Но демократия, по большому счету, противоречит задачам университета. За качество образования? Это уже серьезнее. Но студенты не могут предложить критериев его оценки. За автономию университета и против неолиберальной реформы? Тогда мы защищаем существующее провинциальное болото.

На самом деле все эти критерии, особенно взятые вместе, очень важны. Но они будут иметь смысл только при некоей программе-максимум, которая была бы значима не только для России, но и носила бы универсальный характер. Программа эта может заключаться только в преодолении разделения интеллектуального и материального труда.

Соответственно, должна произойти интеграция университета в общество и экономику. Но такая интеграция, чтобы не университет становился корпорацией, а корпорация частично трансформировалась в университет. Корпорация должна постоянно посылать сотрудников для преподавания в университет, а университет посылать своих преподавателей в бизнес, на производство, чтобы вести семинары, учить коммуникативной, интеллектуальной компетенции, обсуждать политические и философские вопросы.

Иными словами: нынешний глобальный кризис университета должен быть преодолен за счет сближения университета и общества. Но повторяю: важно, чтобы не общество ставило перед университетом задачи и вопросы, а чтобы университет сохранил за собой право на выработку и постановку вопросов на основе тех вопросов, которые возникают у разных общественных структур.

Идея о том, что университет производит вопросы и тем самым должен претендовать на власть в обществе, принадлежит, как ни странно, Мартину Хайдеггеру. Высказал он ее в своей ректорской речи, в которой, в частности, выразил приверженность национал-социализму. Содержание там было именно таким: я, Хайдеггер, задаю обществу вопросы, именно я, а не Гитлер, являюсь его настоящим фюрером.

Это провокационная и много и заслуженно критикованная речь, однако идея была правильная. Идея в том, что ведет за собой вопрос, а не ответ. Однако важно понимать:

она предполагает, что задающий вопросы не может иметь политической власти. Иначе получается именно амбивалентная модель института, который не только обслуживает власть, но и протестует против нее. Хайдеггер не подумал, что должны быть люди, которые задают вопросы к вопросу. Поэтому мы сегодня должны быть внимательны к тем зонам, где в обществе есть вопросы, и артикуляция этих вопросов – не только дело профессоров, но и дело практического действия и протеста.

# **From Communism to Bologna: The Emerging Crisis of Hungarian Universities**

*In Hungary on May 27, 2010 at 9:33 pm*

By Eszter Bartha, Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, Budapest

Today's situation in Hungarian higher education displays the problems of transition from a model considered to be outdated by the European Union to a new structure. Just like the great political-economic transformation marked by the date of 1989 this transition is also ridden with political conflicts and diverging interests. In what follows an attempt will be made to outline the pre-1989 situation and the main reform concepts – along with an explanation of what has failed and why.

The root of many of the current problems lies in the pre-1989 structure of academic life in Hungary, which was modeled upon the Soviet concept of separating research from higher education. Thus, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was by no means a mere honorary institution but it was endowed with both symbolic and real capital to control Hungarian academic research. It maintained – and still maintains – several research institutes, which were considered to be more prestigious academically than teaching in higher education. Top academics could, of course, lecture at universities but the locus of real scholarly prestige was the Academy and not the universities.

After 1989 the Hungarian academic system faced two major challenges. The first one was a dramatic increase in the number of students. In 1990 Hungarian institutions of higher education had around 100,000 students; this reached 400,000 in 2003/2004, and after a peak in 2005/2006 of 424,000 it started to fall again, showing that the system had reached its internal limits.

The second problem, which concerned both the universities and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was the lack of resources to modernize the old infrastructure, reorganize education – adapted to the needs of the increased number of students – and develop new teaching materials and courses designed for students with varying knowledge, skills and abilities. This would have replaced the older elitist system, where admission depended on a very strict selection process.

Nonetheless, the rank of university increased in prestige because institutions of higher education received state support for every student enrolled, and the amount paid for a university student was higher than for a college student. No wonder that universities started to mushroom. Before the Second World War there were 6 universities in Hungary; between 1945 and 1990 27 new institutions of higher education were founded, whereas after 1989 37 new institutions received accreditation. This seemingly contradicts the earlier claim about a lack of resources. We have to qualify the claim: next to insufficient resources, the inadequate division of the existing resources also poses a big problem to the present Hungarian academic system.

In 1999 Hungary – together with 30 other countries – signed the Bologna Treaty on the introduction of the two-level university training system (BA and MA). In the old system an undergraduate degree course lasted for 5 years, and one could obtain a degree only after fulfilling



all the obligations required during this time. The new system elicited huge resistance in academic circles, and there was also a massive social mobilization against the reform of the higher education. Why? Apart from the fierce political struggle, which markedly characterized the last years in Hungary, the planned reform indeed had many elements, which not only violated many interests but also cast doubt on the benefits to Hungarian academic life.

Firstly, the new system decreased per capita state support for university students. In order to compensate the universities, tuition fees were introduced. (Students received a waiver based on their achievement and social situation). Nonetheless, this step met with the massive resistance of university students, and severely worsened the political climate for the then-ruling socialist-liberal government.

Secondly, the attempt to modernize universities and appoint a managing body to control finances (consisting of delegates of the Ministry of Education and delegates of the universities) met with strong resistance from universities – partly because of fears that the managing body would be used to reduce the number of academic and official staff currently employed in higher education. This fear was reinforced by the government's proposal to abolish university teachers' status as public employees (which guarantees protection from dismissal).

Thirdly, the government made it clear that they plan to transfer research to the universities, which would have meant the severe reduction of the (remaining) cultural capital of the Academy. There were plans to sell the valuable estates of the Academy – which, of course, elicited general outrage among academicians. It also left unclear what would happen to the people currently employed in the research institutions of the Academy (many of which were planned to be sold). Given the fact that there were rumors about massive lay-offs at Eötvös Loránd University, the most famous and renowned university in Hungary at the time of the reform, it is highly unlikely that the dismissed academic researchers would have – or could have – found new employment at the universities.

This helps us understand the apparent paradox: while the Hungarian academic system is in serious need of urgent reform, the planned reform that was put forward by the socialist-liberal coalition failed altogether. Since the Bologna-system was closely linked to the eventual nightmare that many anticipated – the selling of the academic institutions, the dismissal of researchers and university teachers and the destruction of what was left of the Hungarian Academy – one can understand why many teachers, who work in higher education, showed little enthusiasm for this program. The government's plan would have received more support if – instead of direct confrontation with all important actors: the academicians, who were regarded as senile old people, desperately clinging to their privileges; the teachers, who were threatened with the loss of their jobs; and the students, who were asked to pay – they had tried to explain the necessity for change and, even more importantly, had made concessions to at least some of the social actors. (Note, the tuition fee that was suggested by the government amounted to a monthly average wage for a year).

The story – so far – lacks a happy ending. The socialist-liberal coalition suffered a severe defeat in the election of 2010. Nonetheless, the problems continue to persist: the system of higher education has exhausted its internal reserves, the funding that the state can give to the

universities is insufficient, and the opposition – in its campaign – gave the firm promise not to introduce tuition fees.

The old question returns: how can one modernize Hungarian higher education when many departments struggle with basic financial difficulties? (There is no paper, or if a computer or a copying machine breaks down there is no money to repair it, and so on.) One path towards a solution might be to create a well-endowed category of research universities. The idea would be to give differentiated state support to the 70 institutions of higher education: those who obtain the proud title of “research university” would be entitled for more support. It, however, has to be noted that even within this proposal there is the hidden intention to reduce the role of the Academy – since research universities are distinguished by the fact that they conduct internationally recognized research

In any event the process will be painful. To make things worse, the present academic system still bears the characteristic traits of “actually existing socialism”: they are saving on the infrastructure but they are not saving on human resources. If an external managing body takes over universities, massive lay-offs can be expected. Should things come to that point, it would be highly undesirable were the past to repeat itself and political interests come to determine the (re)distribution of academic positions in Hungary.

# Iranian Paradox – The Inverted Relation of University and Society

*In Iran on May 26, 2010 at 7:14 am*

By Azam Khatam, York University, Toronto

Iranian social science is experiencing a new wave of ideological assault following the demonstrations against the result of the June 2009 presidential election, which turned into a widespread and continuing movement for freedom. Social Science universities have been accused of being Westoxicated, that is, provoking skepticism and brainwashing students with social and political theories formulated in western academies. In one of the show trials, an important reformist confessed that he had been perverted by these theories and his theoretical mistakes had misguided his party's agenda for change.[1] Still, it is doubtful that there is much truth in the charge that the social sciences had a serious impact on the movement for restructuring the political scene. As I will argue, the university is, indeed, involved in the current political transformation, but, given the ideological harassment it has faced since the 1980s Cultural Revolution[2], social science and its scientific community are at the margin of this movement.

Different fractions of Islamic Republic have adopted, more or less, developmental approach toward the production of knowledge,[3] encouraging the expansion of technical and scientific universities, research centers as well as overt and covert scientific exchange with the outside world.[4] At the same time social science academy has been under considerable pressure to Islamicize educational materials, to purge “unacceptable” professors and to request the stamp of approval; from religious authorities for its very existence. The result has been a weak academy, which the government rarely consulted to do research or make policy recommendations, at least until the late nineties. The irony is that the total number of university students as well as the number of social science students increased dramatically after the revolution. Indeed, while the population of the country has doubled in thirty years, the population of university students has increased 17-fold (from 160 thousand in 1978 to 2.8 million in 2007) and the number of humanities and social science students has increased 25-fold (from 52 thousand to 1.3 million).

The huge expansion of universities over the last three decades was not only the result of the developmentalist approach adopted by new Islamic technocrats, but was also due to the political meaning given to the expansion of higher education – to achieve social justice through a more balanced geographic distribution of cultural capital — in the period of reconstruction after the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). Social science faculties played an important role in such distributive educational justice, as they need less logistical support or expensive technologies to be established in small cities and even in remote areas. The expansion of higher education has provided the main opportunity for social mobility for the urban population, especially with the retreat of the pro-poor politics of the eighties. Universities produced the middle class labor force and stimulated middle class aspirations for social and individual freedom by providing an arena for encountering different life styles, beliefs and political attitudes.[5]

Social science universities experienced a limited liberalization as the consequence of the decentralized structure of the expanding academy as Islamic reformers took power in 1997-2003. But these universities remained at the margin of the networks that produced critical social knowledge through formal and informal gatherings around small political groups, different journals and periodicals, research groups and NGOs, online magazines. This rudimentary public sphere was the basis of circles of intellectuals and scholars who became active in social movements. Actually the purging of social scientists who were deemed non-Islamic during the Cultural Revolution was less important than the ideological inquisition which became part of everyday life in the academy. Since the mid-nineties universities witnessed signs of cultural and political liberalization for a decade, but, still, they were never free from ideological and political pressures. As most of the social science graduates, except for economists, couldn't find jobs in related fields, their participation in building the community of scholars has been limited, while, at the same time, scientific associations have faced difficulties in supporting the intellectual and institutional independence of their members.

In the final analysis, social movements and informal networks outside the university have been the crucible of important developments in social science. We may even say that civil society and its movements have promoted social science more effectively than the academy itself. We can only hope that in the future there will be a more balanced relation between society and the academy..

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[2] Farastkhah, Maghsoud, "The difficult situation of having universities." Interview with *Etemaad* newspaper (2009) Accessible through <http://www.etemaad.ir/Released/88-07-04/175.htm>

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# **Governance and Politics: A Comparison of Universities in Egypt**

*In Egypt on May 18, 2010 at 1:47 pm*

By Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyid, Cairo University

Cairo University and the American University in Cairo are quite opposites in many respects, but the national environment surrounding them casts its shadows over both, making them share certain features in common. One is a national Egyptian public university, initially established through a voluntary non-governmental effort as part of a grand enterprise of national renaissance. The other is an American institution established decades later, partly to diffuse American values in the Middle East.

At present, Cairo University is a much larger organization, claiming three other campuses, two of which are in Egypt and the third one in Sudan, and sports no less than twenty faculties and five graduate institutes and over 187000 students, whereas the American University has no more than five schools and seven research centers and a student body of 5550, or 2.9% of the student body at Cairo University. While the faculty of Cairo University numbers 6822 university teachers, and 3967 teaching assistants the AUC claims only 384 full time teachers and 426 part timers, university assistants excluded. Cairo University offers education in a large number of fields, from Arabic language to medicine, agriculture and nuclear physics, while the American University in Cairo is largely a liberal arts institution, limiting its education mostly to social science, humanities, and business administration with only a small number of students specializing in science or engineering.

The two universities encourage their respective faculties to engage in research through their research centers. AUC has nine research centers, but only three of them are known to carry out serious research projects. Cairo University claims more than 150 research centers– fourteen are university wide entities while 134 centers are affiliated to specific faculties. Apart from the few university-wide research centers, shortage of administrative and financial resources limits the capacity of faculty-based research centers to carry out serious research projects. At present, the two universities are working on ambitious future projects. This includes a Ph.D. program in science and engineering at the AUC, and adding a large new campus in the satellite October City in the case of Cairo University.

Despite these differences, Egyptian society and political system impact the AUC in important respects. Those who are familiar with it find it less American and more Egyptian in character. This could be seen in the constraints under which the two institutions labor. But to understand such impact of the environment, it is important first to compare the administrative structure of the two universities, and examine how they are governed.

## **Two Models of Administration**

Cairo University, since its establishment as a private university in 1908, and even after its transformation into a public university in 1925, has been modeled on French universities, being

divided into separate faculties, initially four in number expanding to twenty three later. The American University in Cairo, on the other hand adopted, naturally, the model of US universities being divided until recently into departments each composed of several units. However, the departments were integrated in five schools few years ago, with a logic not always easy to discern. The schools of Humanities and Social Science, Sciences and Engineering, and English and Arabic Programs brought together disciplines that are close to each other but a fourth school installed Communications and Mass Media under the same roof with departments of Economics, Accounting and Business Administration!! The newly-established Global Affairs and Public Policy School could not separate more than three departments from the older schools, namely Mass Communication, Public Administration and Business, despite ambitions of its founding dean to persuade other departments, particularly Political Science and Economics to join.

The highest authority in each university is its governing council , called at the American University the Board of Trustees, and at CU simply the University Council. There is an important difference between these two bodies. The Board of Trustees of the AUC is composed largely of non-academics, usually thirty five members most of them are US citizens including a good number of business people and former officials of the US government, whereas the University Council at CU is composed almost exclusively of academics, deans of faculties, the President of the University and his three vice- presidents and four other members, chosen from public figures with an educational background. These latter are usually former university professors who had joined the cabinet or had assumed other senior posts in the government.

Another difference between the two relates to the degree of autonomy each has in running its own affairs. The Board of Trustees of the AUC is subject to no external authority whereas Cairo University, being a public university, is a member of the Supreme Council of Universities headed by the Minister of Higher Education. The Council is composed of all presidents of public universities, five members with expertise on questions of higher education and public affairs in addition to the Secretary General of the Supreme Council Whatever the Supreme Council of Universities decides becomes binding to all public universities. Meetings of the Council are chaired by the Minister of Higher Education or the most senior university president in his absence. The most important function of the Council, according to the Law on Organization of Universities is to draw up the general policy on higher education and scientific research and to direct it in a way that corresponds to the country's needs, and facilitate accomplishment of the national, social, educational and scientific objectives. Another function is to coordinate systems of study, examination and scientific degrees in universities. A third function is to formulate rules and determine numbers of new students to be admitted to each university. This latter function often gives rise to heated debate between the Minister of Higher Education and Presidents of universities. The Minister, careful not to antagonize public opinion, would like universities to admit a larger number of students. University presidents, on the other hand, are concerned that quality of education may suffer when the number of students far exceeds the capacity of their universities in terms of size and number of classrooms, professors and laboratories. Views of the Minister usually prevail in meetings of the Supreme Council of Universities.

At the top of each university there is a President, assisted by a number of Vice-Presidents. The number of those Vice-Presidents is no less than three for Cairo University. Their areas of competence vary. Those of Cairo University are in charge of student affairs, graduate studies and

research, and community and environment affairs. At the American University while one of the Vice-Presidents is in charge of student affairs, the three others have functions different from those of Cairo University, one is the provost, another is in charge of development and a third one looks after finance and administration. Being a foreign university in Egypt, only one of the four Vice-Presidents is Egyptian, who is in charge of student affairs. Within the senior administration of the university another Egyptian acts as a Counselor. The top leadership of Cairo University is all Egyptian at present, although there was a time in its early years when its top leadership had a number of foreign professors.

In all large institutions, a middle level management is required, and this is constituted in the two universities by Heads of Departments and Deans of Faculties. At Cairo University, each dean is assisted by three Vice-Deans, those in charge of student affairs, graduate studies and research, and environment and community affairs. The AUC, being a smaller institution, its statutes do not provide for any posts of Vice-Deans. As the two universities are divided into faculties, and each faculty in turn is divided into departments, Deans are assisted in the running of the faculties by Heads of Departments.

The two universities share one feature in the internal management of department and faculties. These should be self-managed units. Their affairs are decided by their members. Departmental meetings run the major business of the department, leaving the Head of the Department with the responsibility for taking care of daily management. The size again dictates differences in the composition of departmental councils. At Cairo University, all full and associate professors are members of their departmental councils. Assistant professors are represented by no more than five of them, chosen on a rotation basis every academic year. Departmental meetings of AUC are open to all full-time faculty members. Faculty Councils are more limited in membership in both universities. Their meetings are attended by Heads of Departments and at Cairo University who are joined by a select number of professors chosen on a rotation basis including one associate professor in addition to the Dean and the Vice-Deans.

The two universities do not limit their mission to education but consider research to be an important part of their activities. However, while the AUC has seven research centers, the most active being one for desert research and a second for social research, Cairo University claims a large number of research centers covering diverse fields ranging from cancer and laser research to development and future studies. Ten research centers are subordinated directly to the president of CU while 131 are faculty research centers. Faculties of medicine, agriculture and engineering claim the largest number of these centers. Among social science and humanities faculties, the Faculty of Economics and Political Science has the largest number of research centers.

Research centers at the two universities enjoy a large degree of autonomy. Each center is headed by a director, who is its chief executive officer. The policy-making body is the board of administration of the Center made up of academics and non-academics with a relevant background chosen usually from among senior officials of the government, businesspeople and public figures.

Each university has devised specific mechanisms for the airing of grievances of its faculty and offering them a chance to express their views on how the university should be run. In the case of

Cairo University, all faculty are members of a university professors club, run by an elected board. The club undertakes a host of activities of a trade union character. At the American University, there is no such arrangement but monthly meetings of the University Senate allow its faculty to make their views known to the administration. Elections of Cairo University Professors Club used to be free and open until the Ministry of Solidarity, in charge of the legality of activities of all NGO's in the country claimed that the council elections were invalid and called for new elections in which all members of the dissolved council were barred from running. The government did not like the dissolved council because it was dominated by professors belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood, an officially banned organization.

Finally, students at the two universities have their own organizations and elected representatives. A liberal presidential decree 1976 was amended in 1979 in a way that changed the composition of the student body in Egyptian public universities, making a university professor a "patron" for each committee in the student union, and giving the majority in the leading organs of student bodies, at both faculty and university levels, to university professors and other university officials in their capacity as supervisors of student activities. American University students have no faculty members sitting in meetings of their elected council. They have however to seek guidance from an adviser, who is the Dean of Students.

Cairo University, however, has a unique institution which has no equivalent at the AUC. In terms of the University bylaw, each department holds a scientific conference every year to examine its scientific plan and to suggest possible amendments in the curricula. This annual scientific conference is open to all the faculty of the department including assistant professors, teaching assistants as well as representatives of students.

### **The Question of Governance[1]**

It might be difficult, or even unnecessary to examine all aspects of the internal governance in the two institutions, but an analysis of a number of the most telling issues would suffice to highlight the distinctive features of each. The four issues are participation in governance, appointment of academic staff particularly Heads of Departments, Deans of Faculties and Presidents of Universities, decision-making about the curriculum, and academic freedom.

Universities resemble armies and bureaucracies in one respect, all are hierarchical institutions with rights and duties being dependent on the rank one holds in the institution. Thus, such rights and duties at each university depend very much on the rank one holds, whether one is an ordinary member of a department, Departmental Head or Dean etc. While the American University opens departmental meetings to all departmental members, Cairo University admits only a select group of assistant professors. The American University on the other hand excludes part time faculty from such meetings even though the latter constitute a large number of the teaching staff, almost three quarters of the full time faculty. Even among the full time faculty, not all of them are tenured. Crucial decisions in departmental meetings are taken in effect by the tenured faculty, even in the face of opposition from untenured faculty. Top officials at the American University are mostly Americans. Thus, the hierarchy of privilege at the University goes down from tenured foreign faculty at the top, followed by tenured Egyptians, non-tenured faculty members with part time faculty at the bottom. This hierarchy is felt in pay, fringe benefits



and even entertainment expenses as well medical insurance offered by the university. No such discrimination is to be found at Cairo University which does not appoint foreign faculty nor part timers. It is only the rank and position which determine rights and duties therein.

The most important post in each of the two universities is that of its President, at least in terms of the daily management of its business. The contrast between the two is greatest when it comes to the method of selection of this official. At Cairo University he is appointed by the President of the Republic in Egypt. The Minister of Higher Education submits to the President of the Republic his candidate or candidates for the post. The President is not necessarily bound by the recommendation of the Minister. Other powerful personalities of the regime could also have their say. Many of them are former professors who could have occupied senior posts in university administration. They would be interested in choosing for the post of President of Egypt's largest and oldest modern university a person who shares their views, or better still, who is one of their "protégés." In this way they enhance their share of the distribution of power in an authoritarian regime. It does not seem that any university organ is ever consulted about this choice, not the Cairo University Council, nor the Supreme Council of Universities.

At the American University, on the other hand, when the post of its President becomes vacant for one reason or another, the vacant post is announced in newspapers. A search committee including some university professors and members of the Board of Trustees would examine documents presented by interested candidates in order to produce a short list. Those who are short listed would be invited to visit the university, meet faculty members as well as its administration. Views of the faculty would be communicated to the Board of Trustees who finally takes the decision.

Those who are chosen to be Presidents of Cairo University were all university professors. The current practice is to choose one of the university Vice-Presidents to be the future President. It is difficult to know the criteria for choosing a President at an Egyptian university. Bureaucratic seniority is definitely a major criterion. For this reason, most Presidents were former Deans who were promoted to the rank of university Vice-President. Political loyalty is definitely an important consideration, but it is not enough since a large number of aspiring professors are willing to show their unreserved support for all government policies. Political connections with top leaders of the country can be a decisive factor. Professor Hossam Kamel, the President of Cairo University since 2008, was never a faculty Dean, but he is the brother of the Minister of Communications, who is very close to the Prime Minister. He is also a member of the Supreme Council of Policies within the ruling National Democratic Party, headed by Gamal Mubarak, the son of the country's President. He is Cairo University's twenty fourth President since it became a public university in 1925.

At the American University, on the other hand, being a private university, the Board of Trustees has favored recently people with a good background in fund raising. Thus, the late John Gerhard who passed away in 2003 did serve in the Ford Foundation in Cairo and in Johannesburg. His successor David D. Arnold, who became the tenth President of AUC, has served as Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer of the New York-based Institute of International Education and had worked as well for the Ford Foundation serving at one time as its resident representative in India. One of his functions in his former post as director of the IIE was fund

raising. The importance of fund raising has increased in recent years. Former Presidents of AUC included diplomats and distinguished Orientalists.

Below the level of President and his Vice-Presidents who are chosen by the President of the University, management of faculties is left to their deans. In this respect the two universities have one feature in common, namely the appointment of the Deans by the President of each university. However, the division of the American University into faculties is a recent development, and the second layer of university leaders below the all-university level were Heads of Departments. The Law of the Organization of Universities of 1972 (LOU) gave Egyptian professors the right to elect the Dean of their Faculty. Names of the three front runners in such election would be sent to the President of the University who would usually appoint the candidate who got the highest number of votes. This continued to be the case in all faculties which had no less than ten full professors until 1994 when Dr. Hussein Kamel Baha' El-Din, who was then Minister of Education and Higher Education, and a former professor at the Faculty of Medicine, decided that elections of Deans gave rise to much infighting among professors. He got one of his followers, a member of the People's Assembly who happened to be a senior official at the Ministry of Education, to amend the Law 143 related to election of deans. Thus, University Presidents, since May 1994, have the privilege of appointing Deans of faculties. The Minister claimed that Deans are also appointed by Presidents of their universities in the UK and USA. He did not mention that they are elected by all the faculty and students in Italy, Spain and France. He failed also to recall that appointments of Presidents and Deans in the USA and UK are decided within the university community and involve much consultation with the faculty and are not a privilege of any government official.

Heads of Departments are elected by full time members of their departments at the American University in Cairo. They are appointed by the Dean at Cairo University. The impact of the change of the method of electing the Dean was soon felt at Cairo University. Under the old system, Deans used to be responsive to demands and suggestions of their faculty. Under the new system, their sole concern is to demonstrate loyalty to the University's President, even if this runs counter to the legitimate wishes of their colleagues.

The top-down method of administration of university affairs is not always the rule at Cairo University and definitely not at AUC. All matters related to the curriculum, organization of teaching and administration of examinations are left to departments and faculties. Each department is almost sovereign in terms of decisions concerning such matters. The appointment of new faculty is initiated by the department which decides on the candidate in its meetings, and then the matter is referred to faculty council for approval. This decision would be finally sent to the University Council through its appropriate committee for ratification. The question of curriculum reform has taken much of the time of Cairo University professors and of certain departments at the AUC in recent years. Conferences were held on this matter at Cairo University in 1999, and then later at the level of all national public universities in 2000.

As the organization of the two universities combines elements of internal democracy and administrative authority, relations between the university administration and collective organizations of professors and students are not free from conflict. Since 1984, the Club of Cairo University Professors has been very often at odds with the university administration. In that year

the list for the Club submitted by the President of the university, with the president himself at the top, was defeated in the Club's election in favor of a coalition of leftist and Nasserite professors. The election was a political one, since the late professor Hassan Hamdy who was then the 15th President of the University was very close to the ruling National Democratic Party. Several of the professors who won had been among those professors who had been transferred from the university to administrative posts in the famous September 1981 Decrees of the late President Anwar Al-Sadat, and were later reinstated in their university jobs by President Mubarak[2]. Relations between the university administration and the Club became hostile, with the government siding with the university administration. State security agents used to watch carefully activities of the Club, considered by them to be a stronghold of opposition.

Two years later, elections of the Club were won by Islamist professors, and relations between the two sides deteriorated even further, with the university administration becoming reluctant to support any initiative taken by the Club. Matters came to a head in late 2009 when the Ministry of Solidarity in charge of monitoring affairs of NGOs, the Club being legally one of these NGO's, ruled, on doubtful grounds, that elections to the Club's Council were invalid. Against the opposition of the Club's Council as well as many professors who do not share the Islamist views of the Club's Council, the Ministry decided to call new elections in late December 2009. A few days before the elections, all members of the outgoing Council were disqualified from running. A rival so-called Independents List, but dominated by members of the ruling NDP, had no difficulty in winning unopposed. In this way, the Club came under the control of government supporters, for the first time since the historic election of 1984.

The two-and-a-half decades of free elections at the Cairo University Professors' Club contrasted with the situation in other Egyptian public universities.. At the University of Assuit in Upper Egypt, the conflict ended with the President of the Club being arrested, tried and imprisoned for a few years as punishment for his political activism.[3] Relations between the university professors' clubs and national university administrations continue to mirror tense relations between the government and the Islamist movement. The Muslim Brothers are politically skillful. They usually manage to easily win elections in the country, whether national legislative elections or elections to professional syndicates and associations. They are in fact much more successful in elections to bodies whose members belong to the educated middle class. University professors in Egypt belong to this frustrated and rebellious class.

The government has been less tolerant of student activities in national universities. Professors may sympathize with the Muslim Brotherhood, careful to adopt peaceful methods in its activities. Students, particularly in Upper Egypt as well as Cairo University, tend to side more with the militant Islamist groups which had taken up arms against the government. The liberal 1976 University by-law allowed free elections for student unions, and offered such unions a large degree of autonomy in organizing extra-curricular activities. The student movement, which had been earlier dominated by Nasserite and Leftist students in the early 1970's, fell gradually, with government complicity, under Islamist leadership. This development was initially welcomed by Sadat's government which was not happy with the influence Leftists and Nasserites had among students. Following President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, student unions in many Egyptian universities, including Cairo University, denounced his new overture towards Israel. The liberal student by-law was amended in 1979 to bring student

organizations firmly under their professors' control. Elections for the student body were usually marred by many irregularities, including banning students known to be politically active from running for any post.

Professors and students at the American University in Cairo are much less politicized. The scene there is, therefore, very different from that at Cairo University. Clashes do erupt from time to time between AUC professors and their administration. Differences over professors' pensions led to the early resignation of Professor Donald McDonald, the eighth President of the AUC. Students sometimes clashed with the university administration over the demand to organize demonstrations at the university, usually to protest Israeli and US policies in the region. The administration often shares students' feelings, but it is concerned lest their protest lead to ugly confrontations with heavily armed Egyptian riot police, when it moves beyond the university gates.

In recent years, both professors and students have organized protest meetings and marches on university grounds. At AUC protesting students were rarely punished for these activities, but students in Egyptian universities, including at Cairo University could be arrested outside the university or even punished by university administrations. In late April 2010, Cairo University professors organized a protest demonstration in front of offices of the Minister of Higher Education in solidarity with persecuted students.

### **The Question of Academic Freedom**

Academic freedoms, even when they are fully enjoyed, do not go without duties and responsibilities on the part of university professors and administration. The two universities have formal mechanisms to enforce rules of academic honesty and good conduct on members of their faculties. Such mechanisms were rarely used in the two universities. In Cairo University, there have been very few cases when such mechanisms were used against professors who violated an informal code of conduct for academic staff, particularly when their "good reputation" was questioned. However, AUC finds itself in a stronger position as it can deny aspiring professors tenure or renewal of their contract. At Cairo University, a university assistant who gets his Ph.D. is automatically appointed as an Assistant Professor. Such promotion guarantees a lifelong appointment. She or he could continue to teach until beyond retirement age. It is very rare in the two universities that professors are sanctioned for the quality of their teaching, although rules of promotion have been stiffened at Cairo University to ensure that promotion to ranks of Associate and Full Professors is dependent on engagement in research of an acceptable quality. The low pay of Egyptian university professors have led some to seek to improve their income in ways that might be seen to compromise the seriousness and honesty expected from an academic. Such professors, always a minority do their best to "market" their textbooks among the largest number possible of students, making such books the required and only reading for their students. This "option" is not available to the majority of professors who teach a small number of students in their areas of specialization, which might be Latin, Coptic Studies, or even Political Science or Mathematics. The university has no way of controlling this kind of conduct.

The two universities do pay the price of conflicting trends in Egyptian politics. Cairo University Professors Club was dissolved by Gamal Abdel-Nasser in March 1954 as it sided with President

Naguib in the famous clash in February–March 1954 over the future of the July 1952 revolution. The Club sided with what seemed to be a liberal stand by Naguib, who was then supported by political parties of the old regime. Several professors of Cairo University lost their jobs, particularly in the 1950's, because of their political views. In his clash with several opposition groups in September 1981 President Sadat removed over 60 of those professors, including many from Cairo University. Under President Mubarak, several professors belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood have been arrested, put on trial, and condemned to years in prison. Cairo University administration did not, or could not, show much sympathy towards these persecuted professors. The American University was put under government administration from 1967 till 1974 because of the tense relations between Egypt and the US due to US open support for Israel.

In the 1990's, the mounting influence of the Islamist trend in Egypt, and the government's interpretation of Islam, definitely caused a certain restriction on academic freedom in the two universities. Any views or writings that could be seen incompatible with a conservative interpretation of Islam would cost those who advocate them dearly.

Nasr Hamed Abou Zeid, the Cairo University professor, had his promotion to Full Professor delayed because his promotion committee could not come to a favorable decision. Only when the composition of the committee was changed did he win his promotion. What is deplorable, however, is that the university that promoted him to Full Professor, at the same time withdrew all his books from the University Library. Conservative Islamists launched a character assassination campaign against him, culminating in the strange decision by a Court of First Instance, supported later by both the Court of Appeals and that of Cassation, to forcefully separate him from his wife, herself a university professor. These developments led him to leave the country for a voluntary exile in the Netherlands. All this had an intimidating effect on professors who share his views.

At the American University, Maxime Rhodinson's book on Mohammed and Mohammed Shukri's novel, dealing with the underworld of Morocco, entitled *The Plain Bread* were also dropped from Sociology and Literature courses because of protests from conservative parents supported by the President of the Republic and the Minister of Higher Education. Didier Moncier, the French instructor who had included Rhodinson's book in a list of readings for his students could not get renewal of his part time contract with the American University and he had to leave the country. Dr. Samia Mehrez, the professor of literature who included Shukri's novel in her course was summoned to the office of the President of AUC from the classroom where she was teaching to be told that the book should be dropped from her course. Protestations of AUC faculty in the last case were completely in vain. Some books were also removed from the AUC Library because a "censor" did not approve their use in teaching. The books related to contemporary Egyptian politics. The two universities did not demonstrate much courage in the face of such assaults on academic freedom. They simply adjusted to some of the negative features of the country's politics, instead of defending their role as bastions of freedom of thought.

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[1] Part of this section is based on personal observations of the author who taught at the two universities and was quite active in university politics in the two of them.

[2] President Sadat was angry with people who had opposed several of his domestic and foreign policies..On September 5, 1981 he ordered the transfer of tens of professors and journalists from their jobs in universities and the press to administrative posts and arrested over 1500 persons of all political inclinations and religious beliefs. He was assassinated by a militant Islamist soldiers on October 6, 1981.

[3] Professor Mohammed Habib, former President of Assuit University Professors Club became The Vice-General Guide of Muslim Brothers for roughly 5 years-2005-2010.

# Greek Universities in Permanent Crisis

*In Greece on May 9, 2010 at 10:32 pm*

By Sokratis Koniordos, University of Crete

In Greece there are currently 23 state universities offering degree and post-graduate courses, and specializations in a large gamut of subjects. At the same time the country “boasts” world (per capita) levels of student migration, most of which is directed towards EU countries; primarily the UK. The opening up and multiplication of the universities, in common with the many counties that adopted the human capital logic of OECD sponsored socio-economic development, has been a gradual process that has intensified since the early 1960s, but particularly in the 1970s and after. The opening up of the universities has often been seen as a response to popular demand for education, which in Greece drew on memories (invented or real) of ancient splendor, more recent experiences of survival and upward mobility in adverse times (e.g. the Phanariots), the forging of the Greek nation, or the authority that scientific status bestowed to its holders. These have been fused with people’s imagery that considered and considers university-level education as an all-important path towards non-manual work, itself considered an anathema, and social elevation.

The financing of this growth has been achieved by partly drawing from the state budget, but also from foreign, mostly EU funding. Indeed, there is no university in Greece which does not display the mandatory boards that mention the EU’s role in constructing buildings, equipping them with virtually all necessities, and paying for salaries too, albeit for a limited and set period. Indeed, many departments, faculties and universities could only be established with a 75% EU contribution on top of a 25% national contribution. Among the beneficiaries one should not fail to include the country’s three departments of sociology!

In general, one must note that university expansion has meant the creation of inexpensive departments to meet the high demand for higher education. In this way the political class met the demand of its voter-clients and the crisis encountered by taking in EU money. In a sense the crisis has been contained, but not actually resolved as we saw when further financing of universities had to draw on national funding sources. Thus, contract teaching staff in universities continually receive their meager salaries six or more months after they start working. In between they survive on subsidies from families even though they are often over 30 years of age, which does real wonders for their morale. New appointments, then, are delayed by at least two years due to the unavailability of resources. In addition, university teachers’ salaries have been frozen for about six years now. Another example of the consequences of the under-financing of higher education is the failure, for more than a year now (despite announcements that “the problem has been resolved”), to pay electronic journal subscription with the result that access to them has been blocked, which is not very good for research or even teaching.

The university entry examination system, as it has developed over the years, has been particularly hard on students who have to pass very competitive entry examinations. This is especially true in the highly rated medical and engineering departments and schools, in which the entrance mark is often set at 18 or 19 points out of 20. No doubt, those that enter Greek

universities are good and even very good students, but the entrance system leaves out many talented youths. What happens after four, five or more years of study is another matter.

In actual practice, once one is admitted, it is hard not to obtain a degree in a Greek university. Students have the mandatory right to take examinations a number of times so as to make sure they pass a course – at the end of the semester in which it has been taught and again in the September examination period. Thereafter, in the case of some courses, they have the right to be examined in a third examination period. The possibility of repeating the same examinations goes hand in glove with the widespread practice of allowing students to take an inordinate large number of courses per semester, particularly so in the last year of studies. The end result is that students who register for two and sometimes three overlapping courses cannot attend them. As class attendance is not obligatory, the whole system cannot but find refuge in repeating examinations as the major assessment tool. This is also the result of a curriculum that is restricted to what may be included in one or two textbooks (often dated) and to student class participation which, by definition, is impossible to monitor – especially in classes in which the material is delivered in lecture-form to large audiences.

The situation is further exacerbated by vociferous calls by some left-wing student groups to resist work “intensification”, a euphemism for resisting studying “a lot”! The dominant more middle-of-the-road student groups, which are open front organizations of the major political parties, add their voices, less vociferously it is true, by using their block vote in the elections of department chairs, deans and rectors as bargaining chip. In fact, under the current system of elections, students command an exceptionally high percentage of votes in university bodies –up to 40%, and, as already indicated, it is most usually a block-vote. This means that student political organizations play a key role in who is elected to these posts and heavily influence the policies that are pursued, e.g. repeat examinations, the largely non-compulsory attendance in classes, the number of courses students are allowed to take per semester, who enters post-graduate studies, among other issues.

Then, the officially unrecognized – because then something would have to be done and this would blow the whistle on the quality of indigenous universities and, by implication, those associated with them – yet widespread cheating practices, only further discredits university education. Hence, by graduation the most able students have become aspiring public sector employees of indifferent conscience, on the lookout for the most advantageous, and definitely politically connected, opportunities to settle into the various state bureaucracies.

The current economic crisis has brought about another heavy blow against the universities, exacerbating their already problematic situation. As part of the deal reached with the EU and the International Monetary Fund for the country’s bail out, the effective direct cuts in salaries for university teachers will be in the region of 23-25%. To this, one must add the reduction in the purchasing power of salaries due to a 4% increase in VAT that affects items of mass consumption so that the real salary reduction will be more like 30%. But, this last crisis might have positive outcomes but only if it would lead to a solution to the financial deficits (much doubted, say by Paul Krugman); only if it would release people from their breast-feeding and dependence on clientelism and partyocracy (but to become mature one must also want it); only if it would awaken intellectuals to assume their critical role (possible, but that would require an



improbable cultural revolution ); only if it would lead to a socially planned shift from the dominance of neoliberal markets, for which the economists are largely responsible (as David MacKenzie has demonstrated), and which politicians find irresistible (as Michel Mann has shown), coupled with a shift towards some measure of social justice. In the meantime, since these and other “ifs” are difficult to realize, we may expect that various “neutralization” mechanisms will unleash small-scale and low-level corruption, but they will be justified as a response and even a defense against high-level and large-scale corruption (as Mark Granovetter has indicated) that has brought Greece to its knees. Such social processes may also embrace the universities. An upsurge of amoral familism (studied by Edward Banfield and considered to fit the social situation not only in Sicily, but in Greece and other areas too) unfortunately seems to be a most likely possibility given the loss of confidence in alternatives.

# The Death of Philosophy in the Neoliberal world

*In United Kingdom on May 4, 2010 at 8:21 pm*

By Sarah Amsler, Aston University

Nowhere have the battle lines of neoliberal power in education been drawn more clearly than in Middlesex University's recent decision to close its renowned department of Philosophy. It is home to Radical Philosophy, boasts one of the largest MA philosophy programmes in the UK, was the university's best performing research unit and houses some of the country's most eminent Continental philosophers. More pragmatically, much work in the department has been recognised as 'world-leading' by the state's research regulators and the faculty have apparently contributed nearly half of their combined earnings from tuition and research to the university's budget. So why is the department being shut down, and what should we be learning from this situation?

According to the Ed Esche, Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities, the decision to close the department is 'simply financial', as it will be more profitable for the university to teach 'Band C' rather than 'Band D' students. For those not initiated into the labyrinthine system of state funding for higher education in England, allow me to explain. Each year, the Higher Education Funding Council of England allocates universities a certain amount of money according to various criteria in teaching and research. One funding stream distributes money according to the numbers of students universities teach in particular types of disciplines. Each student accepted falls into a different 'price band' and embodies a different monetary value. 'Band A', for example, includes students studying clinical medicine, dentistry and veterinary science. This year, they are each worth £15,788. 'Band B' includes scientists, pre-clinical medical students and those in engineering and technology. Requiring cheaper technology and expert labour to educate, their value drops to £6,710. 'Band C' students include anyone studying subjects involving studio, lab or fieldwork projects. £5,131 per year for each of these. And 'Band D' students, including philosophy and 'all other subjects', annually rake in a mere £3,947 from the state. Comparatively speaking in terms of market value, therefore, and despite the fact that the university apparently taxes 55% of each academic unit's income, Esche claims that Philosophy can make 'no measurable contribution to the university'.

Obvious concerns about 'measuring' the contributions of philosophy aside, in reality this decision is just the latest battle in a state-business-industrial campaign to decimate the humanities and social sciences in British academe under the aegis of neoliberal 'progress', now wholly green-lighted by the all-party assurance of savage cuts — perhaps twice Thatcher — to public spending in the coming year. The programme of marketizing and commodifying higher education began so many years ago that it seemed almost banal when all UK universities were subsumed under a new Department of Business, Innovation and Skills in 2009, or when universities began referring to students in terms of 'key performance indicators' and 'clientele'. Perhaps this tolerable, slow-boiling to death of political sensitivities is one reason why students and academics across the country are radicalizing outside of the business-as-usual of contemporary university life: in other recent struggles to save philosophy programmes at Kings College London and Liverpool, for example, or the remarkably sustained student occupations to

oppose widespread losses at Sussex. The closure at Middlesex is part of this larger trend. It is particularly appalling for the sheer absurdity of its rationale, and as the department's directors have said, for its regrettable implications for philosophy education in the UK. But it is most alarming because, effective campaigning notwithstanding, the swiftness of its execution illuminates just how weakly equipped we still are to effectively understand and resist the crushing negations of neoliberal power in our universities and other public institutions. Much less to build alternatives.

However, the crass and anaesthetized method of this closure is also a purifying revelation that might push the movement along: the emperor has finally admitted there are no clothes. It is not about education or research or knowledge after all. The decision is not savvy or politically slick. It does not even need to be convincing in academic, professional or pedagogical terms. It is, as the dean asserted, 'simply financial' — and this is enough. We knew it all along, but now it is confirmed: no philosophy, no matter how good, can be evaluated according to what Max Weber once called the 'sheer market principle', and in a world of capitalist realism, therefore cannot have any value at all. Perhaps we can be now liberated from the temptation to validate intellectual work by squeezing it into the narrow criteria of what Alex Callinicos has called the 'Orwellian' inspired Research Excellence Framework. Perhaps we can finally accept that there are no ears to even receive arguments about the importance of humanizing education, the power of ideas and research to transform the world, or the necessity of critical thought in a frighteningly possibility-limiting social system. Such revelations and crises should come as no surprise at this very late stage in the long march of capital through our cultural institutions. Yet it seems they do, every time.

But perhaps this surprise is still a good thing. It is true, as Slavoj Žižek writes, that we must dare to believe that 'our side no longer has to go on apologizing; while the other side had better start soon'. This is nowhere more obvious than at Middlesex now, where at least a reversal of decision, far more than just an apology, is clearly in order. At the same time, the shock, disgust and anger that are pouring out from across the world in response to Philosophy's closure confirm that all is not lost — not the department, neither philosophy nor education, and not the potential for organised collective struggle beyond individual institutional battles. But as the stakes to save public education get higher and higher — and they assuredly will with the coming crisis — even this last possibility is under threat. If we don't mobilize against the neoliberal takeover of universities now, we stand to lose much more than we can either imagine or repair. The wagons are well on their way down this path, and we would be wise to jump off, barricade and reorient now. For, as Michael Apple once wrote, 'it's a long walk back'.

# How Russian Universities Became the Future of World Education

*In Russia on May 3, 2010 at 8:25 am*

By Alexander Bikbov, Center for Modern Philosophy and Social Sciences, Moscow State University[1]

The Russian Ministry of Education entered the European Bologna reform club in 2003, five years after its foundation, having jumped over the constitutive phase. Such a delay accompanied by the government's explicit hesitations and high resistance among university administrators, made Russian universities seem like an(other) example of obstructed modernization. This vision was and still is actively promoted by the advocates of reform in both national and international agencies. Ironically, the very same idea of efficiency has recently been imposed on the university in the European cradle itself, now proclaimed rigid and retrograde. Being an object of important public expenditures, the contemporary university is everywhere condemned by the new commercial *doxa* as never-good-enough.

The Russian rhetoric creates a clear line dividing the desired global market future of Russian higher education from the isolated and clumsy Soviet past. The attempt itself is far from being the first during the long post-war period. The categorical imperative of "optimization" in terms of effectiveness and adaptation to the "needs of industry and services" has been progressively applied to the expanding university system since the late 1950s. But even this protracted historical perspective does not explain the current impetus for university change. If we separate the new university model from its technical dimension (convertible credits, common levels of study, mutual recognition of degrees), the Russian version, as in the rest of the world, finds itself part of a global political trend guided by three key principles: reducing the costs for the public sector, privatization of common goods and the disempowerment of self-governed (peer-based) social bodies in favor of a directive state.

The fact that the Russian universities were radically pushed in this direction as early as the early nineties, is an attempt to reverse the usual hierarchy, forcing them to jump from the bottom to the top of the "modernization" ranking. Russian higher education may be an example of reform, in a certain way, brought to its ultimate success.

## ***Back to the Future***

One of the decisive indicators making clear this success consists in the proportion of the financial self-funding of universities. Public universities of the continental Europe (France, Germany) have 8-10% of their budgets coming from non-public sources[2]. Certain UK universities, which are often used as a didactic model by advocates of reform, receive up to 28% of their budget from endowments, tuition fees and other publicly independent sources (ibid.). Russian universities do not provide the public with statistics of this kind, with excuses such as calculation difficulties or appealing to the principle "it depends on what is taken into account". Nevertheless in private discussions administrators of several great public universities and departments indicate a proportion of "around 50%" from private sources, which corresponds

quite well with expert estimations of 45-55% given in the early 2000s. Even if university managers always love to get more from the public budget, last year's State programs and State institutional grants, unknown in the nineties and even in the first half of the current decade, may result in some indigestion syndrome among university structures.

Such an extensive self-financing, compared to the modest 10% rising to 28% for European universities, sounds pretty seductive. So why is criticism of the lamentable quality of education in post-Soviet universities so common whether in professorial or in administrative statements and discussions? What makes these criticisms persist? The fact is, contrary to the mental experiments, financial self-sufficiency and commercial profit made under real economic conditions turn out not to improve but to lower educational standards.

Pushed by the "liberated," i.e. profoundly deregulated, market in the early 1990s, and in absence of those economic agencies that could and would invest in non-profitable education and research, Russian universities set out to sell those goods which might provide them with a minimum level of survival. The goods that sold well were far from being fundamental knowledge and even educational services were still rather exotic in that early post-Soviet moment. They included, first of all, square meters of the university buildings and acres of the university lands proposed for rent to trading companies, commercial ventures, etc. They also included diplomas which may or may not have required any knowledge or learning. A significant factor behind the exponential growth of the diploma industry was the exemption from mandatory military service for students of the great public universities. All these self-financing measures lay at the limits of legality, and, indeed, often exceeded those limits, generating corruption rents. Such a situation was largely tolerated by State agencies since they were enmeshed in similar corruption "like everyone in the country". This crisis-based management, while letting universities survive, had little to do with the quality of education and competition in pursuit of knowledge. It generated the income to pay electricity bills and basic (though miserable) professors' salaries, but also personally benefited the university executive which re-established itself as a faction of the new Russian bourgeoisie, making its fortune in the emerging free market.

A university model based on the crisis management "naturally" required decision making to be concentrated in the hands of higher university administration. In the same period when Russian industries were privatized via the *voucher* system transforming managers into owners, the decision-making power of the never-too-strong Academic Councils was monopolized by senior management that made universities work under a paternalism that was even sharper than in the late Soviet era. Public universities were never privatized *de jure* but were (and are) often administered as if they were privatized *de facto*. This not only affected finances. It also included such an important procedure as staff recruitment which was appropriated by deans and chair administrators leaving the mandatory public competition for vacant positions, formally required even in the Soviet era, in abeyance.

Liberating commercial incentive and leaving local administrations to govern in their own interests was considered by the ultra-liberal government of the early 1990s to be an important advantage driving Russian education to produce new competitive knowledge and to leave behind all the disadvantages of the conservative Soviet system. Market autonomy destroyed both occupational security for the professorial body and its self-regulated quality control, which had

the effect of a retrograde conservation of the degrading Soviet university structures and of its knowledge base[3]. The quality of education declined at traditionally strong departments in the natural sciences accompanied by a high brain drain towards other world scientific superpowers. Not surprisingly, the emerging post-Soviet social sciences have not produced an epistemic breakthrough so long as professors and researchers were seeking extra jobs inside and outside the university sector to compensate for their miserable salaries, and in this way intensifying their precarity not only in its economic but also in its intellectual dimension.

The tough survival years ended in the early 2000s, with the growing public finance of secondary and higher education and with the introduction of new university supports such as State Target Programs and institutional grants. Aside from the growing public budget for education, Russian universities enjoyed growing tuition fees, now introduced officially as early as the mid-1990s. By the middle of the first decade of the new century, 62% of all the freshmen in public universities were paying for their studies[4]. Tuition was seldom below 3,000 dollars per year in the central universities (Moscow and St. Petersburg) or below 1,500 dollars in the regional universities. The most prestigious public universities charge annual fees of around 6-9,000 Euros. The market for legal education expanded considerably on the basis of a management model marked by the absence of peer-based decision making.

Controlling the growing public finance and commercial flows, the university-as-enterprise remains an important agency of the black and gray economy and is connected genetically and functionally to earlier institutional models. Maintaining illegal commerce in diplomas and reselling a part of the remaining 38% of the vacant student places that had already been paid for by the public budget (so called “budget places”), certain university administrations make double profit from their financial autonomy in spite of toughening State measures against unlicensed commerce and corruption inherited from the “wild nineties”. Private reselling of publicly paid places was already familiar under the rigid Soviet regulation but became much more widespread under harsh deregulation. The image of the university as violating basic principles of social justice continued unabated, even intensified, in the post-Soviet period. Such commercial autonomy kept the post-Soviet university afloat and its management motivated. In some cases, prestigious universities might take up to 50,000 Euros in cash from student families as the admission fee for vacant “budget places”.

It worth mentioning that another key factor of this model — along with a diploma of higher education to be presented on entry to the labor market and the avoidance of military service — consists in holding mandatory entrance exams (since the Soviet era) following the model of elite High Schools but now applied to mass education. In 2009 a set of universally imposed but locally managed exams were replaced with a set of mandatory national tests which serve to regulate the role of private incomes including corruption that lie at the basis of university self-financing.

Under these circumstances, the significance of the current European (Bologna) university reform in Russia is quite unusual from a global perspective. The State wants to take over the underground financial flows which have been controlled, since the early nineties, by separate university groupings. The contest between a faction of university managers and the Russian government does not signify a struggle between two opposed principles, such as academic freedom and repressive State control, but rather it is a struggle between two rival models of

commercialization of the educational sector, namely a “black” and private model versus a centralized and seemingly more transparent manner. From the outside, this situation is often seen in a distorted way, a contrast between the revival of state tyranny on the one side and the expansion of the mafia on the other. If we look closer, however, we see these two models are but slightly different expressions of spontaneous capitalist neoconservatism, or neoliberalism, depending on one’s viewpoint. What could better reassure the pro-“modernization” Western observers frightened by the threat of Russia’s ascetic despotism? Indeed, the new right governments in Europe are on the way to a profound mutual understanding. The actual governmental executives of Sarkozy or Berlusconi reveal similar political and economic sensibilities, and consider the Russian State as a successful enterprise which knows how to make a good profit from public goods.

### **Commercialization Equals Hierarchy**

The fact that the actual educational struggles in Russia have been developing around an almost unchallengeable commercial and managerial/corporatist consensus has several interconnected and not always evident effects:

1. Neither government nor university administrations normally consider the problem of inequality of access to and success in education. In most cases such social justice issues are the concern of the left, vastly marginalized in the political decision making and often nostalgic for the “excellence” of the Soviet educational system.
2. At the same time that social assistance for tuition fees and other expenditures (such as housing) has decreased, students’ geographical mobility, especially between big cities and between regions, has also fallen considerably, when compared to the welfare decade of 1980s[5]. This does not concern students from wealthy families who can assist their children in pursuing studies at prestigious centers including international ones. But for the majority, especially for those coming from small and medium towns, a cheap dormitory and, in general, lower living expenditures are a key factor when choosing a university. In other words, the quality of education or a discipline’s attractiveness often play a less important role than basic material conditions. According to surveys conducted in the early 2000s in several major Russian cities, from 70% to 95% of students come from the same region[6]. The famous “mobility”, which was one of the main planks of the reforms, has an economic price which, at least in the Russian case, proves to be higher than the inflated social and economic value of the university diploma.
3. A large proportion of parents pay quite legally for their children’s studies (the above mentioned 50-60% in the recent years), but what they really purchase is not enhanced academic knowledge or skills adapted to the labor market. They pay for a diploma that is only a basic prerequisite for gaining access to a job. This fact makes the university a less probable institution for knowledge production, transforming it into a machine for extracting a “natural” rent for awarding degrees, with special appeal to young males wishing to avoid mandatory military service. In this sense, post-Soviet universities drop out of the history of world culture and find themselves, to a large extent, as part of the modern economy of rent seekers – an image that is all too closely associated with the New Russia. .

4. Increasing fees and inadequate social programs transform the university into a place of forced social consensus where no one has interest in claiming too much. Parents do not ask what they pay for, professors do not ask students to study hard, and students themselves feel uneasy to formulate any claims. Such a tight consensus reveals itself in various ways, including an extremely low failure rate from one year to the next. By the early 2000s, the ratio of the number of graduates to the number of freshmen five years earlier was a sensational 102%, while in the early 1990s the figure was only 63% [7]. A success rate over 100% looks quite ironic as compared to the European situation where the recent governmental criticisms of the university has been directed at the low graduation rates which vary from 20-30% in Italy to 40% in France. In the Russian university, “liberated” more than 15 years ago, a student is never removed until the delivery of the diploma, whatever his or her scholarly prowess or success in intermediary exams. Far more than in the Soviet Union, commercial autonomy of universities has transformed higher education from a personal project into a weighty family investment.

5. Commercialization does not improve the most problematic parts of the university model, such as general entering exams serving as one of the main relays of educational corruption. Indeed, commercialization does not eliminate the weak parts but just makes them more profitable. Locally held mandatory oral and written exams (in 3-5 subjects, depending on the university), giving access to university studies, served as an important source of illegal income for university administrations and staff, until very recently. This elitist admission procedure was not abandoned, whether in favor of an open commercialized access or to take into account the fact that 72% of school leavers were entering universities in the early 2000s [8]. Mandatory written tests taken in schools and controlled by the Ministry (and not by the universities), mechanistic and often senseless, replaced the previous exam system in 2009. The formal procedure and the controlling body were changed but the principle itself remained immutable. Both forms had the same results – allowing the coaching industry to flourish and dividing all the vacant student places into those paid by the public budget and those paid by students’ families. In long oscillating polemics that have accompanied preliminary regional experiments and the ultimate shift from exams to tests, some university administrators confessed that none of the methods of pre-selection had effectively measured student abilities. While claiming to “guarantee the level” of university entrance, this new method of selection works as it did before, namely to obtain, legally or not, educational rent from the student population.

6. The power balance between university management and collegiate bodies has shifted dramatically in favor of the former, leading, in effect, to various kinds of university privatization. Concentration of institutional power in the hands of university executives, while spontaneously implementing models of “effective” university-enterprises, detached Academic Councils from decision-making, both in career evaluation and in teaching. This detachment affects staff recruitment as well as the way the curricula are immutably (since the Soviet era) determined on the ministerial level. Universities seeking the State certification must then make sure professors follow the curricula in conformity with the ministerial “standards”. This balance has little chance of being recomposed within the crystallized model of a paternalistic and profit oriented university, and, moreover, one that is impervious to critique and revision.

7. One of the most immediate effects of such a model is a rapid increase in the “precarity” of the professorial body. This financial insecurity expressed itself in the nineties in the holding of



several badly paid jobs, but by the end of the current decade, under a demographic and financial crisis, it involved the reduction of vacant positions due to the growth of teaching obligations. The Ministry of Education recently set the norm at 900 hours per year, as compared to less than 200 in European universities. University management does not explicitly make professors interchangeable, but in practice that is what happens. It can impose temporary lay-offs (furloughs) for periods during the summer holidays and profits from academic exchange that mean salary savings. Management may also dilute education by providing departments with packaged curricula in the form of ready-made powerpoint presentations. In the absence of active university trade-unions or collegiate structures, professors, especially younger ones, are often overburdened with unpaid administrative, technical (secretarial) duties or extra teaching making it even more difficult to do research and publish. Many universities do not even provide professors with a copy of their contract. Some contracts have an open ending-date, and in this way give management a tool for dismissing employees at any moment and with minimal legal risk. Legal trials are naturally rare in the academic environment which is governed by personal symbolic credit: Having lost their job, professors simply try to find another one. It is worth repeating that the proletarianization of the teaching profession is the reverse side of a no less “natural” evolution of the university’s higher management into an established bourgeoisie enjoying university rent. The intensification of social stratification among students, which accompanied the commercial drift of the nineties, thus went along with the social stratification of the university staff.

8. The same imbalance of university power translates itself not only into a low level of professional solidarity but also into a weak public activity of the professional corps. This can be observed in many domains starting with questions of establishing disciplinary boundaries, and ending up with struggles around the educational reforms. Such struggles are focused on the way that the professorial body is merely excluded from decision-making, often being manipulated by university management. That means that there is simply no chance for such a “French” confrontation (as in 2009) between professors and students on the one side and government and rectors on the other – struggles that have emerged more broadly in Europe from peer-based routines like self-governed professional and disciplinary associations, peer-to-peer career evaluations, university or department General Assemblies, etc. Russian university and ministerial administrations remain the key protagonists of reforms, and their decision-making is far from the public eye, never mind public debate.

### ***The Chicken or the Egg?***

The spontaneous “managerial turn” taken in the early nineties by the Russian universities and their progressive commercialization created overwhelming evidence that such a turn does not make for an effective higher education. The market “liberation” which reduced collegiate power, weak enough in the Soviet era, produced trends in the opposite direction from the expectations of Russia’s “Chicago boys”. The university has not escaped from oversized bureaucracy: while the institutional power has been privatized, the university has experienced a growth of bureaucratic ranks and of direct administrative intervention in every sphere. The European universities living the managerial turn since the early 2000s seem to confirm these trends in highly parallel forms[9].

The 50% self-financing that Russian universities achieved by the end of 1990s has helped neither the public budget nor the quality of education. Getting money from students' families in the form of rent, the university-as-enterprise has rarely reinvested it in the production of nonprofitable knowledge via research, in developing longstanding professional cooperation or student incentives. Instead the funding that existed has flowed into ampler and more urgent matters such as restructuring or constructing new buildings, attracting fresh students, creating new "market-oriented" departments, playing with salaries, maintaining bureaucratic expenditures, acquiring status symbols, etc. In other words, commercialization of university has not created competition for the production up-to-date knowledge and higher labor skills. Moreover, the neoliberal or neoconservative reforms have created something different from an emancipated and dynamic international intelligence so much desired in the early post-Soviet era. What it has produced is a new sovereign and visibly provincial rationality, stimulating universities to obtain profit from secondary commodities such as buildings, delivery from mandatory military service, distribution of university degrees and academic grades, creating departments for political and economic use, etc. In spite of a clear rhetorical emphasis on "effectiveness", the highly commercialized and newly hierarchized universities have proved to be even less educationally functional than the State model of the late Soviet era.

All this is often vaguely seen from outside Russia as a local specialty, like caviar, Bolshoi theater, falsified elections and Gazprom. It is true that the definitive transfer of decision making from the fragile peer-based structures to the university's top executive was realized in Russia under an economic and social crisis whose depth was unimaginable in the Europe and America of the two latest decades. The commercial turn that followed the political liberalization of the late 1980s, brought an end to high hopes for an intellectually valid and socially just educational system. Taking into account the fact that the actual European reform was planned in the context of a strong regulative presence of the State, the Russian deregulation crisis of the early nineties could be seen and used as an argument to deny any relevance of the early post-Soviet and the current European experience. These nationally specific circumstances do indeed make a difference.

Even though, one should not omit a homology between these reforms quite visible on the structural level. The Russian transformation disabled weak counter-powers existing in the late Soviet university and thus discouraged both institutions and professors from competing in the field of knowledge. In the new Russia disempowering academics was a spontaneous invention of university managers; in today's Europe it is part of governmental policy. Is there still a difference? The contrasted Russian experiences of the nineties and of the current decade are both significant because they clarify a key point: Either a "liberal" or a State regulated commercialization guides universities to a hard compromise between the old and the new forms favoring those elements which persist with minimal effort of collective collaboration and personal commitment.

In the long run, tightly commercial and paternalist management, precarious university labor, and the retreat of knowledge production from institutional competition emerged in different societies under different crises, taking different speeds in different directions. The Russian crisis was sharper after the welfare State was overthrown with the repressive Soviet regime. The European and probably the American transformations revealed themselves to be more gradual. Though the

actual European (as the previous American) governments tend to reproduce the same institutional architecture, that was spontaneously found in the early post-Soviet perturbations. Normalizing the state of exception which awards top university administrators with supreme decision-making power, provokes a reverse effect which is too easily explained away as another instance of the “exotic” Russian case. This effect consists in the fact that implementing a model well fitted to a sharp crisis condition, even under a presumably *bona fide* State watch, creates a management which ends up provoking a deeper crisis, just like creating a strong army often ends with a great war.

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[1] Alexander Bikbov runs a blog of his own on educational reforms in Russia and elsewhere. See

[http://a.bikbov.ru/publ/media/#ref\\_edu](http://a.bikbov.ru/publ/media/#ref_edu)

[2] Christophe Charle, Charles Soulié (eds.), *Les ravages de la “modernization” universitaire en Europe*. (Paris, Syllepse, 2007). p. 78 (data for 2005).

[3] A more detailed illustration of the same academic crisis in the Russian research sector could be found in p.ex.: Loren Graham, Irina Dezhina. *Science in the new Russia: crisis, aid, reform*. Indiana University Press, 2008. Ch. 2.

[4]. Data by the Ministry of Education for 2006  
([http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=v\\_5&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=A7](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=v_5&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=A7)).

[5]. In light of the permanently changing modalities of the official migration statistics, viable numbers of educational mobility are hardly accessible.

[6]. Tchudinovskikh Olga, Denisenko Mikhail. Gde khotiat zhit vypuskniki rossijskikh vuzov?, *Demoskop Weekly*, 30 June – 10 August 2003  
(<http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0119/tema02.php>).

[7]. Data by the Ministry of Education: the total number of graduates  
([http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2\\_6\\_19&ttype=2&Field=All](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2_6_19&ttype=2&Field=All)) divided by the total number of freshly admitted to all the universities  
([http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2\\_6\\_13&ttype=2&Field=All](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2_6_13&ttype=2&Field=All)) between 1985 and 2005, when the division into bachelor/master degrees had not yet been introduced.

[8]. Data by the Ministry of Education for 2006  
([http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2\\_6\\_15&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=D34](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2_6_15&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=D34)).

[9]. Besides the above mentioned collection of articles, *Les ravages de la “modernization” universitaire en Europe*, important testimonies are presented in Franz Schultheis, Marta Roca I Escoda, Paul-Frantz Cousin (eds.) *Le cauchemar de Humboldt. Les réformes de l’enseignement supérieur européen*,. (Paris, Raisons d’agir, 2008).

# **Deliberative Democracy in a Global Context: A South African Model of Higher Education?**

*In South Africa on May 3, 2010 at 6:47 am*

By Michael Burawoy, University of Witwatersrand.[1]

Comrade Minister, the calling of this summit on higher education has been a bold, brave and imaginative move, indeed. To bring together all the stake holders in higher education into one venue, here at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, could so easily court trouble and raise unrealizable expectations. Especially as you have taken a rare broad view of the stakeholders – a view that included not only the visible actors – Vice Chancellors, managers, civil society organizations, government bodies – but also students represented by the Presidents on the SRCs and workers represented by NEHAWU. No doubt, the perspectives from below are often the most illuminating, but also the most challenging.

This is a rare endeavor, indeed. I may even say only in South Africa would a Minister call together such a broad range of interests to tackle and discuss, in a no holds barred way, the biggest issues facing higher education. To start the summit with the stakeholders representing their views, to break up into commissions on the academic experience, on the student experience, on differentiation, and on governance and then to have the commissions report back to the summit turned out to be a stroke of organizational genius. The seriousness with which each set about its work, the heated discussions, the open conflicts and tensions, the desire for considered solutions marked the work of each commission.

My ticket of entry to this wondrous event was to offer some concluding reflections as an outsider. I have heard quite a few speeches about higher education in South Africa and they usually take the form of laying out all the achievements – demographic profile of students, the research output, the vitality of some of the best academies – but then to follow with all the challenges of transformation that remain. I will reverse the order, starting with the challenges and then focus more on the way South Africa is going about meeting those challenges. What have I learned from these one and half days as I have listened to the opening speeches and then the discussions in and reports from the commissions? Well first, I have been amazed how well developed and informed you all are about the problems facing higher education in South Africa. But, second, I can only conclude the transformation is not for sissies. That's an expression that is usually applied to old age, and we can say that many South African universities are long in the tooth, but they are having to adapt to the still youthful postapartheid order as well as meet the challenges of a modern, globalizing world.

If I were to quickly list the challenges facing higher education in South Africa, they would include: at the most basic level the unequal access to higher education and the even more startling unequal success rates, by race in particular, but one might suspect even more deeply by class. From this follows much else. On the one hand, the preparedness of students, the articulation of basic education and higher education, the difficult living conditions on campuses, the institutional racism of the pedagogic function and the lack of adaptation to and comprehension of the student of today. On the other hand, there is the question of the

preparedness of the universities, many inherited from apartheid, the failure to attract and retain the best teachers and researchers who find more remunerative work elsewhere. Within higher education there is the enormous differentiation between institutions – the abiding differences between HBUs and HWUs — under-resourced at one end and subject to global competition on the other. In short we may say that higher education is caught between the disabling legacies of the past and the structural pressures of the present. The danger is that these twin forces become excuses for inaction – to throw up one’s hands and point fingers at apartheid or neoliberalism. The enterprise of this summit has been an attempt to overcome rather than submit to the heavy weight of the past as well as to resist the intruding pressures of marketization.

My first observation is that South African higher education is in relatively good shape compared certainly to anywhere in Africa but also more generally to the global south. South African higher education is the jewel of Africa, which is why so many students and faculty come to South Africa from the rest of Africa. It stands in relation to Africa as Brazil stands in relation to Latin America, relatively well funded public education, both inherited from previously authoritarian regimes – apartheid and military dictatorship. The conditions of teaching and learning in the rest of Africa are, sad to say, at a much lower level than in South Africa.

My second observation is that South African higher education is not unique in facing the challenges of transformation. Universities across the world, not just in the South but in the North too, are facing such challenges and it is about this that I wish to devote the remainder of my time here at the podium. We can safely say that almost everywhere the university is in crisis. Put in the broadest terms the place of the university as simultaneously inside and outside is being eroded. Except in a few antiquated hold outs the idea of the ivory tower has gone, we have to engage society beyond the university. We no longer can hold on to a privileged position. We have to justify our existence. We were living in the Golden Age of the University, but perhaps it was also a Fool’s Paradise that simply couldn’t last.

The university as simultaneously participant in and observer of society is dissolving, the university is losing its capacity to fend off pressures of instrumentalization. These pressures come in two forms – commodification and regulation. I come from the University of California, which, with its seven plus campuses, is surely one of the shining examples of public education in the world. This year it was hit with a 25% cut in public funding. This is a sizeable chunk of money! The university has never faced such a financial crisis and it has taken correspondingly drastic steps – laying off unknown numbers of non-academic staff, putting pressure on already outsourced low paid service workers, furloughing academics that included world renown figures, Nobel Prize Winners. Most significantly it involved a 30% increase in student fees, so that they now rise to about \$10,000 a year, but still only half the price of the best private universities. These are drastic measures indeed, and a violation of the 1960s Master Plan, the vision of free higher education for all who desired it, orchestrated through a system that integrated two year community colleges, the state system of higher education and then at the pinnacle the University of California. All this now is turning to ruins.

But it has not been an overnight process. The state has been withdrawing funds from higher education for over three decades so that before this year’s cuts it supplied only 30% of the university’s budget. So 25% cut is more like a 7% cut in the University’s budget, still sizeable.

The cuts began in the 1980s with the new era of marketization, which some call neoliberalism. Marking the shift was the change in intellectual property rights, and Bayh-Dole legislation on patents of 1980. Before patenting was seen as an infringement of the market. Knowledge was a public good that should be available to all and, therefore, even the discoverer should not have monopoly access to its revenues. That changed and today a patenting mania lies at the bottom of expanding industry-university collaboration. As the leading universities cashed in on their research so the government saw less need to pour funds into higher education which only intensified the commercialization of knowledge, which had all sorts of implications for those disciplines that could not convert their knowledge into tangible assets. They were told they had to find alumni or corporate donors to support their enterprise! With the corporatization of the university so the university came to look more and more like a corporation, and its managerial ranks expanded rapidly. Within the last two decades the ratio of faculty to senior administrators has fallen from 3 to 1, to 1 to 1! And the salary structure has been distorted accordingly. The President of the University is supposed to earn a corporate executive salary – he actually earns in excess of \$800,000, which is twice the President of the country! All managerial and administrative salaries are stretched accordingly, and salaries within the university become ever more unequal, varying with the marketability of the associated knowledge they produce. As universities become the site of investment so national and global ranking schemes – Times Higher Education (now QS) or Shanghai — inevitably emerge to suggest which universities are most likely to provide the best monetary returns.

Let me now turn to the second model – the regulatory model. The source of this model, we might say, was the Thatcher Revolution in England. Here the strategy is not to commercialize the production of knowledge, bringing the still public university directly into the market, but to make it more efficient, more productive, and more accountable. The Thatcher Regime introduced the notorious Research Assessment Exercise – an elaborate scheme of evaluation based on faculty publications. An elaborate incentive scheme was introduced that you might say was intended to simulate market competition but actually generated something more like the Soviet model of planning. Just as the Soviet planners had to decide how to measure output of the factories, how to develop indices of plan fulfillment, and these led to inevitable distortions, shoes that all looked the same, tractors that were far too heavy, and the inevitable shortage of everything, so now higher education is full of parallel distortions that obstruct both the production (research) and dissemination (teaching) of knowledge. Ironically, the Thatcher Revolution, which was supposed to applaud the market against the plan, proved to be a simulation of Soviet planning, developing an elaborate auditing culture that led academics to devote themselves to gaming the system, distorting their output – such as publishing essentially the same article in different venues, the devaluation of books, importing into departments academic rock stars, even on a short term basis — all to boost RAE ratings. Perhaps, the most debilitating consequence has been the shortening of time horizons in the conduct of research, so that it becomes ever more trivial and superficial. Basic research gives way to contract research. This Soviet model has been exported to Europe with the Bologna Process that homogenizes higher education across countries. The Soviet model is especially applicable, therefore, to those states that want to hold onto public higher education, but seek to rationalize it by monitoring of the pursuit of short term goals.

The two models combine in different ways in different countries, but together or individually they conspire to instrumentalize higher education, subjecting professionalism to formal

rationality and exaggerating the importance of policy research, but policy research that is subject to control of the client. All this comes at the expense of critical thinking that makes academic knowledge accountable to academics, and public engagement that is concerned with building a higher education responsive to the interests of the wider society. It is, therefore, in this connection that the model of higher education implicit in what we have been doing here at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, at this summit, becomes clearer. It is a model of the university that does not deny the importance of its instrumental moment but subjects it to critical examination. What I have witnessed these last two days is a reflexive model of higher education – a dialogue that is both internal to higher education between for example managers who point their fingers at academics and academics who point their fingers at the corporatization, but also a dialogue between government, civil society and the institutions of higher education. What emerges is neither government regulation nor commercialization but one of deliberative democracy, in which the stake holders are participants in a political process. We can call this a model of empowered participatory governance.

While it takes courage for the state to engage in such a dialogue with the sector of higher education, it is nonetheless quite rational to do so because it allows the adjustment, articulation of interests – articulation in the sense of voicing but also in the sense of mutually adjusting – rather than every group pursuing its own narrow interests, responding to the exigencies of the day, oblivious of the perspectives of others. As the barriers between the inside and outside of the university break down, as the boundaries become porous the academic can try to retreat into its shell, sabotaging outside interests while protecting its turf within the university, or it can take a more outward looking approach that seeks to tackle the challenges together and in public. We are arriving, therefore, at a new vision of the public university, one that is publicly accountable that engages with publics rather than simply with itself. This does not preclude relations with business or the development of incentive structure but does so through open discussion, a discussion that includes all the stake-holders, that recognizes the tradeoffs at stake!

You can, of course, be cynical about this project. You can say you've tried it all before in the 1990s and nothing came of it and that it got bogged down in futile debates about trivia. You can say that this is just an exercise in legitimating state policies and the government will simply pursue whatever suits it. You can throw up one's hands in disgust to say that this was just a staged ritual of an ANC state, unresponsive to the interests of society. You can say that this stakeholder summit has nothing to do with me, whether I be a teacher, administrator or student, and that the participants were handpicked and unrepresentative. But this cynicism, this defeatism is to overlook the uniqueness of South Africa, its long history of negotiated politics and dialogue, and thus to miss an opportunity – a public debate concerned less with transition and more with transformation. You can refuse this opportunity for dialogue and suffer the consequences of an invading regulation and commercialization, and by thus retreating behind the screens of academic freedom and autonomy encourage the state and market to vanquish the university as we knew it. And there are some terrible examples of that, Russia being one with which I am familiar. Or you can take the fig leaf, and exploit the space for deliberation, call upon the state to honor its commitments, open up debate both within and outside the academy, a debate about the meaning of the public university, especially in the South, and its place in transformation.

The irony is that the university protests that have spread across the Global North – United States, England, France, Germany, Austria and beyond – during the last year are all groping toward a model of deliberative democracy in public education, a model that South Africa almost takes for granted, that it inherits from its past. It's not perfect, and ultimately it has to deliver reform, but it is an important beginning from which we can all learn.

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[1] These comments are the concluding reflections I presented to the *Stakeholder Summit on Higher Education Transformation* held at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, April 22-23, 2010.



# **The Bologna Process is fine, but let's do it for real!**

*In Spain on April 19, 2010 at 5:36 am*

By Rafael Castelló, Universitat de València

The proposals of the Bologna Declaration to build a European Higher Education Region are very progressive, at least in the Spanish context. Realizing the main objectives would effectively bring Spain into the 21st. century. The Bologna process would focus higher education on students' learning rather than on teachers' teaching; they would give studies a more practical dimension; they would reduce the time required to obtain a degree; they would make European University degrees interchangeable. The ultimate goal is a noble one: to turn the European Union into a powerful knowledge economy.

In Spanish universities, the reform was necessary in order to gain distance from an archaic, feudal model. However, as actually implemented the measures are very poor and far from the stated democratic aims of college education. We've gone from a feudal model to a capitalist model, and so we now have to make moves towards a more social and democratic university. Here are just three ways in which the education reforms diverge from the Bologna principles.

First, in Spain, we find that teaching is regarded as very inferior to research. It is true that research advances knowledge, but research must be democratized which means giving students the tools, theory and methodology to develop their own knowledge. Research needs to reinforce learning. Only then will there be a democratization of knowledge acquisition and, thereby give rise to a strong knowledge economy.

Second, the focus on learning rather than teaching, and also on the practical rather than the theoretical, can only work if there is an associated increase in human and material resources devoted to college education. However, the Spanish government has sought to implement university reform at zero cost, which is only possible at the expense of quality, or requiring more work from students or from teachers, or some combination of all three. We need more teachers, and with contracts that offer security of employment as new physical infrastructure, information technology, etc... A real university reform cannot be free.

Thirdly, while it is good idea to increase the mobility of students, the Spanish government approved a reform that makes it hard to achieve the objectives as stated in the Bologna Declaration. It reduces the time to degree, but not in the same way as in the rest of Europe. In Spain a Graduate degree requires 4 years, while in the rest of Europe it requires 3 years. Thus, the Masters Degree in Spain has durations ranging from 1 year to 2 years, while in Europe it is 2 years. Therefore, when Spanish students move to other countries with an MA they are at a disadvantage. Not only for continuing their studies, but also their access to the labor market is more difficult.

Furthermore, the Spanish government declared the new degree of 'Grado' (4 years) would be equivalent to the old degree 'Licenciatura' (5 years), but in labor negotiations in the public sector, it argued differently, namely that the 'Licenciatura' degree is equivalent to the Masters

Degree (5-6 years), which also violates another Bologna objective — the time needed to obtain an equivalent qualification is not reduced, but rather increases. It is misleading to students, but also to teachers.

We could talk about other aspects, but we in the final analysis reform was necessary and the goals set were good, however the actual implemented reforms were not in accordance with the Bologna principles. As the gap between objectives and reforms has widened, so skepticism rises as to whether the government is genuinely committed to those excellent objectives — whether it really believes in the Bologna principles or whether it is merely mouthing them as political rhetoric.

# In the name of Welfare – Mainstreaming the Norwegian Academy

*In Norway on April 16, 2010 at 5:32 am*

Karin Widerberg, University of Oslo

I used to be quite proud to be a Scandinavian academic. Educated in Sweden and working in Norway but collaborating internationally had not only made me aware of but also appreciative of the welfare model of Scandinavian universities. Free public education (at all levels), equality regarding salaries and work conditions among the academic staff and a social mission as the goal of research – could one wish for a better platform for a social scientist? When, in addition, our knowledge is not only publicly appreciated but also made use of politically in policymaking for the welfare-state, surely there cannot be much to complain about. Yet it is precisely this very close relationship between research and politics in Norway – as an illustrative example – where intellectuals are positioned to be politically accountable, that poses a problem. Government in the name of “internationalization”, Europe-ization, neo-liberalism and well-fare bureaucracy, shakes the foundations of the university as an academic institution. We are, I would claim, more caught up in ruling relations – structurally and culturally – than intellectuals working in less egalitarian or democratic cultures. How else can one explain the rapid and profound changes within higher education and research, undertaken to mainstream and control not only the amount but also the content of both research and teaching? Just as important, how can one explain the lack of resistance and critique of this development!? Let me give a few examples of the areas and items of change in Norway over the last decade.

- *The Bologna agreement* on the structure of higher education (3 years [Bachelor] + 2 years [Master] + 3 years [PhD] in Norway, portrayed as a “Quality reform” (the implementation of the Bologna agreement added with a whole series of different changes related to teaching and examination). It is often considered a joke that Norway, not a member of the European Union, was the first to accept and implement the Bologna agreement, in 2003
- *A new budget system* accompanied the recent university reform. Now, the distribution of money/grants to a department is not only related to the number of students registered but also how many exams they take and how much the department’s staff publishes. Finally, overhead money brought in through external research projects, that is, productivity – students, research projects and publications – are the incentives and foundation for funding university departments.
- *Faculty salaries were set “free” for negotiation*, less than two decades ago. Previously, the rule was that everyone with the same position was paid the same salary. Increase in salary followed rules of seniority. Today, one is expected to negotiate one’s salary more or less annually, and the publication rate is a factor used in the negotiations. That is, economic equality is now set aside and productivity is used as an incentive.
- A new system for *registration of teaching duties*, an account of hours, titled the “time-bank”. Each semester one has to fill out a form where all tasks related to teaching and supervision are given fixed “prices”, leaving an employee in debt or in surplus regarding

working-hours. That is, only certain tasks are made visible and those are then evaluated not on an actual but on a normative basis.

- A new system for *registration of research publication* ("Frida"). Each staff member is now requested to register everything she publishes. The publication rate of its faculty staff is then annually reported and evaluated.
- A new system for *rating research publications* ("tellekantreformen"). Internationally inspired, the Ministry of Education developed a model (known as "The Norwegian Model") and now exported to the other Scandinavian countries. Articles in International journals and publications using a peer review system receive higher credits than those in national journals – with or without a peer review system. This hereby introduced a dilemma for academics from the social sciences and the humanities who take their goal of social mission and research dissemination to the public seriously. Also the issue was raised of what will happen to the Norwegian (research) language and public debate in Norway if English becomes the main language in higher education and research.
- A new policy for *strategic research activity*. In an effort to make university research more competitive and productive it has been decided that its *core areas of research*, on all levels, are to be defined. Each faculty is to decide how many areas each department is allowed to select. It is meant to have consequences for the allocation of money at each level and, in the long run, influence which research areas will survive or thrive. When, in addition, the Norwegian Research Council – the national body responsible for allocating research resources, and accordingly decisive for the university's research policy – has made a similar change regarding research funding, the door is being closed for "free research".
- A new policy for establishing *strategic teaching activities*, with a "course portfolio" connected to the core areas within research. It represents a strategy similar to the one regarding research, but for teaching.

None of these changes are of course unique to Norway, quite the opposite. Since the purpose is to modernize the university, ideas and models have been imported from other countries as well as from other branches of the state. What is unique to Norway, I would argue, is its very pervasiveness – its rapid, smooth and successful implementation. And let me also stress that, in themselves, none of these reforms are "bad". Quite the opposite. There are good reasons and good intentions behind every single one of them. Taken together, however, I would argue that they assume a new quality, changing both academic activities and academic culture. Registration and rating of research and teaching affect not only the tasks you do and how you do them, but your whole state of mind. You become one who *calculates*. And if the tradition for counting and documenting is based on the individual as a unit, *individualization* will increase at the expense of a more collective working culture. When this is combined and synchronized with the policy for the mainstreaming of research in the form of strategic plans at the Research Council as well as at the university, this might prove to be the death knell for critical thinking.

For us, as sociologists, it is accordingly a most urgent task to investigate, in depth, all the instruments used to shape the reformation of the University. Here, the specific role of the ruling relations in the welfare state and the role given to us as social scientists in this reform process, need special attention. A worthy task for a critical sociology.

# Have Global University Rankings any Value for the Global South?

*In South Africa on April 14, 2010 at 1:28 am*

Saleem Badat, Rhodes University, South Africa

The global ranking of universities has come into prominence in the past few years. This paper analyses their value and what is at stake. I argue that such rankings generate false perceptions and prejudice the global South, and that they should be replaced by alternative instruments that better serve educational and social purposes.

The Shanghai Jiao Tong Institute of Higher Education (SJTIE) ranking has its genesis in the Chinese government's quest to create "world-class universities" as catalysts of development. The SJTIE ranking gives priority to six indicators for which data were available (Mohamedbhai, 2009).

The purpose of the Times Higher Education-Quacquarelli Symonds (THE-QS) ranking is "to recognise universities as the multi-faceted organisations that they are, [and] to provide a global comparison of their success against the notional mission of remaining or becoming world-class" (Times Higher Education, 2009). It considers a mere six criteria to be pivotal for judging *world-class* (see Kauppi and Erkila).

## **Rankings: what value?**

In order to establish their validity, university rankings need to be subjected to critical analysis in terms of their purposes, methodologies, and value to universities and society. I will briefly address each in turn.

Regarding *purposes*, the SJTIE originated as an attempt to benchmark Chinese universities as a means of charting a trajectory for their development. However, SJTIE has become a global ranking of universities, although only based on a narrow range of (essentially research) indicators that are wholly inadequate for measuring performance and quality in relation to diverse social and educational purposes as well as university goals.

The THE-QS's precise purpose with generating a global league table of universities is opaque. Its discourse, however, is one of "world esteem", with the *world-class university* representing the gold standard to which all universities should ostensibly aspire and according to which they should be measured. In the THE-QS "universe, higher education is primarily about reputation for its own sake, about the aristocratic prestige and power of the universities as an end in itself" (Marginson, 2007b:138-39). The internationalization of the student body is valued less for enriching a university; instead, international students are a "prized quarry" as "universities are free to charge them whatever the market will bear" (Times Higher Education, 2007). Thus, "it is not about teaching and only marginally about research" (Marginson, 2006a:5). Although it

claims “to recognise universities as multi-faceted organisations”, the THE-QS criteria are dubious as proxies for teaching and learning quality.

*Methodologically*, global rankings suffer from “weaknesses in data collection and computation; the arbitrary criteria used in ranking; and the arbitrary weightings and standardization procedures used in combining different data sets into composite indexes” (Marginson, 2008a:7). Such indexes “undermine validity [as] it is dubious to combine different purposes and the corresponding data using arbitrary weightings. Links between purposes and data are lost” (Marginson, 2007b:139).

The indicators and their weighting privilege specific university activities, domains of knowledge production, research types, languages, and university types. Thus, the natural and medical sciences are privileged over the arts, humanities **and** social sciences; articles published in English are favoured over those in other languages; journal articles are favoured over book chapters, policy and other reports. Furthermore, “comprehensive” universities and generally larger institutions with a wide range of disciplines and larger numbers of academics – especially researchers – are privileged over others (Charon and Wauters, 2007). The rankings therefore enable the self-selection of universities whose missions and academic offerings strongly match the rankings’ performance measures.

### **What is at stake?**

In terms of their methodologies, the SJTIHE and THE-QS rankings have little intrinsic value and serve no meaningful educational or social purpose. On the contrary, if they are not challenged, rankings and the assumed notion of the “*world-class university*” as gold standard can have perverse and dangerous effects on universities in underdeveloped societies in the global South.

1. Under the umbrella of neo-liberalism, 1950s modernization theory singled out Western capitalist societies as the apex of modernity and made “catching up” with the West an ultimate development goal. With it came the view that underdeveloped societies’ path to development lay in faithful adherence to the prescriptions of Western governments and Western-dominated multinational institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. Globalization and its supposed development benefits became the new goal.

If modernization theory depicts Western capitalist societies as the apex of modernity, global university rankings present the *world-class university* – essentially North American and European institutions – as the pinnacle and goal of all higher education development.

The value of uncritical mimicry of and “catching up” with the so-called world-class university in order to further socioeconomic development is questionable. It also cannot be blithely assumed that creating world-class universities will in itself result in investment or development. Outstanding universities may be a *necessary condition* but are not a *sufficient condition* of development. There is a need in many societies in the global South to create favourable national environments to facilitate university work and contributions.

2. The SJTIHE and THE-QS rankings “inculcate the idealized model of institution as a norm to be achieved and generalize the failure to achieve it” (Marginson, 2009:13-14). The *world-class university* has until recently neither existed as a concept, nor as an empirical reality. Its status as the gold standard is the normative social construct of the rankers themselves.

The specific national conditions, realities and development challenges of societies in the global South, and the diversity of social and educational purposes and goals that universities in these societies must serve, require national higher education systems characterized by differentiated and diverse institutions. Institutional differentiation and diversity are to be valued over homogeneity and isomorphism. It makes little sense for all universities to aspire to a common “gold” standard, irrespective of socioeconomic needs, missions, goals, capacities and capabilities. Graham has argued that universities should avoid aspiring to “ideal[s] which they cannot attain” (Graham, 2005:157). Otherwise, “no sense of worth will be forthcoming” and they can have no “proper self-confidence” (ibid:157). There are many conceptions and models of the university and these have changed over time. Furthermore, according to Graham, the “name ‘university’ now applies to institutions with widely different functions and characters” (2005:157), and this means that the “ideals each can aspire to” will be different (ibid:258).

Instead of valuing a horizontal continuum that recognizes the need for universities to have different and diverse missions, and which makes provision for universities that pursue various missions, the idea of the *world-class university* as “the idealized model of institution” has the perverse effect of privileging a vertical hierarchy. Universities that do not feature in the top 500 of the SJTIHE ranking or the top 200 of the THE-QS ranking are devalued and are – by implication – poor quality, second-rate or failures. In the face of continuing global North-South inequalities, the burden of such characterizations weighs disproportionately on universities in the global South.

3. The rankings criteria favour publishing in English journals and, in effect, privilege the English language. Especially in the arts, humanities and social sciences, prioritizing research and publishing in order to improve ranking can seriously undermine universities with important social, intellectual and cultural roles related to their local, regional and national societies.

Today, the competition for, and concentration on, economic advantage means that certain kinds of knowledge and research – especially those generated by the natural, medical and business sciences and engineering – are privileged. However, as Mkandawire argues, “attempts to improve Africa’s prospects by focusing on scientific advances and the benefits accruing from them have all too often overlooked the important perspectives which the humanities and social sciences afford” (2009:vii), and “it is vital that the social sciences and humanities are granted their rightful place... if Africa’s development challenges are to be fully and properly addressed” (ibid:vii).

4. Rankings compromise the value and promise of universities as they “divert attention from some central purposes of higher education” (Marginson, 2007b:139), and “to accept these ranking systems is to acquiesce at these definitions of higher education and its purposes” (ibid.:139).

As important as new knowledge production and the scholarship of discovery are (Boyer, 1990), the foundation of the production of high-quality graduates who can advance development in the underdeveloped global South is high-quality learning and teaching. Moreover, community engagement and service learning are also vital functions of universities in the global South. Both are a “means for connecting universities and communities with development needs” (Stanton, 2008:3), and “for higher education staff and students to partner with communities to address development aims and goals” (ibid:2). However, the global rankings are only marginally concerned with learning and teaching, and completely overlook or omit the value of community engagement.

5. Finally, the extent to which the global rankings are embraced by numerous universities and higher education agencies must be considered a matter of great concern. The validation of rankings as knowledge of universities ultimately corrodes knowledge and science.

## **Conclusion**

Global university rankings fail to capture either the meaning or diverse qualities of a university or the characteristics of universities in a way that values and respects their educational and social purposes, missions and goals. At present, these rankings are of dubious value, are underpinned by questionable social science, arbitrarily privilege particular indicators, and use shallow proxies as correlates of quality.

Universities in the global South must refuse to play the game as formulated by the SJTIHE and THE-QS, even if others collude with rankings for the sake of self-aggrandisement. Rather than permit these rankings from prescribing a “gold standard” and imposing narrow definitions of quality, quality should be regarded as historically specific and related to institutional missions and goals as well as educational and social purposes.

My critique of global university rankings is not a refusal of critical public scrutiny of universities or of universities in the global South. Besides rankings, there is much value in performance indicators and benchmarks if carefully conceptualized and designed with a clarity of purpose and respectful of institutional missions and policy goals. Performance indicators have an important role in institutional development and, through these, the achievement of national socioeconomic development priorities. Clearly, effective monitoring, evaluation and critical reviews of universities, including their goals, strategies, academic programmes, administration, governance and financial management also have key roles in university development.

The challenge for universities in the global South is to effectively replace global rankings with alternative instruments that genuinely serve educational and social purposes, contribute to innovation and development in universities, enhance transparency in and critical public scrutiny of universities, and facilitate informed choices and judgements on the basis of robust social science and appropriate methodologies.

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# Higher Education in Taiwan: The Crisis of Rapid Expansion

*In Taiwan on April 11, 2010 at 2:28 am*

By Dung-sheng Chen, National Taiwan University and Mau-kuei Chang, Academia Sinica

Serious investment in education is thought to be important for development. At the same time, education is expected to increase opportunities for the underprivileged to move up economic and political ladders, and to increase the overall competencies of the prospective workforce of the country. However, education investments, whether they come from public or private domains, function in a competitive world, in which the calculations of costs-and-benefits dominate the allocation of resources. This goes not only for investors, university administrators but also for degree-seeking students. Therefore, a crisis could emerge if education organizations fail collectively, not because of underinvestment, but because of inefficiency associated with unexpected outcomes due to their rapid expansion. For instance, a crisis in higher education can occur when the number of universities increases while the pool of prospective students is shrinking. In the following, we will discuss the urgent issues resulting from the overexpansion of higher education in Taiwan during the past two decades, its impacts on social equality, and the associated pressures for auditing and evaluating the academic performance of universities.

In the twenty years from 1986 to 2006, the number of Taiwanese universities and colleges has gone up from 105 to 163, or a 55% increase. In 2006, Taiwan had a total student body of 1,313,993 undergraduates. And there were 163,585 in masters programs, and 29,838 in doctoral programs. These numbers represent a 197% increase of the undergraduates, a 136% increase in masters students, and a 125% increase of doctoral students, suggesting a very rapid expansion of higher education, which can be attributed to educational reform, occurring in Taiwan's post-authoritarian era, especially since the 1990's.

It is fair to say that competition among universities could help to improve the overall quality of education by providing prospective high school graduates with more choices. Expansion could also improve opportunities of younger generations who otherwise would have had little opportunities to gain a college degree just because of underinvestment in higher education. While all the above may sound good, it remains debatable whether this expansion and the increasing "choices" automatically help to improve students' life chances.

We can begin to look closely at the expansion of different sectors of the university system. Data indicate that private universities and colleges have grown much faster than public ones, in both enrollment numbers and number of schools. During the period from 1986 to 2006, undergraduate enrollment in public universities and colleges increased 2.67 times, while it increased 5.17 times in private sectors. This discrepancy in expansion is also shown in the composition of the entire undergraduate body. In this same period the proportion of undergraduates enrolled in private institutions, jumped from 62.5% to 73.7%.

However, it becomes alarming when we consider how social inequality is reproduced through higher education. First, established public universities enjoy competitive advantages which they have accumulated through many years. Similar to the European higher education model, public

universities and colleges receive generous governmental support while restricting the marketization of higher education. In the early days, before liberalization, public universities could recruit qualified faculty members more easily, establish better research and teaching facilities, and offer better training to students. They could even afford to do so while charging low student fees in comparison to private universities because of government subsidies. With the help of a unified national college entrance examination, public universities always get the “better” students. Ordinarily, students got to “choose” their university, based on the result of a common examination. Today, though college entrance system has been modified, about eighty percent of freshmen still enter colleges through the national examination. This makes it very difficult for private universities, especially the newly established ones, to “catch up” since they receive little government subsidies and charge higher fees, and at the same time they cannot offer a better quality education. Expansion and competition thus have a bigger negative effect on private institutions than on public ones, on newer institutions rather than older ones, on southern institutions rather than northern ones.

Consequently, public institutions can still attract the better high school graduates, who come from the upper-middle or middle class families. As for students from lower-middle or lower classes, who tend to be less “competitive” in the system, they continue to have fewer options and thus find themselves in the less preferred private institutions. They tend to pay higher fees and receive possibly poorer quality education, and, in the end, a diploma that is likely to be less respected. The unintended result is a continuing and perhaps even deepening gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged, thereby offsetting increases in social mobility, which was the intended outcome of education expansion.

Lagging behind public universities is not the only problem for private universities. The second problem they confront is the shrinking pool of prospective students. The problem has its roots in the sharply declining fertility rate in Taiwan (possibly the lowest in the whole world in 2009). For instance, the total numbers of births was 309,230 in 1986, but by 2007 the figure was down to 204,414, or a 33.9% decrease, and there is no sign of the trend reversing in the near future. Therefore, some higher education institutions, especially private ones, face a serious challenge in recruiting sufficient numbers of students just to survive. Moreover, this problem cannot be solved by lowering tuition fees or by struggling to raise the quality of education. Among all divisions of the academic world, social sciences and humanities, perhaps with the exception of management and economics, are the most likely to take the hardest hit, regardless of whether they belong to private or public universities. When all things are considered, sociology and related departments in some private universities are at risk of being the first tier for restructuring or closure.

Lastly, we come to the issue of auditing — the evaluation of departments and of faculty performance. Competition is not limited to domestic comparisons in today’s world. As in many places, perhaps more so in Asia, the quality of institutions and faculty performance is evaluated by a series of universal quantitative academic indicators, such as the citation impact index, the number of papers published in top journals, etc. This is especially so for some top public universities in Taiwan. They are guided by an education policy that seeks excellence on a global scale and, for instance, sets its goals on being among the “top 100 universities” in the world. However, this sort of evaluation system automatically privileges English publications, and gives

more credit to publications written in English than in local languages. They ignore the needs of the local and marginalize indigenous knowledge. Historical and social contexts are overlooked as academics pursue a global audience, which easily lead to all sorts of biases in scholarship.

In conclusion, we can say it is very important for researchers in the humanities and social sciences to be sensitive to local issues, while situating them in the larger picture of world context and world history. It is important to initiate locally significant research topics, as well as addressing research findings to local audiences. If they were to publish their research in foreign languages exclusively and to cater to the interests of international audiences only (for sake of publication), then they would become totally irrelevant to Taiwanese publics and ignore many significant issues in Taiwan. The result would be a pathological distortion of the rich heritage of our sociological discipline.

# Regulating Higher Education in South Africa and Chile

*In Chile, South Africa on April 9, 2010 at 3:34 am*

By Barbara Dickhaus, Kassel University, Germany

There has been a global move towards new accountability regimes in higher education in recent years, promoted by US-American or European actors as well as by International Organizations like the World Bank or UNESCO. External quality assurance (QA) policies of universities like accreditations and audits reflect a paradigmatic shift of regulatory policies in the higher education sector. This process is not undisputed, and those promoting QA partly face strong opposition, as traditional and collegial forms of ‘assuring quality’ in higher education are fundamentally called into question by QA as a new public management tool. However, notwithstanding these contestations, new accountability regimes have become a widely accepted governance mechanism in higher education in very different contexts. But how did a managerial tool like QA become a generally accepted regulatory policy for the higher education sector? And what can we learn from analyzing the ‘politics of translation’ of these globally promoted concepts in two countries of the Global South, Chile and South Africa?

My argument here is that QA gained momentum because of its ‘*adaptivity*’: QA is a concept to which a variety of meanings can be attached, and thus very different, partly contradictory interests can be accommodated by implementing these reforms. Thus, these new accountability regimes can be linked to very different ideas such as re-establishing public governance, strengthening market governance, contributing to national competitiveness, internationalization of higher education, positioning universities in the (global) education market and contributing to democratic transformation.

With reference to the cases of Chile and South Africa we can identify very different ways of translation and appropriation. Both Chile and South Africa were among the ‘first movers’ in terms of adopting QA for higher education and introduced these reforms in a process of transition to democracy since the early 1990s.

The Chilean case of introducing QA in higher education can be seen as a struggle between the idea to re-regulate a higher education sector liberalized and privatized under dictatorial rule and the dominant ideology of market governance. Due to the broadly accepted belief into market forces and a prevailing discourse about the benefits of market governance, QA as a policy of public re-regulation was heavily opposed. Government faced strong opposition from universities striving in the liberalized sector as well as from liberal –right wing parties in parliament. On the one hand, promoters of QA therefore ‘jumped scales’ and shifted the forums of struggles by inviting the World Bank to support Chile with a program introducing new accountability regimes in higher education. On the other hand, QA was discursively framed as facilitating market transparency in the liberalized sector and as strengthening Chile’s position in the globalised education sector via establishing globally recognized ‘quality standards’. Thus, the initial discourse of re-regulating the liberalized education sector became less relevant and was substituted by a discourse about globalization and market transparency, while the initial idea of

re-regulation was still present, but less visible. As actors were constrained by power structures and discourses on the national scale, they reached out to the international scale and reframed QA.

In South Africa, in contrast, the higher education sector is predominantly organized as a public, even though commodified sector, which is still highly segregated due to Apartheid rule. With the end of Apartheid, the state became to be seen as the key agent of change, thus, governance structures and discourses in higher education are dominated by an idea of ‘public governance’ and re-dressing. Also, national power structures were favorable, as the ANC government held a clear majority in parliament. This facilitated and selectively enabled promoters of QA to establish this new public management policy as a democratizing tool into the higher education sector. Even though QA policies were opposed on the grounds of being a managerial policy by some academics and universities, this ‘transformation imperative’ facilitated the reforms. While the role of international actors in the transfer and translation of QA policies was also highly relevant, South African policy makers did not ‘need to’ re-scale the struggles and build a coalition with international actors via an international program in order to establish policy change. Furthermore, another meaning was attached to QA, which facilitated its acceptance: QA serves to establish a powerful regulatory and public accountability system towards foreign private providers in higher education and therefore strengthens the idea of national sovereignty. In South Africa, the selectivity of the context favored the establishment of QA as a democratizing tool and a form of public re-regulation, and the meanings attached to new accountability regimes were therefore framed accordingly.

Thus, the two case studies illustrate how the *adaptivity* of a new public management concept and the *selectivity* of different contexts facilitate the rise of QA as a hegemonic governance paradigm in higher education.

This contribution is based on current PhD research on the translation of new accountability regimes in higher education in South Africa and Chile.

# French Campuses: The Bitter Taste of Autonomy

*In France on April 8, 2010 at 6:46 pm*

By a Teaching Assistant at the University of Nanterre

Last year, for six months, a broad strike paralyzed most universities in France, from February 2<sup>nd</sup> to the end of May, against a decree enforcing a new law called LRU (Law for Responsible Universities). 76 out of 82 universities organized General Assemblies at which most teachers and students voted to go on strike. In France, among 90,000 teachers, 2.2 million students and 50,000 employees who make universities work, not everyone stopped working or studying – but most of them had to discuss and debate, often fiercely and bitterly, about the future of National Education.

In contrast to preceding years, teachers led the strike while students and employees followed. Even in Law Schools, known to be traditionally State-respectful and Law-abiding communities, well-respected protesting professors were rife. Thirty-three smaller technical schools, known as IUT (*Instituts Universitaires de Technologie*), also decided to join the strike, and a National Committee for Universities on strike (CNU) tried to coordinate all these voices to build a coherent and unified structure challenging the government's program. Only a few months after Italy and Greece, France was dealing with the most massive and determined teachers' movement since 1968. If it did not succeed, at least it shed light on the universities' wounds.

## **Autonomy, another word for Dependence?**

In 2009, teachers were opposed to the governmental decree reshaping their status for the first time since 1984. According to this decree, their working-time and professional tasks could be changed at the university president's will: they could teach more for the same wage if the quality of their research didn't meet unexplained academic standards, made to work on other campuses against their will if it was needed, and forced to cooperate with private corporations if their university's board of directors, where executives from for-profit firms could sit, decided so. In a country where education is still seen as a "public good", many found these pills rather difficult to swallow.

But this decree was only one of the ways to enforce LRU, voted in the French Congress in 2007 and seen by President Sarkozy as an essential reform. LRU's keystone was university "autonomy": autonomy for university educational programs, autonomy for their management, autonomy for their budgets. Many teachers and researchers saw – and still see – this "autonomy" as a nice old word for a new set of dependencies: professional dependence upon university presidents, financial dependence upon private funding from non-academic foundations connected to profit-driven corporations, academic dependence upon nationally renowned universities able to attract the best students and teachers.

Therefore, one of the major threats of "autonomy" was that it would tremendously increase social and economic discrepancies between campuses. A few elite universities, gathered into a handful "Pôles d'excellence", would gain international recognition, while most others would be

forced to cut their budgets, stop recruiting teachers and select economically viable scientific tracks to the detriment of humanities. But LRU was not the first step in this direction.

### **The long-distance Mammoth trimmers and the economic crisis**

Behind last year's political crisis lurks a more profound social and economic crisis: the trend toward what is called "privatization" in France is not just a current fashion but a long lasting economic shift that is transforming a state-managed and nationally centralized educational system – with all its flaws – into locally ruled islands compelled to build more and more bridges toward departmental and regional marketplaces. This new model, said to be more adapted to today's economic realities and to educational budgets facing crisis, is deepening preexisting inequalities.

First, the most efficient way to reduce educational budgets is to cut payrolls: in 2008, 11,500 teachers lost their jobs; 13,500 in 2009 (including 900 in universities); 16,000 in 2010. This program is based on the idea that 50% of retiring State employees shouldn't be replaced. Therefore, classes are overwhelmed with students (sometimes 500 or even 1,000 in amphitheatres in the first year) that are left on their own, without any proper direction. Sitting on the other side of the desk, young assistants often feel like tamers – but untrained tamers, because Ph. D. students can teach (for the first time) with as little as 10-days training. Even this short training is often dispensed with or it is unrelated to the young assistant's needs. Ten years ago, socialist Prime Minister Claude Allègre (1997-2000) had already said he wanted to "trim the fat off the Mammoth" – the "Mammoth" is Education, and its "fat" is nicely trimmed every year.

Second, diplomas are more and more forged according to specific employer needs — a "licence professionnelle chargée de clientèle particuliers en banque-assurance", co-organized with Crédit Agricole, Groupama, Crédit Mutuel and BNP — so they don't help students find or change jobs, develop general skills and abilities or avoid unemployment. It ties them to a narrow set of workplaces and increases their dependence on employers. In the 1980's professional diplomas for skilled workers were widely introduced into public schools. Before that, corporations like Renault or Peugeot had their own training schools but the new formula allows them to outsource their training costs. Little by little, it is extending to the whole educational system.

Neither the LRU nor the impact of the 2008 economic crisis really gave birth to that process, although both of them greatly contributed to its acceleration. In fact, "university crisis" has been going on for years in France, and recent reforms, instead of healing wounds, spread salt on them.



# Australian Universities — Running with Neoliberalism

*In Australia on April 6, 2010 at 1:20 pm*

By Raewyn Connell, National Tertiary Education Union

Australia is a small rich country in the global periphery, with a society stemming from the encounter between an ancient Aboriginal civilization and the British form of settler colonialism. Dependent development turned towards import replacement industrialization in the 20th century. In the last 30 years, the industrial economy has been dismantled under neoliberalism, and the country is now once more dependent for prosperity on heavy exports of raw materials, especially coal and iron ore.

In the period of import replacement industrialization, the Australian state build a good-quality public university system as part of its development strategy. Few working-class youth, however, attended, even when fees were abolished in the early 1970s. Under a neo-liberal Labor Party government in the late 1980s this system was deregulated, expanded, and quasi-privatized by the reintroduction of fees, which have since escalated massively. The system has since become increasingly stratified, with a group of the older universities (calling themselves, believe it or not, the G08), trying to distinguish themselves from the rest and entrench a privileged funding position centered on research.

Stagnation in public funding has made the system increasingly dependent on student fees, and especially on fees from overseas students. Overseas students are now around 20% of all enrolments, I believe. As they pay much higher fees than local students, they are a key to university finances. Some universities have gone gangbusters for overseas students, expanding the fields in demand in this market, such as business and engineering, and discarding others.

The University of Sydney was founded in the colonial era, as a kind of finishing-school for the sons of the British colonial elite. It is now one of the largest in the country, a multiversity (to use Clark Kerr's old term) which claims to teach the widest range of fields in the system. Though basically a public institution, it is richer than other Australian universities because of its links with the local ruling class, and the endowments some of them have provided. (Not on the scale of US elite private universities, however.) The social profile of the University of Sydney's students is noticeably more privileged than that of, say, the University of Western Sydney. The University of Sydney schools of law and medicine are closely linked to the established wealth and power of the city. The University is, naturally, one of the G08.

Yet last year the staff voted to strike, and were almost on the picket line when the university management came to the table. (In Australia the term "staff" includes academic and non-academic staff; we are in the same union.)

Why did the University staff vote to strike? There are always multiple reasons behind industrial action. This one was triggered by frustration at the university management's dragging its feet for the best part of a year about a new Enterprise Agreement (i.e. legally enforceable wage bargain, under Australia's now decentralized industrial relations system).

But behind this were broader concerns:

- a pervasive sense of increasing pressure of work, often from incremental expansion in the range of tasks staff are expected to do, without increase in the support provided;
- growing surveillance, as neoliberal management systems bite deeper and demand more in the way of documented “performance”, encouraged by neoliberal governments with their ideology of “accountability”;
- growing distance between management and staff, a feature of all Australian universities, symbolized at University of Sydney by the creation of a “Senior Executive Group” as a new decision-making body, bypassing all elective mechanisms;
- overcrowded and deteriorating buildings, a problem now acknowledged by university management.

In the deep background, I think, are problems across the whole Australian university system, including:

- growing distrust of the purposes of managers and governments, pushing neoliberal agendas in various forms;
- high levels of insecurity and uncertainty among junior academic staff, combined with a pending labor supply crisis in the sector;
- uncertainty about the rationale of a university system in the global periphery, as higher education becomes more commodified and is treated as an export industry;
- spreading alienation among a workforce that finds few signs other than rhetoric of common purposes in academic labor as it is now organized.

Yet the University of Sydney is one of the most privileged in the world, and the Australian system is relatively well resourced. What’s it going to be like elsewhere? The rest of the blog tells

# Higher Education in Armenia: Challenges and Achievements

*In Armenia on March 31, 2010 at 8:42 pm*

By Gohar Shahnazaryan, Yerevan State University

Education has always played a significant role for Armenians. Throughout history and until today it remains among one of the most important values of the Armenian population. According to a sociological survey conducted last year “Education” is among three main values for young Armenian people after “Family” and “Health”. Furthermore, for Armenians, education has always implied higher education and being educated means having a university degree.

During the past 20 years the higher education system in Armenia has gone through major transformations, which have had both positive and negative outcomes. Inevitably, there is a scarcity of educational resources, specialists, professional networks and associations in almost all spheres, but at the same time there are some positive developments, which could serve as a basis for more effective and deeper changes. For example, the data of recent surveys among young people in Armenia show the constant increase in the proportion of people who think that success in a career depends on personal knowledge and skills (70% agree with that statement) or that in order to be successful in business one should rely on his/her “good” name, quality of production and trust among colleagues and clients (86 %).

Today in the Republic of Armenia there are 22 state and 73 private higher education institutions (HEI), among them 34 are accredited institutions, 31 – non-accredited, 3 branches of the state HEI of the CIS countries (former Soviet Union) and 5 branches of the private HEI of the CIS countries. The main education programs of higher professional education are conducted through various types of teaching: full-time, part-time, distant or external education. The main education program for preparing specialists with a Bachelor’s degree includes required courses and practice in the humanities and social sciences, mathematics and natural sciences, and special professional disciplines, as well as elective and optional courses. To enter the first degree, i.e. Bachelor’s degree, at higher education institutions, applicants should have at least received a full secondary general education. The duration of study is at least 4 years — for medical specializations it is 5 years. The program ends with a summary assessment and requires the defense of a final paper. The first degree gives a right to practice the relevant specialization (except medical specializations) and continue education to the next level – Master’s studies. Master’s qualification is awarded to persons holding a Bachelor’s or Specialist Diploma degree based on the results of a 2-year higher professional education program. Graduates completing a Master’s program have the knowledge, capacities and skills necessary for scientific-research and scientific-pedagogical activity, as well as management and self-improvement of their profession. It offers the possibility of continuing education to the post-graduate Doctorate (Aspirantura) studies, access to which is based on the results of the entry examinations of applicants.

The qualification of Researcher is awarded to graduates holding Master’s or a Specialist Diploma degree who pass through a further 3-year education program. Graduates holding Specialist Diploma or Master’s degrees may study for the Candidate of Sciences post graduate

qualification, which requires expanding theoretical and professional knowledge and obtaining skills to prepare a scientific dissertation. Doctor of Sciences is a scientific degree which is awarded to persons holding a degree of Candidate of Sciences who conduct further independent scientific activity, and then successfully defend a thesis. .

Among the many serious problems that higher education system in Armenia is facing today, I would like to address those which are more visible in comparison with US universities. Some of them are more global problems and need deep institutional and structural reforms, while others are more social-psychological and could be solved through joint efforts of university administrations, faculties and students.

At present one of the main problems in Armenian higher education institutions is that our universities are not considered to be research institutions. Professors and faculties mainly provide lectures, seminars and supervise student theses. The majority of professors are expected to work in other places due to the low salaries in the universities. In this situation, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain one's status within the university and at the same time look for opportunities to do your own research. Research opportunities are usually tied to international and non-profit organizations and/or scholarships and grants from different funds. This creates a very ambiguous situation, wherein faculties are supposed to divide their time and energy between 2 or even 3 jobs. As a result their professionalism and motivation decrease significantly.

Another major problem is that many departments remain very conservative and resistant to updating old courses, implementing new ones or introducing contemporary teaching techniques. Along with low salaries this conservatism is more and more holding back young professionals, especially those who have MAs or PhDs from Western universities.

Among the more social-psychological problems, the one which becomes much more vivid when we compare our universities with those of the US, is the absence of a collective Self among students, professors and administrative staff, and the lack of a sense of being affiliated with the university, and with little identification or pride in being a part of the higher education system. The development of a collective Self, arising from a university's prestige, requires the implementation of programs which encourage faculties and students to feel more affiliated with universities, which in turn could help to solve more global problems facing Armenian higher education today.

There are also numerous problems related to the artificial transmission of American, Western European and Russian knowledge into the classroom and into research projects without real analysis of their relevance to the local Armenian context. This approach is creating serious obstacles for the "localization" of the social sciences, especially in the field of political sciences, sociology, social welfare and public policy. At the same time, there is a tremendous need to establish long-term professional contacts with foreign universities and to exchange our knowledge, skills and perspectives on different social, economic, political, cultural processes with colleagues from different parts of the world.

The Department of Sociology at the Yerevan State University is among those few departments at YSU which conducts various surveys on different social issues and uses the data to design

academic courses. Numerous projects have been conducted by the Department of Sociology, analyzing various problems of Armenian society and as a consequence they are generating practical outcomes and proposals. Today the Department has three major research directions: Theory and History of Sociology, Research Methods and Public Relations and Conflict Studies. All three directions have separate courses covering Armenian, Regional or Post-Soviet contexts.

Among the main research projects are:

1. Social Transformation and, in particular, educational reforms, national identity, human rights, migration, social policy, social-psychological transformations and gender issues
2. Political Processes, including elections, image making, political participation, military sociology.
3. Conflict Studies that include regional and ethnic conflicts
4. Communication Studies that include information security, sociology of mass media, public relations.
5. Economic Research and Marketing.
6. Theory and Methodology of Sociological Research that include methodology of qualitative research, evaluation research, methodology of quantitative research.

Most of the faculty, besides their national PhDs, have foreign academic degrees and different types of affiliations with such world-renown universities as The London School of Economics and Political Science, Harvard University, Tufts University, the Central European University, University of California, Berkeley. This provides many opportunities for the development of academic curricula based on international standards. On the international level the Department of Sociology collaborates with various scientific and educational institutions such as the Berlin Humboldt University, Potsdam University, Ruhr University in Bochum, Swiss Peace,, George Mason University, Uppsala University. The Department is a member of the International Sociological Association.

The results of active academic and methodological research have been published in number of scientific journals. The establishment of the Department itself has been carried out through various short term and long term exchange programs in the most advanced scientific centers around the world, particularly in American, German, French, Italian, Hungarian, English, Indian, as well as in the CIS universities.

Since 2006 the Department of Sociology holds an Annual Sociological Conference and the papers presented are being published in the yearbook of the Department and last year the 39<sup>th</sup> World Sociological Congress with the symbolic title “Sociology at the Crossroads” was hosted by the Department of Sociology of Yerevan State University. The entire higher education system in Armenia could take advantage of its position at the crossroads of different civilizations and culture by developing unique academic curricula and training specialists with a broad understanding of developments taking place in the whole region.

# Universities in the Arab East: A Crisis of Privatization and Internationalization

*In Lebanon on March 28, 2010 at 11:10 pm*

By Sari Hanafi, American University of Beirut[1]

There are three types of universities in the Arab East. The first type is the *public university*, which absorbs the overwhelming majority of the students. Being often a national university, it generally uses Arabic language curricula. According to the UN's Arab Human Development Report (2003), political censorship and repression limits critical approaches, especially in public institutions. The democratization of education in Egypt and in Syria (where free education allows a large proportion of the population access to it), albeit very important in the post-independence era, has led to an increase in the quantity, not the quality of students. In addition to these two major factors which effect education, one should add: lack of proper faculty salary, poor libraries and teaching resources, old curricula, enormous logjams of students, and lack of financial resources for research and poor knowledge of foreign languages. These factors make the level of education in these universities problematic.

The second type of university is older, and some of them historically belonging to missions. As their tuition is very costly, they are *private non-profit universities*, which attract the upper middle class. These include Saint Josef University, the Lebanese American University (LAU) and American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon, American University in Cairo (AUC). These universities teach exclusively in English or French and are 'selective universities,' or universities with a distinct linkage to social class. These universities attract both (upper) middle class students as well as faculty from the same classes. Pierre Bourdieu characterizes academia as a fundamentally conservative institution that reproduces and reinforces social class distinctions as a result of internalized faculty outlooks and expectations. This observation would only apply to the exclusive universities in the region (and not to the public university). Some of these universities have mission statements, which clearly state that their aim is to prepare students to serve the people of the region (e.g. AUB, AUC) while other mission statements aim to prepare students for work in the global market (e.g. LAU).

Finally, since the beginning of the 1990s, many countries in the region have opted for the privatization of education. While private non-profit universities in Lebanon date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jordan opened its first *private for-profit university* in 1990, followed by Egypt, Syria and the Gulf Region.

These three types of universities do not necessary produce corresponding types of elites and knowledge, but they do indicate particular patterns of classification that will be addressed later. Boundaries are occasionally blurred between these types of universities; for instance, some public universities have created private programs.

With the transformation of the relationships between Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff's famous triple helix of university, industry and government, education is now being seen more as a private than a public good. Facing declining budgets and under intensified competition, private

and public universities in the Arab East have responded with market solutions, standardization and corporatization. They have instituted joint ventures with private corporations and have been reinventing education as a commodity through distance learning. Mahmood Mamdani argued that whereas privatization (the entry of privately sponsored students) is compatible with a public university where priorities are publicly set, commercialization (financial and administrative autonomy for each faculty to design a market-responsive curriculum) inevitably leads to a situation where the market determines priorities in public universities. The primary objective is to turn the university into an entrepreneurial organization that can foster a relationship with the productive sectors of the economy. Turning education in the Arab East into a means of industrial development together with the often backward looking gaze of these elitist institutions often frustrates social science scholars. Some of the public universities, like those in Syria, are often much better than the newly opened private universities. Mamdani warns that the commercialization of public universities leads to the subversion of public institutions for private purposes. While commercial universities have often attracted middle and upper middle classes, the quality of the higher education is also problematic, as they produce an élite that cannot compete in the global market.

There is a massive academic boom in higher education in the Arab World. One important pattern characterizing the current boom is a dual process of *privatization* amidst *globalization*. According to Vincent Romani, two-thirds (around 70) of the new universities founded in the Arab Middle East since 1993 are private, and more and more (at least 50) of them are branches of Western, mostly American, universities.

While offshore campuses (Qatar Education City, Dubai Campus) can protect the university from their conservative surrounding societies, this results in a tendency for the university to cut its ties with society. The parachuting of these structures does not encourage research output and the social sciences in these institutions are very marginal. For Vincent Romani it is highly unlikely that the influx of new higher education venues can proceed without engaging the conflict between nationalism and the necessary *internationalism* of the projects. On the level of language, national universities often teach social sciences in Arabic, while exclusive universities use French and/or English. Private universities use what Zughoul called ‘innovative accommodation’ with lecturers and students code-switching between Arabic and English (or French) in order to get their points across. Many researchers, especially in North Africa, have shown that code-switching is not only frequent, but almost instinctive, producing an effortless and seamless flow of language that accommodates the variable levels of student understanding.

These new trends in university development in the Arab region, driven by marketization and privatization, thus impact the language of instruction and elite formation, deserving closer scrutiny.

The UN’s Arab Human Development Report (2003) indicated how little Arab countries translate from, and to, other languages. The damage caused by the lack of translation effort has become quite obvious: mono language teaching (either in Arabic, French, or English) and disconnection from external cultural and scientific advances, has led to the isolation of younger generations of graduates from international debate. Generally speaking, the language-divide corresponds to an unequal division of labor in which Arabic production is mainly local and of little relevance to

international debates. These observations are based on a review of articles submitted to *Idafat*, the Arab Journal of Sociology and to *al-mustaqbal al-arabi* since early 2007.

Although language is a highly symbolic marker of identity, multi lingual scholars have multi-layered identities which opens the door to more expansive research agendas and a commitment not only to local and regional contexts, but international ones too. According to Sultana, the language of instruction cannot be chosen exclusively on the basis of political-cultural factors, which are related to identity formation on gaining political independence. There is also a political-economic component, which involves recognizing problems related to the dearth of resources that limits the production of required textbooks, as well as problems determined by the marketing strategies of international publishers from core universities. Production in two languages, especially through translation, allows Arab scholars to be read by both the Arab public and an international audience. Recent experience from the region confirms this. Thus, there are different markets for different languages, making English very important as a teaching tool. However, there is no reason to have a syllabus devoid of references to Arabic publications. A study of 30 syllabi of social science courses taught in Saint Josef University, LAU and AUB shows that it is extremely rare to find Arabic references, even as secondary reading.

However, as many interviewees pointed out, compartmentalization of the language of scholars does not mean one cannot find a way of mixing English and Arab curricula and references. One can expect universities that teach in English to be a bridge connecting the local social science to the international arena, but they become globalized institutions only in the sense that they have access to global conventions and resources, but do not necessarily participate in the production of global science. Moreover, these universities contribute to the isolation of students and faculty from their society. George Soros and Joseph Stiglitz have recognized the pitfalls of globalization, specifically that internationalization of the higher education creates and/or magnifies inequalities and inequities that already exist in southern societies. This process has led to the homogenization of curricula. Knight and Yew suggest that the complexities involved in working in the field of internationalization require additional sets of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and understandings about the international, intercultural, and global dimensions of higher education.

In Lebanon, while there is segmentation of society on sectarian-nationalist lines, language lines have come to reinforce this division. Knowing a foreign language becomes a source of integration globally and isolation locally. These elite universities produce hybridity that is geared only towards production and leads to alienation from national society and marginality. Social scientists in Lebanon do not speak with each other because while the Lebanese University (public university) talks to the society, AUB, LAU and Saint Joseph, talk to the international world. The fora for encounters are rare.

In brief, increasing privatization and the commodification of knowledge have created hierarchies among universities and among different language speaking elites, and also compartmentalized scholars by language of interaction.



[1] This paper is part of a forthcoming article “University Systems in the Arab East: Publish Globally and Perish Locally vs. Publish Locally and Perish Globally” *Current Sociology*. Vol. 59, no 6.

# Italy: A Troubled and Divided Academic Field under Neoliberal Pressure

*In Italy on March 17, 2010 at 3:47 am*

By Anna Carola Freschi, University of Bergamo, and Marco Santoro, University of Bologna

It is well known that Italy has one of the poorest public funding for scientific research and universities in Western societies. The number of researchers as a percentage of the employed population is also one of the lowest. The ratio of full time tenured researchers/professors (who amount to about 60,000) to temporary researchers and lecturers (normally with short terms contracts and low remuneration) is near one to one. A big slice of teaching activities and courses is provided by young researchers, often without any remuneration.

## The Impoverished University

During the last twenty years, the public university has suffered an increasing financial impoverishment along with a great waste of creativity: the intellectual and practical needs of the new generation of students and researchers has been widely neglected, too often sacrificed in favor of short term interests of both institutions and tutors/masters. The waste of the first ten or more most important years of academic training – spent in intense teaching activities, fund raising and executive jobs – for dozens of thousands of young researchers is clearly a great loss for the university system and the whole country. For those students and young scholars, research has often become a part time and contingent activity, to be done after all the other stuff, in the residual interstices of a growingly bureaucratic and Fordist university.

Actually, the whole academic work (at all hierarchical levels) in public university has been transformed into one of the most entrepreneurial and flexible occupations on the market, at the same time that it has been asked to perform increasingly heavy executive functions, and to apply a wide range of bureaucratic and standardized modes of control. This transformation has specially impacted the academic training relying too much on the sense of responsibility of the masters.

The increasing competition for scarce and uncertain resources has exacerbated the relationship among ‘schools’, cartels and the most influential personalities in academic politics. Under a certain level of resources, competition loses its ideal aura of a fair and fruitful confrontation among peers, at all organizational level, and became pure struggle. Opportunistic behaviours, along horizontal and vertical dimensions, have dramatically increased, even in the ‘market’ of authorship, and have deployed the worst consequences in the recruitment policies. The process of “corrosion of character” (focused by Sennet) has weakened the opportunity to consolidate a professional ethics, which should be the core of the profession.

Not surprisingly, and disregarding the strong continuity with the public policies which have brought about the present difficult situation, the buzzwords which have framed recent governmental initiatives have been “equity,” “meritocracy” and “moralization” of academic life. Such governmental claims sound, however, a bit paradoxical to anyone who has in mind the

Italian current scene and specifically the deep public ethical crisis, which concerns the reproduction and even the identities of the Italian political and economic elites.

Still, not surprisingly, public debate has been distorted by strong conceptual as well as empirical mystifications. Concepts and measures of merit and equity have been proposed in rough and misleading terms, avoiding any link with the wider social context, and often generating more confusion than clarity.

In the middle of the global financial debacle the proposal of private subsidization for augmented university student fees appears to some observers irresponsible, particularly if one considers the unfavourable job opportunities for medium and highly qualified individuals in this country. Again, neither the social selectivity of indebtedness nor the possible motivations for studies, which is not the same as individual financial enrichment, are included in public discussion.

The wider national context is also characterized by other elements, leading to the dismantling of those public functions bearing on social equity: important cuts in the public expenditure on schools, welfare and the disadvantaged areas of the South, very low care for the needs of a growingly multiethnic society. Even the privatization of several public services hasn't had the expected positive effects on the quality and price of the services; on the contrary, new grounds for inefficiency, corruption and bad entrepreneurship have emerged.

In this frame, the everyday campaign of denigration/humiliation of academic work, conducted by some ministers and by opinion leaders (mainly economists), is not constructive and, definitively, as it is too generic, becomes unfair. However, the academic elite has certainly played its own role in the current crisis of the Italian universities. The recurrent reforms of the last ten years have been often managed in a feudal and particularistic manner, conducive to a disproportioned increase of associate professors and full professors without a parallel recruitment of assistant professors (*ricercatori*).

Finally, it should be noted that in Italy the only important recent mobilizations against the local and national consequences of the several waves of reforms on the university system haven't been led by the academically most consolidated cliques, from any disciplinary field. Students and less protected workers (like precarious researchers) were indeed the main protagonists of the two recent protest cycles (2004-2005 and 2008-2009). Only a small proportion of the permanent academic staff has participated in this protest, adopting a mostly symbolic repertoire (such as lessons in the squares). The great part of researchers – precarious or permanent – has continued to accept extra-courses, often with no remuneration and always beyond their contractual duties, according to a pattern of access to professional groups which is widely used (and sometimes abused) in Italy .

### **The marginality of sociology in Italian society and in its universities**

All these features of the national and university contexts find a clear resonance in the sociological field, with the aggravating circumstances which derive from being a recently institutionalized discipline and from its-own scientific core. The generation of sociologists, who control the nodes of academic power and connections with local and national political and

economic elites in the last two decades, played a substantive and peculiar part in this debacle. They didn't succeed in carrying out the defense of their position with respect to market and public action. Bitterly, this implied also a lack of vision about the future of university and of the space reserved for sociology and sociologists as both professional experts and intellectuals. The prevailing weakness of a public and professional ethic, neoliberal culture and the wider media context are radically unfavourable especially to many kinds of sociology, due to the well-known hegemonic denial of the existence of an object such as "society" even among Italian gatekeepers, in large part under control of/belonging to right wing parties. This, in part, explains why sociologists don't succeed in claiming the scientific autonomy of their-own field of knowledge. Unfortunately, the increasing troubles for cultivating sociology as a discipline, which favor more pragmatic and short term policy analysis, haven't given advantages to the sociological field as a whole. Indeed, it has led to the progressive expulsion of sociology from a few of the fields where it had achieved important results on analytical grounds. The almost complete exclusion of sociology from the curricula in Schools of Economics or even Statistics is an example of this significant trend. Not surprisingly, as less profitable in terms of the current market logic, public sociology, social critics and part of the humanities have been the predictable 'victims' of the newly emerging models of university and society. Precisely because of its-own scientific peculiarity, these defeats/retreats have been almost fatal to the sociological field. In government milieu the proposal to dismiss sociology as a discipline (and to merge it with other social and cultural sciences) is being debated and seriously considered as a result of intellectual inconsistency and vacuity, generically addressed to the sociological field. The imbalance of quality within the field is instrumentally used by other social scientists against sociology as a whole. After all, sociology is a well established discipline, with a solid and acknowledged canon, in different regions of the world. This is not a claim for disciplinary fundamentalism, but surely the centrifugal pressures towards more (neo-classical) market-inclined fields and a corresponding positioning of the discipline – without acknowledgment of its own autonomous scientific dignity – have been accepted as only a minor problem by the same gatekeepers of the sociological field.

### **Sociology: a divided intellectual field**

As usual, history is a helpful resource for understanding puzzles. Consider first of all that sociology arrived late in Italy – late with respect to countries like France and the United States, at least from an academic point of view. The first chair in sociology was recognized by the Italian government only in 1950, when the chair in history and the doctrine of fascism held by Camillo Pellizzi in Florence, was transformed into a chair in sociology. The first appointment following public competition in sociology goes back only to 1961 – in Rome, with Franco Ferrarotti. Therefore the sociological field emerged only in the 1960s, mainly around a few scholars who acted as poles: Pellizzi in Florence, Ferrarotti in Rome, and then Filippo Barbano in Turin, Luciano Cavalli in Genoa, Achille Ardigò in Bologna, Alessandro Pizzorno in Ancona, and so on. Still more recent is the introduction of a third degree in higher education, i.e. PhD. This was introduced in 1985, and the current cohort of PhD students is only the 25<sup>th</sup>. This means that it is only since the nineties that PhDs entered the sociological field – with the few exceptions of those who since the sixties graduated in a foreign university (rarely absorbing the foreign country's academic customs, however.)

But another feature is important and should be noticed in any account of the Italian sociological field. Since its inception, with the aforementioned early academic practitioners, the field structured itself around two great poles: a lay pole, on the left, and a Christian (or better a Roman Catholic one), on the right. A great tension was therefore organizing and driving the emerging Italian sociological field in its early years (approximately 1960-1964), a tension which would be soon institutionalized in a true cleavage between two so-called “components,” or better “camps”: the Catholic camp (with the full leadership of Ardigò and at least two strongholds: the Catholic University in Milan and the Faculty of Political Science in Bologna), and a less organized and more polycentric camp of lay (usually left-oriented) sociologists. It is not surprising that Parsons – with his stress on social integration and the importance attributed to value systems – was appealing to the Catholic camp more than to the left-oriented one. It is less obvious why Merton and Lazarsfeld proved so alien to this same Catholic camp: the most promising explanation is probably the stronger philosophical orientation of early Catholic sociologists, who were still influenced by Luigi Sturzo’s philosophical sociology, and still sceptical about the extension of scientific programs and tools to the study of human life and culture – including, of course, religion.

In fact, after the great mobilization of the 1970s, and the exposure of social science to the political conflicts and stakes of that decade, Italian sociology worked hard – as other national sociologies – to eliminate any suspicion of ideological commitment, looking for a new and, strictly scientific, legitimation. This work of de-politicization and de-ideologization was particularly intense in the camp which was more involved in political mobilization, i.e. the lay camp. In this conjuncture, it is revealing that precisely a conservative French scholar like Boudon was identified as a bearer of scientific legitimacy even by the more leftist sociologists. Incidentally, the troubles Bourdieu has long encountered in Italy, after a first import in the early seventies, have to be located, and seem accountable, exactly in this context. Just to complicate the case, the lay camp within the sociological field worked hard to further differentiate itself after the early seventies. At first there was the constitution of an academic group – labelled MiTo (i.e. Milan and Turin, as the greatest part of their members were associated with these two big universities in the North of Italy, even if an influential group was also located in Bologna), composed of younger left-wing or liberal scholars who wanted their voice to be heard in the Associazione Italiana di Sociologia – the first true professional association which was effectively founded only in 1982 (before that year, sociologists were associated with groupings that were both more local and specialised). The second one was the formation, in the early eighties, of a new group, the so-called Third Wing, which was and still is appealing above all to sociologists in the Center and South which were not part of the Catholic wing and not willing to stay in MiTo – indeed, were not really accepted by the latter. Different from the principles structuring the MiTo, which adhere to the rules of a Weberian “sect” (with a high barrier to the access), the Third component seems characterized by an opposite organizational/normative model, less exclusive in access and more rigid toward exits. This organizational feature accounts for the wide range of topics and references which characterize this wing – much wider than the MiTo’s. Political, geographical, interpersonal, and only in small part scientific-intellectual factors account for this split inside the lay camp.

This articulation of three camps, which can be found even among formally established associations (e.g. the SPE, the “Sociology of the person,” in the Catholic camp), has deeply

marked and still is marking anything a sociologist can do, including his opportunity to enter the field, and particularly the chances to enter it through a formal *public* competition (necessary to gain a tenure). We don't have enough evidence to say that this model of structuring the disciplinary field doesn't also affect other academic disciplines in Italy, in different ways and measures. Our sense, however, shared by many colleagues, is that sociology is really an exceptional case at least for the degree of institutionalization that this organized system of cleavages has achieved in 40 years of development and improvement. Perhaps, this is an aspect of the delayed modernization of the (academic) profession, which has had stronger consequences for sociology, as a particularly vulnerable field, for many of the reasons we have underlined above (its specific public mission, late institutionalization, small dimension of the field, relationships particularly unfavorable inter-disciplinary fields, etc.). What is sure is that this internal division affects almost all the institutional and even intellectual life, and work, of Italian sociologists.

It is easy to imagine how the prevailing structuration of the field according to cleavages, which are only in small part intellectual but mainly organizational and political (unfortunately not in the sense of academic politics, but in the sense of potential relations with the political and especially the party system) could affect the working and the intellectual productivity of the sociological field. Suffice to say that the psychological tension among intellectual generations is here distorted by tensions and cleavages pertaining less to the current scientific game and much more to the political or bureaucratic fields. Too much academic work is in Italy consumed in managing and above all piloting competitions, in order to regulate who will enter the field, usually less on the basis of scientific merits than reliability to the camp (and inside this, to the smaller local group, or even the personal chair). Of course, given the features of the field and the growing scarcity of resources, an open critique has been quite rare.

After all, the AIS is the expression of this threefold structuration of the sociological field, in so far that each new President and executive board has to be decided (before the voting) according to the negotiations among these three "parties". An enlightening indicator of this main function of AIS is the fact that its members do not include some of the most influential and respected sociologists and that almost none of them has ever considered becoming a President. If few younger scholars – especially from among the more productive and internationally linked – aren't involved in the activities of the AIS, it is often because it is more common to adopt a strategy of loyalty than implicit confrontation or voice.

This is after all the main issue of the Italian sociological field: i.e. the interiorization and internalization even in the younger generation of a vision of sociology as a system of cleavages and tensions among academic power groups, which do not easily foster intellectual creativity, and cannot promote the change and innovation needed to strengthen and re-launch an original role for sociology in Italy. Indeed, even among the younger generations it is very rare to find attempts to modernize the structuration of the field in a direction that would offer better opportunities for innovative and substantive involvement.. That may be because strict loyalty has become a particularly precious resource in a context of permanent 'war' of all against all, with negative consequences in recruitment policy. This result has been exacerbated by subjecting the current generation over 40 years old to excessive amounts of teaching and bureaucratic tasks

during the last decade, with the effect of reducing time for research and pressure to rely more on organizational than intellectual or scientific resources.

### **The quest for a stronger professional identity**

The weak sense of professional and disciplinary identity is, we suspect, an important social condition for the ‘market’ drift of Italian sociology. Not only exchange and negotiation have become an integral feature for the working of the field, but the lack of a clear and deeply felt scholarly identity – and of a mission grounded on it – has favoured the acceptance of heteronomous organizational principles, which for long have been mainly political (i.e. linked to the peculiar party system) and currently are more market-oriented (also this in part an effect of the party system and its move toward the right). In the absence of shared criteria of scholarly evaluation, the (neo-classical, mono-dimensional) market has become the main standard – in the design of the courses, in the selection (and still before that in the writing) of textbooks, in the building of reputation (measured in terms of student numbers, fundraising and book sales), and even in the selection of the topics to study, methods to adopt, and the books to write (very often driven by the expectations of sales, according to the publishers’ vision).

It is not surprise that the first (and recent) national assessment of research in Italy (so called CIVR) which has been conducted for the social sciences by a group of experts with no interest at stake in the national game, has thrown a long black shadow especially on Italian sociology, very poorly evaluated and described in the following points: 1) a prevalence of books as against articles (a mark of an immature and heteronomous scientific field); 2) an almost total nationalization of book production (i.e. books in Italian, and for the Italian market) and an international visibility promoted only by (the few) articles; 3) little cooperation among researchers (that is, a prevalence of individually authored articles and books); 4) concentration of research in the Northern and Central regions of the country, as a confirmation of the wider territorial imbalances affecting the country; 5) a relatively low average quality; 6) a strong heterogeneity among research areas, with excellence concentrated in some areas and very low standards in others. There are good reasons to suspect that these outcomes in turn are the natural effect of a distorted selection of the intellectual products to be evaluated, in which the institutional position and the academic power of the authors have been prioritized over intellectual qualities like originality and soundness. But this is only a cold comfort, as it translates on another plane into what is the deep problem at stake in the field. In other words, the perverse criteria of valorization in the field have been isomorphically transferred to the assessment process (through the phase of product selection which was controlled by the academic hierarchies), with the effect of distorting the relationship between outcomes and the object of the evaluation exercise (the actual potential of research).

Although Italian sociologists learnt this outcome in 2006, till now the very apparent challenges posed by the CIVR assessment don’t seem to have given rise to extensive and appropriate reactions in the national field, different from the usual (and not very productive) ones discrediting the real value of the whole enterprise. But a few innovations can be highlighted.

One improvement in the Italian sociological field has been the wider adoption of peer review procedures by the human and social sciences, as a consequence of the pressure of other scientific

fields at the national level and their influence in the national decision making arena. Even if promoted from the outside, the new system of evaluation has anyway been welcomed by the most prestigious sociological journals – even if, so far, there aren't indications about how much it will be accepted in the whole field, and how it will be implemented in practice.

The founding in 2007 of a new journal by a group of younger sociologists to which we belong (mainly in our forties) is, we hope, a step in the direction of the internationalization of the discipline and the improvement of its internal communication, as well as the general improvement of standards. The journal, named “*Sociologica*. Italian Journal of Sociology on line” and published by the most prestigious Italian publisher in the field of academic sociology, is the first sociological journal in Italy to exploit digital technologies. , It publishes peer reviewed (in blind and public modalities) essays, it has chosen English as its main language and it is explicitly designed to foster discussion among scholars, both Italian and foreign.

We regard both these initiatives – the spreading of peer review and the founding of a new, and internationally oriented journal – as encouraging signs of change and professionalization. In order to institutionalize this novel trend, some social conditions need to be first realized , and among them is priority given to the organization of a solid constituency. Even here there are may be good reasons for being optimist. For partly contingent reasons, but also as an effect of the working of the field itself (e.g. the introduction of PhD programs and the recent professionalization of social research, a few “deep” and virtuous intellectual continuities between good masters and good students, the recent resurgence of a radical, critical attitude even inside sociology, etc.), in recent years a new generation of scholars have begun to occupy interesting, strategic positions in central regions of the field, which Canadian sociologist Neil McLaughlin would define as “optimal marginality”.

Actually, the new generations of sociologists have to accept the challenge of overcoming the weaknesses of the legacy of their elders and promote wider changes in the field. These changes must prevent the final dissolution of the discipline,– which prevailing current cultural and political trends tend to reinforce – by reversing the many mistakes made in the past by many of its practitioners.

How near the system is to collapse is witnessed by the recent proposal to dismiss sociology as an autonomous discipline from the official list of disciplines acknowledged by the State, which has provoked a public discussion online about the “suicide/homicide” of sociology in Italy (launched in mid February by the sociologist Guido Martinotti, one of the founders of AIS, in the website of one of the most important intellectual institutions in Italy, the Istituto Treccani's, that is the publisher of the Italian Encyclopaedia and many other reference publications in Italian high culture.

Indeed, only six sociologists have till now contributed a post, three of them from the younger generations, almost all insisting – this is not by chance – on the issue of professional division and lack of a national representation with high scientific legitimation. We can only hope the discussion will continue...



# Who Controls Universities in South Korea?

*In South Korea on March 6, 2010 at 7:45 pm*

By Soon-Kyoung Cho, Ewha Womans University, South Korea

In November 2008, chancellors and university officials from 68 universities gathered in the Plaza Hotel in Seoul to participate in a briefing session on the 2008 University Evaluation by Joong-Ang Ilbo, one of South Korea's major newspapers. Presidents from the Korean Council for University Education, the Chancellors' Council for National and Public Colleges, and the Chancellors' Council for Private Colleges also appeared. In its newsletter, Joong-Ang Ilbo wrote that "the power of the Joong-Ang Ilbo University Evaluation was once again reconfirmed."

Since 1994, Joong-Ang Ilbo, over which Samsung Group has practical control, has conducted an evaluation of domestic universities and reported a ranking table as top news on the paper's front page, following the US News & World Report's America's Best Colleges ranking model. Another newspaper company, Chosun Ilbo, which is considered one of the most conservative in South Korea, began its own college appraisal in 2008. With the cooperation of QS (Quacquarelli Symonds), a medium-sized British company, Chosun Ilbo has run college evaluations on 463 colleges from 11 Asian countries, including 106 colleges from Korea.

The university evaluations and rankings phenomenon has become a hot topic in university administrations in South Korea. It is evident that university evaluations by the media are one of the most effective ways of controlling universities and the academic community. Universities have continuously implemented the guidelines of the appraisals and also have made strenuous efforts to move up the rankings.

The university evaluations and ranking reports have accelerated fierce competition among universities. All-out efforts have been made to get higher points in the evaluations. Major universities have made it their top priorities to enhance research capabilities of the faculty members, recruit foreign professors, increase the number of courses taught in English, introduce high-tech equipment, and construct more buildings.

The rapid increase of college tuitions, the attraction of business resources, and the acquisition of universities by conglomerates (i.e., Samsung and Doosan) all have much to do with such college evaluations. Universities have increasingly been modeled after business corporations in their operations. Increasing numbers of universities have implemented restructuring as proposed by multinational consulting companies such as McKinsey & Company. Colleges in Korea have been moving toward marketization more than ever before. Joong-Ang University, which was taken over by a major Korean conglomerate, Doosan Group, made Accounting a required course for all students since 2009. The chairperson of the board of directors of the university, who was formerly the CEO of Doosan Group, argued that college graduates need to be able to read financial statements of firms.

Major indices for university evaluations include papers per faculty member (the source used in the Chosun Ilbo evaluation is Scopus, thus only papers in international journals are counted),

citations per paper, number of courses that are provided in English, portion of international professors and students, and employer review. For many major universities in South Korea, gaining good scores in these evaluations has become one of their most important tasks.

This environment has made it more difficult for researchers at universities to produce knowledge which is urgently needed for civil society. The number of articles in journals with wider readership has been reduced significantly. The articles published in popular magazines as well as books for public audiences are not taken as 'academic' work. Magazines published for mass circulation, which had an important influence on democratization movements until the mid-1990s, are now experiencing difficulties due to a lack of contributors.

Books are often not well received in determining evaluation points. Faculty members thus are reluctant to spend their time writing books because it takes much less time for them to work on journal articles. Books for wider audiences, in particular, receive little credit because they are not considered academic, especially those intended primarily for public audiences. Books such as *The Second Shift* by Arlie Hochschild, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire, *The Overworked American* by Juliet Schore and *The Corrosion of Character* by Richard Sennett would not be favorably recognized as academic works in South Korea. This is because they are not written in academic formats and thus are claimed to lack expertise, as they could be easily read by the non-academic.

In Korea's academic world, popularity and academic quality are often reciprocally arranged. Those works with great popularity are claimed to not have academic quality or expertise. The distance between academia and civil society is moving farther apart. Neither public audiences nor policy makers in South Korea read the *American Sociological Review*.

For faculties, publishing articles in professional journals is a top priority. Because of this, it is not easy for scholars to afford time and space to be concerned with the lives of others. Nor is it easy to reflect on one's own work. It is not safe to ask questions which deviate from existing academic ones. To pursue new paradigms different from existing research programs is also difficult. The current university evaluation and ranking system formulated and run by private firms has effectively ruined universities as a source of critique and 'inconvenient truth.'

Although the media control of universities has continued for over 15 years now with little resistance, the cracks in the evaluation and ranking model are beginning to show. During a general meeting of the Korean Council for University Education, which was held in early 2010, a number of chancellors raised objections to the evaluations by media. They noted that the evaluations hardly show credibility and objectivity in determining college ratings. Furthermore, they argued that the university evaluation and rating system is not designed for enhancing the quality of research and education, but for lucrative business. They criticized the commercial purposes of the evaluations, claiming that they instigate excessive competition among colleges to get advertising revenues from them.

# Resource Scarcity in Armenia

*In Armenia on February 4, 2010 at 11:53 pm*

By Gevorg Poghosyan, Armenian Sociological Association

In Armenia sociology is developing in academic institutions, state and private universities, think-tanks and NGOs. The Yerevan State University (YSU) was founded in 1919. Today YSU has 22 Faculties of History, Linguistics, Philosophy, Law, Psychology, Sociology, Geology, Geography, Physics, Mathematics, Biology, Faculty of International Relations, Economy, Oriental Studies and others. The educational and scientific activities are organized in more than 100 departments, which are furnished with modern technologies and equipment. YSU has 13 000 students. More than 200 lecturers out of 1200 hold doctoral degrees and more than 500 are Candidates of Sciences. By now there have been approximately 90,000 graduates ([www.y-su.am](http://www.y-su.am)).

The Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Yerevan State University was established in 1986. The Faculty of Sociology was opened in September of 2004. The Chair of Social Work and Social Technologies was separated from the Chair of Applied Sociology. Currently the following specializations are available here: Sociology, Social Work, Conflict Resolution, Methodology of Social Research and Public Relations. Since the 2007-2008 academic year distance learning in the area of Sociology and Social Work is available as well.

Laboratories for Applied Sociological Research and Distance Learning exist at this faculty. One year courses are available at the Distance Learning Laboratory in the area of Social Work and Public Relations specializations. Preparatory courses for foreign students in the field of Sociology with one year duration have also been available in this laboratory since 2007.

In the framework of the Armenian Academy of Sciences sociological researches were conducted in two Institutes: in the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law (1969) ([www.ipsol.sci.am](http://www.ipsol.sci.am)) and in the Institute of Archeology and Ethnology (1959). In 1983 Armenian branch of the Soviet Sociological Association was opened, on the bases of which in 1992 the independent Armenian Sociological Association (ASA) was founded. Together with ASA ([www.asa.am](http://www.asa.am)) small private sociological organizations, including groups attached to newspapers, political parties, ministries, and private universities also started to be created. It is worth mentioning that besides the capital, sociological groups were created in other towns of Armenia.. Sociological education was also enlarged due to the creation of many private universities. Nowadays there are about 80 private and 12 State universities in Armenia. 6-7 of them offer Bachelor's and Master's degrees in sociology. Powerful changes in the development of Armenian sociology started from the mid eighties and early nineties.

Sociological researches conducted by Armenian sociologists focus on three main sectors: (a) Fundamental academic research; (b) Public opinion polls, political sociology, and (c) Market research. The spectrum of sociological topics has been widely extended. Liberalization of Armenian society extends the frames of sociological analyses of public life. Nowadays sociologists examine problems that were previously closed and forbidden to research. In the sphere of academic research you can clearly see new trends which did not exist before. Among

the main academic sociological research we could mention the following directions: Sociology of Disaster; Migration Sociology; Ethno-Sociology; Gender Studies; Social Stratification; Sociology of Poverty; Sociology of Family; Sociology of Youth and Children and others.

Market research and public opinion surveys were completely new for us. The main fields of this research are: advertisement, media surveys, consumer behavior, etc. Public opinion surveys became very intensive especially after the first presidential and parliamentary elections in 1991. However, Armenia has not yet founded an Institute of Public Opinion Research that would conduct surveys on a regular base. More or less regular surveys are conducted by the Academy of Sciences and the ASA.

The main problem that sociological education in the country faces is the lack of qualified teaching personnel and the scarcity of books and textbooks in Armenian. In reality, Armenian is the language of instruction in all universities, except for a few foreign universities. Yet despite this there are only a couple of textbooks written in Armenian by Armenian sociologists, and 2-3 textbooks translated from Russian or English into Armenian. Thus, Armenian students studying in faculties of Sociology and Political Science in our universities have to satisfy their need of information from the oral lectures of their professors. Even works of eminent classical sociologists are available only in foreign languages: Russian, English, French, and German. Lack of textbooks, learning materials and books in the teaching language reduce drastically the quality of sociological education in universities. Students obtain their BA and MA degrees with a poor knowledge of history of sociology, modern sociological theories, directions, tendencies and methodologies for sociological research.

Lack of qualified instructors in universities is another key problem. It is enough to mention that even in the Faculty of Sociology at YSU none of the professors hold a postdoctoral degree in sociology. Philosophers, political scientists, economists, mathematicians and even geographers teach courses in sociology to undergraduate and graduate level students. The situation is even worse in other universities of Armenia.

The huge deficiency of textbooks and books in Armenian and the lack of professional teachers are the main obstacles for progress of not only sociological education in the universities of Armenia but also for sociology as a whole. The most immediate solution for this problem is the development of sociological education in foreign universities that are established in Armenia, and encouraging Armenian students in sociology and political science to study abroad.

# The Sub-Prime University

*In United Kingdom on February 2, 2010 at 8:53 am*

By Peter Hodgkinson, London Metropolitan University, U.K.

One cannot help but be struck by the almost daily reminder that the worlds of finance and higher education are actually conjoined ('Oxford University loses £100m in credit crunch'). Their fates appear to be inextricably linked, and never more so than in the current economic crisis. However, it is not just the suggestion that ex-hedge-fund managers and City market traders are supposedly vying for a place in the Senior Common Room that is currently sending a shiver up and down some academic spines, it is also the reported case of London Metropolitan University (LondonMet) being in debt to the tune of £50m and as a consequence having to lay off 400 staff. This has really concentrated the minds of even the most gilded HE employees. Indeed, it is this, the parlous state of my own institution LondonMet, that is probably the most stark illustration of what happens when the worlds of finance and higher education (HE) appear to run parallel. More significantly still, this case highlights the considerable differences that remain between these worlds in terms of how they are actually treated.

LondonMet, in common with most of the high street banks in 2009, is currently broke. And, as with the banks, no one is taking responsibility for the situation. Neither the senior management, the Regulators – the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) or indeed the government appear to be willing to own up to the fact that the institution could soon be the first publicly financed university in the UK to go bust.

Yet, if we look to our counterparts in the financial sector, it becomes quite obvious why we are in the mess we are in. LondonMet is the HE equivalent of the Northern Rock Bank – the first domino in the recent UK banking collapse. In many respects these two institutions have led a parallel existence and their fates appeared, until recently, to eerily coalesce. However, unlike the government's bail-out of Northern Rock, there appears to be a DNR (Do Not Revive) notice attached to LondonMet. It is therefore important that we turn over the bones and see why, at this point in time, these surrogate twins are being treated so differently.

Of course, with hindsight, we can now see that the business models of both Northern Rock and LondonMet were always destined to end in tears. Northern Rock was an upstart bank that had its origins in the rash of Building Society de-mutualisation (ownership by depositors) in the late 1980s and 1990s. In fact Northern Rock's de-mutualisation came about in the halcyon days of New Labour in 1997. In real terms de-mutualisation was little more than de-regulation, albeit dressed up as 'freeing' the institution to compete for funds in capital markets or not be 'tied down' to its traditional customer deposits. Every building society that de-mutualised after 1986 has now either been taken over by a conventional bank or, as in the case of Northern Rock, recently been part 'nationalised'. Apart from the 'carpetbaggers' who made a quick killing on the stock market in the rush to de-mutualise, no-one appears to have gained by the deregulation of what were once proud and hugely respected civic institutions. Similarly, the formation of the post-1992 'new' universities in the UK also marked the destruction of what were, in most cases, respected civic education institutions – the former Polytechnics. Their re-branding as autonomous universities i.e. independent of local accountability, was also hailed a 'freeing up'

these institutions. LondonMet was duly constituted by the merger of the former polytechnics of North London and London Guildhall (later Universities) in 2002.

Northern Rock developed a business model that was predicated almost entirely on aggressive growth. Put simply, the bank borrowed money on the markets to fuel its lending. When the credit crunch came along Northern Rock found that it was not able to borrow money: it had a 'liquidity' crisis. For example, in the first half of 2007, Northern Rock raised just £1.7bn from depositors and lent £10.7bn. The difference between the income it received and the loans it was continuing to make was made up by borrowing from the capital markets. Therefore, when the credit crunch arrived, the bank couldn't bridge this gap in its accounts and was unable to continue its business. The sub-prime mortgage scandal in the US had sent shivers through the capital markets and no one was willing to lend to huge borrowers, especially those such as Northern Rock, who were also sitting on the about-to-burst housing bubble.

Meanwhile, back in HE, the newly merged LondonMet was also adopting a 'business model' based on aggressive growth – only in student numbers. Fuelled by what appeared to be a government sponsored 'happy-hour' policy of extending HE provision to 50% of the eligible population, the 'production' of new courses and 'customers' was to continue apace. The management of the institution adopted an approach that was described at the time as 'putting Stalin's Five-Year Plans to shame'. The suggestion that the university invade Eastern Europe would not have gone amiss in the search for new 'markets' and students of every which ilk. However, much of the growth was in fact achieved largely by attempting to erode the staff's terms and conditions. This culminated in the inevitable industrial dispute over contracts in 2004-5, wherein both management and unions could have come straight out of central casting for a remake of the famous Peter Sellers film 'I'm Alright Jack'.

It is important to note that the aggressive, growth-at-all-costs approaches of Northern Rock and LondonMet were both legitimated by an appeal to social equality. Just as the parents and partners of the students were being offered loans and mortgages by Northern Rock that they could ill-afford – all in the name of extending home ownership to marginalised groups – their kin were being offered a chance to go to universities such as LondonMet in the name of 'widening participation'. At the time it was very difficult to argue that this was anything but a 'good thing' for all concerned. In fact, we believed that this was part of a package of redistributive policies and no one, not least the academics who had benefitted from the 1970s expansion – ironically, mostly through the Polytechnics – could object to opening the doors of HE even wider. The only real objections came from the middle-classes who found that their newly mortgaged working class neighbours were now squeezing them in competition for houses and places for their kids at university. It was not long therefore before the traditional retail banks and even the 'elite' universities wanted some of this widening participation action.

Everyone, it seemed, wanted you to either take out a mortgage from their bank and/or send your son or daughter to their university. And it was this feeding frenzy, of both the major retail banks, especially those who had in fact subsumed the demutualised building societies, and the 'traditional' universities who had come both late and screaming to the widening participation party, that added fuel to the crises experienced by both Northern Rock and now LondonMet. Everyone had to 'up their game' to attract new customers in this highly competitive market. And

in both cases the quality – of the loans with Northern Rock and the ‘student experience’ at LondonMet – began to be degraded.

The regulators, no doubt egged-on by the government’s fixation with deregulation, singularly failed to acknowledge or even understand the crisis they were harbouring in both the financial and HE systems. Just as the Financial Services Authority (FSA) in the UK failed to question the basis of Northern Rock’s accounts and the probity of their business model, the HEFCE has allowed LondonMet to pursue growth at the expense of both student and staff interests. There was from very early days in the LondonMet approach clear evidence that the student experience was far from being comparable to that enjoyed in other universities. The staff at LondonMet also made their views known with regard to the erosion in the standard of the learning and teaching that was taking place as a consequence of this patently unsustainable rate of expansion. However, the nature and quality of the LondonMet senior management and the ineptitude of the HEFCE vouchsafed that nothing much of any note was done to address the issues, especially the rates of student retention and progression. Confidence in the management and the strategic ‘vision’ it promoted had, in any case, all but disappeared in the wake of a damaging industrial dispute in 2005.

It is only in 2007 that the FSA began to get wind of the impending crisis at Northern Rock. And it was only in 2008 that HEFCE sent in the forensic accountants to LondonMet. In both instances we might therefore point the finger at the regulators for allowing these institutions to chart an almost inevitable course to disaster. In the case of the HEFCE, they appear to have continued to fund ‘ghost’ students who had either walked or disappeared from LondonMet long since. This is the equivalent of the bank continuing to offer its mortgage defaulters yet more loans. Even if the market conditions in both housing and HE were entirely unforeseeable, there is perhaps a good case for arguing that the business models of both Northern Rock and LondonMet were, in *any* circumstances, little short of being criminally negligent – even corrupt. The sub-prime market was predicated on moving the risk on in the form of ever-more complex (and therefore beyond effective regulation) financial instruments. In the case of LondonMet, the opening up of HE to new types of students has led to ever-more complex configurations of fee arrangements, course regulations and notions of achievement and progression. And these appear to have been too difficult for the HEFCE to comprehend or at least accommodate in their traditional, red-brick university conceptions of students and progression. LondonMet was bound to fall foul of models that were designed with quite different students and institutions in mind, let alone financial circumstances. And that indeed appears to be what has happened. Like Northern Rock, LondonMet in the HE sector strayed beyond the boundaries of the traditional ways of ‘doing business’.

For all their similarities, the way in which the two institutions are now being treated also reveals what appears to be their singular difference. Northern Rock was bailed out by the government and eventually nationalised on the pretext that ‘confidence’ in the entire banking system was at stake. The sight of customers queuing to withdraw their funds from a British bank appeared to shock the government into action. Both economically and politically they were not going to allow Northern Rock to be a DNR. Despite the obvious failure and hubris of its management and business model, the reputation of the entire system was considered to be endangered by Northern Rock becoming a basket case. Whereas, in the case of LondonMet, it appears that the whole of

the HE system is endangered if it is allowed to *survive*. That is, the existing hierarchy of HE institutions appears to be best served if this institution is allowed to fail. It could in fact have the same fate and serve the same purpose as the failure of Lehman Brothers in the US. That is, the failure of LondonMet needs to be cast as a ‘little local difficulty’ – and one that is largely the responsibility of an inept senior management rather than the system as a whole. And, by the inevitable derogation of failure downwards and success upwards in such organisations, responsibility for the demise of LondonMet has to be seen to rest with its impoverished staff and students. The message from the HEFCE is therefore quite simple: ‘this is a poorly managed and failing ‘new’ i.e. diverse, university: all you others take note’. It is noticeable how very few, if any, other universities have spoken out about Londonmet’s partial treatment at the hands of the regulators. So much for sector solidarity!

The fact that the staff have kept this institution going, despite the poor management and the largely hostile press it engenders, is little short of a miracle. It speaks volumes of the commitment of my colleagues to the one real mission of the institution – to offer the best educational opportunity we can to *whoever* comes through the door. Recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) results suggest that this is in fact a vibrant and successful ‘multiversity’. However, unlike Northern Rock, LondonMet now finds itself with a ‘liquidity’ problem and with no prospect of a government rescue package (regardless of the outcome of the forthcoming general election). The staff are now of course paying the price – with many being laid off and those of us who remain being required to work even harder in worsening conditions. Meanwhile, those senior executives who have been most culpable continue to draw their salaries, bonuses and pensions. Today, whilst recognising the worlds of banking and HE are no longer radically different given their common, central focus on money, one would still not have expected to see the state bail out a private bank whilst leaving a very large, publicly-funded university to slowly sink into the mire. Our world has indeed turned upside-down!



# The Multiple Crises of French Universities[1]

*In France on January 28, 2010 at 10:35 am*

By Bruno Cousin and Michèle Lamont, Harvard University

Between February and June 2009, French universities were the theatre of an exceptional protest movement against the latest flavour of governmental reform concerning academic careers. Protest sometimes seems to be a way of life in the French academy, and in France at large, but this time the situation is serious, with potentially huge consequences for the future of the sector. Indeed, the nation that gave birth to *je pense, donc je suis* is in a deep crisis on the intellectual front, and nowhere is this as obvious as in academic evaluation.

The protest movement did not take off in the *grandes écoles* (which train much of the French elite), or in professional and technical schools. Instead, it took off in the 80 comprehensive *universités* – the public institutions that are the backbone of the French educational system. Until two years ago, they were required to admit any high-school graduate on a first-come, first-served basis. A selection process was recently introduced, but even today most students are there because they could not gain entry elsewhere. Faculty work conditions are generally poor, as their institutions are chronically underfunded. Classes are large and programmes are understaffed. More than half of all students leave without any kind of diploma.

Public universities can be very different from each other and are research-intensive in varying degrees, but they carry out the bulk of French scientific research. Research is largely conducted in centres that are located within these institutions, and which often bring together overworked university teachers and full-time researchers who are attached to national institutes such as the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). In a context where the output of these joint centres is not, or is only partially, covered by international ratings, French academics feel doubly underrated owing to the combination of low salaries and low ratings.

This feeling was exacerbated on 22 January when President Nicolas Sarkozy declared that the poor performance of French universities in international rankings was, above all, the consequence of the absence of continuous evaluation, which encourages sloth. Of course, he was displeased that the extensive set of higher education reforms undertaken by his Government during the preceding two years were met with opposition by large segments of the academic community.

Everyone agrees that the current system poses a great many problems, but there is no agreement on how to improve it and get beyond the current gridlock. It is *la société bloquée* all over again. To wit:

- While most academics believe that the system is far too centralised, a 2007 law establishing the progressive financial “autonomy” (and accountability) of universities has been met with criticism and resistance, because it is perceived to be part of a strategy of withdrawal on the part of the State that will result in fewer resources being available for higher education. A number of

scholars also fear that the increased decision-making power conferred on university presidents is a threat to the autonomy of faculty members.

- While there is a need to design new, more universalistic procedures for evaluating performance and distributing resources, many academics are sceptical of the new institutions recently created to do this, namely the national agencies for the evaluation of universities and research units (Agence d'Evaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Superieur, or AERES) and research projects (Agence Nationale de la Recherche, or ANR). The former, in particular, has been criticised for its reliance on bibliometrics (publication and citation counts), even if the agency is now moving towards using less quantitative standards. Moreover, whereas the former mechanisms for distributing research funds depended on the decisions of elected peers (for instance, on the national committee of the CNRS), AERES appoints its panel members, and this is seen as a blow to researchers' autonomy. For this and other reasons, many academics have refused to serve on its evaluation panels.

- While academics often agree that the old CNRS needed further integration with the universities, many denounce its gradual downsizing and transformation from a comprehensive research institution to a simple funding and programming agency as the work of uninformed politicians and technocrats intent on dismantling what works best in French research. In 2004, a widespread national protest arose against this dismantling, with 74,000 scholars signing a petition against it. Critics also say that the ongoing reorganisation of the CNRS into disciplinary institutes will reinforce the separation between the sciences, reorient research towards more applied fields and work against the interdisciplinary collaborations that are crucial to innovation in many fields.

- While many agree on the need to improve teaching, moves to increase the number of teaching hours are among the most strongly contested reforms. French academics, who very rarely have sabbaticals, already perceive themselves as overworked in a system where time for research is increasingly scarce. These factors help to explain the resistance to expanded classroom hours and new administrative duties.

In the longest strike ever organised by the French scientific community, tens of thousands of lecturers and researchers began in early February to hold protests over a period of several weeks, demonstrating in the streets and (with the support of some students) blocking access to some university campuses. Many also participated in a national debate via print, online and broadcast media, and in general meetings. Some faculty members held teach-ins and action-oriented "alternative courses" for students. Several universities saw their final exams and summer holidays delayed and many foreign exchange students were called back by their home institutions. Despite this frontal assault, the Government did not back down: the much disparaged decree reorganising academic careers (with regard to recruitment, teaching loads, evaluations and promotions) and giving more prerogatives and autonomy to university presidents came into effect on 23 April.

This outcome will probably lead academics and their unions to rethink their strategies and repertoires of collective action. The traditional protest forms are losing legitimacy. As the dust settles, it is becoming clear that demonstrating has little traction in a context where the French

public increasingly perceives academics as an elite bent on defending its privileges, even if it requires depriving students of their courses. Negotiation is also perceived as ineffectual, as many suspect that governmental consultations were conducted to buy time until the end of the academic year, when mobilisation would peter out. A third strategy – the radical option that would have prevented the scheduling of exams and the handing out of diplomas at the end of this spring – was ruled out even on the campuses most committed to the cause for fear of alienating the public even further.

As yet, however, no clear alternative has surfaced. We are now witnessing a cleavage between those who voice their opposition (in the main, scholars in the humanities) and the increasing number of academics (primarily scientists) who espouse a “wait-and-see” or a collaborative position as the only realistic path to improving the situation in their own universities. If the majority of academics appear to share the same diagnosis about what needs to be changed in the French system, they disagree on the solution (and on its scale – national or local). The root of the crisis lies not only in the Government’s difficulties in generating consensus, but also in the academics’ own scepticism, cynicism or fatalism about meritocracy, the absence of the administrative resources needed to support proper evaluation, the possibility of impartial evaluation, and the system’s ability to recognise and reward merit.

Deep problems remain in the institutions charged with evaluating the work of academics. The interference of political power, and the (admittedly diminishing) influence of trade unions and corporatist associations have long been viewed as obstacles to a collegial system of academic evaluation. The legitimacy of the 70 disciplinary sections of the Conseil National des Universités (CNU) – charged with certifying individuals as eligible for faculty positions, and with directly granting some promotions – is under question. Some of its committee members are appointed by the Government and as such are suspected of being second-rate, of benefiting from governmental patronage, or of defending governmental interests. Others are chosen from electoral lists that include a disproportionate number of partisan members, who are often perceived to be there because of their political involvement rather than because of their scientific status.

The legitimacy of these committees is further called into question because they include only academics employed by French institutions and are often viewed as perpetuating a longstanding tradition of favouritism. To give only one particularly scandalous example: in June, panellists in the sociology section allocated to themselves half of the promotions that they were charged with assigning across the entire discipline of sociology. This led to the resignation of the rest of the commission and to multiple protests. Such an occurrence sent deep waves of distrust not only between academics, but also towards the civil servants charged with reforming a system that is increasingly viewed as flawed.

Peer review is also in crisis at the local level. While selecting young doctoral recipients to be *maîtres de conférences* (the entry level permanent position in the French academy, similar to the British lecturer), French universities on average fill 30 per cent of available posts with their own graduates, to the point where local clientelism is often decried as symbolising the corruption of the entire system. The typical (and only) job interview for such a post lasts 20 to 30 minutes – probably the European record for brevity and surely too short to determine whether an individual deserves what is essentially a lifelong appointment. Many view the selection process as little

more than a means to legitimise the appointment of pre-selected candidates – although the extent to which this is genuinely the case varies across institutions.

What is to be done? Because both the CNU and the local selection committees have recently been reorganised or granted new responsibilities, it seems the right moment to think about how to improve the evaluation processes in very practical ways. As part of a new start, academics should aim to generate a system of true self-governance at each level, grounded in more explicit principles for peer review. This would put them in a position to defend academic autonomy against the much-feared and maligned governmental or managerial control. While this is certainly occurring in some disciplines and institutions, progress is far from being equally spread across the sector.

Obvious and costless regulatory measures could easily be implemented – for instance, discouraging universities from hiring their own PhD graduates (as AERES recently started to), or forbidding selection committees from promoting their own members. One could also look abroad for examples of “best practice”. The UK’s Economic and Social Research Council has created colleges of trained academic evaluators who are charged with maintaining academic and ethical standards in peer review; although not all aspects of the British approach to academic reform should be emulated, this one is particularly worthy.

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) uses teams of elected experts to evaluate proposals, and academic reputation weighs heavily in determining which names will be put on electoral lists and who will serve on evaluation panels. Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council recently asked an independent panel of international experts to evaluate its peer review process in order to improve impartiality and effectiveness.

In a recent book on peer review in the US, one of the present authors (Michele Lamont) showed the ways in which American social scientists and humanists operate to maintain their faith in the idea that peer review works and that the academic system of evaluation is fair. In this case, academics exercise their right as the only legitimate evaluators of knowledge by providing detailed assessment of intellectual production in light of their extensive expertise in specialised topics. The exercise of peer evaluation sustains and expresses professional status and professional autonomy. But it requires significant time (and thus good working conditions) and moral commitment – time spent comparing dossiers, making principled decisions about when it is necessary to withdraw on the grounds of personal interest, and so forth. Of course no peer review works perfectly, but US academics, while being aware of its limitations, appear to view the system as relatively healthy and they engage in many actions that contribute to sustaining this faith.

In our view, fixing the current flaws in the French system does not merely demand organisational reforms, including giving academics more time to evaluate the research of colleagues and candidates properly. It may also require French academics to think long and hard about their own cynicism and fatalism concerning their ability to make judgments about quality that would not be driven by cronyism or particularism, and that would honour their own expertise and connoisseurship.

Not that proper governmental reform is not needed, but sometimes blaming the Government may be an easy way out. Above all, it is increasingly a very ineffectual way of tackling a substantial part of the problem. A little more collaborative thinking and a little less cynicism among both academics and administrators – if at all possible – may very well help French universities find a way out of the crisis. And it will help the French academic and research community to become, once again, much more than the sum of its parts.

[1] This article originally appeared as “The French Disconnection” in *Times Higher Education*, n.1925, December 3, 2009.

# Commodifying the Academic System in Poland

*In Poland on January 17, 2010 at 12:25 pm*

By Janusz Mucha, AGH University of Science and Technology, Krakow

There are many faces of the current crisis of academic systems. There are many points of view on the social functions of research and higher education. It is not possible to cover here all of these faces, aspects and points of view even in one country — in this case, Poland. Moreover, it is difficult to collect all relevant “hard data” on short notice. Therefore, what follows, is a comment based on my participant observation of the system as professor of sociology (but not as sociologist of higher education) who, since the beginnings of economic transformation (from the centrally planned and managed economy to market economy) and political transformation (from state-socialist one-party system to liberal parliamentary democracy), has worked in three public universities and in two private institutions of higher education. Now, I work in one of the largest and best public technical universities in Poland and simultaneously in a medium-sized private college about 90 kilometers from my home town. Sociology is marginal in both institutions (although in the university its role seems to be gradually increasing), so I will not devote space to the analysis of these schools. In this paper, “college” will mean any institution of higher education, “student” will mean college student, and “social sciences” will include humanities, but also economics and law.

In the academic year 1990/91, there were 403,000 students in Poland, the overwhelming majority in about 100 public colleges. In the academic year 2006/07, there were 1,940,000 students (nearly five times as many). More than 470,000 of them are in private colleges. In 2007/08, more than 56% of students were female. In 1991 there were two private colleges, while in 2006/07 there were nearly 320 of them. Students in private colleges pay tuition, unlike the full-time “regular” students in about 130 public colleges. Public colleges take in weekend (extra-mural) students who pay tuition as well, something controversial from the point of view of the state Constitution. In public colleges, the graduates receive identical diplomas regardless of the ways they study. Extramural students usually come from underprivileged social classes (unlike the regular students in public colleges). They take 60% of the number of “contact hours” of instruction in comparison with the full time students. In theory the extramural students – the majority in full-time jobs — study more at home. There is no doubt that in nearly all fields the quality of this fee-paying extramural education is lower (or even much lower) than the quality of regular studies in public colleges. Most private college offer sociology at the BA level, most public colleges offer sociology at BA and MA levels.

Between 1989 and 2010, the number of college teachers increased, but insignificantly. In 2009 there were 81,000 college teachers in 130 public colleges and 17,000 in 320 private colleges with the overwhelming majority of the latter either retired from public colleges or hold a “first job” there. In many social sciences it is usual for teachers to have two or more full-time jobs. This has consequences for the time they can devote to research and other academic activities. On the other hand, college teachers, in particular senior professors — those with “habilitation degree” or “second doctorate” — are in short supply especially as a school must employ certain number of full-time senior and junior professors (with PhD) before it can legally open its doors in any

particular field. The fact that many teachers are forced — by their low salaries and the way the system operates — to take a second job seems to be a major problem for the quality of education and research in the social sciences. This is not a major factor in natural sciences and engineering.

It is hard to compare different ways societies finance research and higher education. However, in the European Union, to which Poland was accepted in 2004, 1,2% of the GNP goes to higher education from national budget. In Poland, where private funding is virtually non-existent, about .88% of GNP goes to higher education, and the percentage has fallen systematically since 1995. On the other hand, private colleges get more and more public money for their various activities and student stipends, which has meant an even steeper decline in funding per student in public higher education. Only about 50% of the budget of public colleges is covered by the state so that these schools must somehow find the remaining 50%. They do this in a number of ways, the most important being the “commercial” fee-paying education. Public schools enter the same educational market in which private colleges operate. One should note, however, first that the quality of education and prestige of public schools is on average much higher (but to graduate is more difficult) and, second, the demographic cycle has meant decreasing cohorts of college age youth which makes competition tougher. The number of high-school students and graduates is decreasing so that, at least for the next decade, there will be declining numbers applying for higher education.

The number of students in 2007-8 was 0.2% lower than the previous year. The largest number of freshmen in 2007-8 began to study economic sciences and administration (many more than the previous year) and they constituted more than 23% of all Polish freshmen. The number of freshmen in social sciences, computer sciences, engineering, on the other hand, was smaller than one year before. The number of regular full-time students decreased a little and the number of extramural students increased a little. There are more students taking additional “post-diploma” (not “postgraduate”) courses after graduation. In these special college “post-diploma” courses, more than 68% of students are female. The number of doctoral students increased, but only by 3%. It should be added, that the doctoral students very rarely receive any kind of scholarship, so they have to get an outside job, if their families do not support them.

Until 1989, about 7% of Polish adult population had college education, now, after the twenty-year long educational boom, the proportion is about 20%, but it is still much lower than in Western post-industrial countries. Poles are proud of the educational boom of the 1990s and the first five years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and they believe that their scholars and scientists, especially theoreticians, belong to the best in the world. For decades the university “full professor” has been the most prestigious occupation in Poland. However, various ranking lists of world universities do not support this self-confidence. One of these lists, the “Shanghai List” of 2009 has only two Polish universities, ranked 303 and 401 in the world, and 126 and 170 in Europe. There are quite a few foreign student at Polish colleges, with numbers increasing every year. In 2007/08 we had, all together, nearly 17,000 foreign students, 2,000 more than the previous year. While it is not always clear who counts as a foreign student in Poland, still the number is less than 1% of the total.

According to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, there are too many social sciences students and too few students of the natural sciences and engineering. However, actually there

are no well paying job offers for graduates of these disciplines. Modern industry in Poland means actually local branches of global companies which have their technologically advanced laboratories in other countries and rarely employ Polish specialists. Local Polish companies increase their profit without investing in high-tech. Many graduates of engineering take jobs as office workers, or better paying jobs which do not require their qualifications. There are special stipends for students who wish to study what the government considers to be very important from the point of view of modernization of the country, but there are not enough candidates for these stipends. The potential candidates clearly realize that the chances of getting a well paying and interesting job in Poland are limited. The university system is underinvested and there is a shortage of modern, expensive equipment, necessary for research and teaching in natural sciences and engineering. In the social sciences, the authorities think it sufficient to have libraries or access to the Internet plus time and interest in doing research. As mentioned before state investment in higher education has declined as a percentage of the GNP.

That does not mean that the state authorities, parliamentary politicians, academic teachers are pleased with the situation. Everybody understands that, if Poland is to catch up with the modern Western-style (even East Asian) postindustrial and global economy, the academic system must be changed. However, different groups have different interests and values. This is obviously not specific to Poland. For some, “pure” or “basic” research is important, whereas for others — including local political authorities but also the European Union and its Framework Program, with its very rich but highly bureaucratized European grant system — practical application is important. For some, in social sciences, but not only in them, what is important is the analysis of local and national culture and structural problems (actually, local natural environment as well), whereas for others what is important is that academics publish in English (other foreign languages do not count), abroad, and in ISI periodicals and not in edited collections. The topics, originality, the way of doing the analysis and of presentation of the findings are different if one writes for international audience than if one writes for the local audience. Publishing only abroad and in periodicals that are hardly available in Polish libraries can give one, perhaps, prestige abroad, but will not contribute to one’s prestige at home.

It is interesting, however, that the publication of any finding anywhere is much less important for the evaluation of individual scholars and their institution than their participation in European funded research grants, even if their findings are never published. For instance, for publication of one article in a Polish (and any non-English language) front-line academic journal one can get a maximum of 6 points (English language abroad — maximum 24 points), for an authored book in Polish — 12 points (in English — 24 points), for being the editor of a collection in non-English language — 3 points (in English — 5 points), but for participation (!!!) in any European Framework Program grant — 150 points (the equivalent of twelve authored books in Polish).

It is not possible to present here a balanced view but instead I would like to stress what I think is important for improving the situation. A significant part of the problem lies, however, not within the system of higher education but elsewhere. And unlike the politicians, I do not believe in a fast solution of problems that have been with us for decades.

There is no doubt, in my opinion, that high-school students are not less intelligent and capable now than they were fifty years ago, but the kind of knowledge necessary in higher education is



less and less taught in high-schools. For instance, the final high-school exam system, during last twenty five years, did not include mathematics – although in the Spring of 2010 the situation will change. At the same time, political authorities and college authorities complain that there is too small a number of well qualified candidates for natural sciences and engineering studies.

Elementary and high-school-teacher salaries are very low just as academic teachers' salaries are too. For decades, there has been a “negative selection” for entering teaching. Fortunately, being an academic at least gives one prestige. However, much higher salaries for professors so that they need only be employed in one job would probably improve the situation, even if it caused problems in other realms, e.g. many private colleges would collapse.

Modern high-tech industry and local capital are very important for investment in research and higher education but as mentioned above this source of funding is rare. However, the political authorities, when giving licenses to global companies for their operations in Poland, could require that some of their research units be located here. The manner of taxing global and local businesses could also be a significant factor. More grant money, focused not only on application but also on “basic research” would obviously help.

As regards sociology, since the beginning of the 1990s, the situation has changed but continues to display an ambivalence that had also marked the socialist. The new ambivalence is as follows. On the one hand, there is much more freedom, and there are nearly no “taboo topics.” Due to the Internet, it is much easier to get some new literature free of charge. The new research grant system (which obviously has its own disadvantages) is much better than the former one. There are a lot of high-school graduates who want to study sociology and even pay for it. As I said before, the educational boom has largely affected the social sciences. This means more opportunities for social scientists to earn money, whether in teaching extramural students in public colleges and teaching in private colleges. However, spending time teaching means no time for research. And teaching itself became less rewarding than before since an increasing number of fee-paying students are of the opinion that because they pay for their education they don't have to work as hard. They can always go to a less demanding school and – until now – most of the employers do not distinguish between diplomas from better as opposed to worse schools. In addition, colleges are interested in keeping students, so teachers who demand “too much” are often discouraged, in a more or less subtle way.

No summary is possible but let me offer a few end notes. For at least one year the ministry of higher education has been presenting new, tentative proposals to improve the situation. Until now, the ministry is politically too weak to be able to break the resistance of vested interests and implement its ever-changing ideas. On the other hand, the commercialization of research — nearly only those grant proposals which promise immediate commercial gratification are considered worthy of funding — has been introduced quietly and effectively at the same time that an increasing proportion of higher education is fee-paying. Moreover, the criteria of evaluation of the social sciences are exactly the same as for the natural sciences and technology. That, in the opinion of authorities, will lead to modernization, helping Poland to “catch up” with the “developed world.”

# Intensified Regulation of New Zealand Universities

*In New Zealand on January 17, 2010 at 2:50 am*

By Charles Crothers, Auckland University of Technology

Given that New Zealand tertiary teaching and research institutions still provide high quality teaching and research for an increasing student body (underwritten by a generous student loans scheme and modest fee levels) and given the wider societal demand for higher education, albeit with relatively limited resources compared to those available in other jurisdictions, Universities in NZ cannot be characterised as being in crisis. They are, however, subject to increasing pressures, many pulling in contradictory directions.

Some of the structural difficulties are external: fighting for a share of the international student market both for students and staff; rising demand as the current international recession continues to bite and sends more into the ranks of those wanting higher qualifications; and a pressure to reduce state budgets shaped by a one-year old center-right government.

But other pressures are internal to the system which is dominated by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) – run by Commissioners but in effect much like a government department. Indeed a very senior visiting senior academic described the Vice-Chancellors in our system as ‘branch managers’. Over the last decade an ‘audit culture’ has been implemented, largely following UK practice. Thus:

- individual research performance is monitored annually (by employing organizations) and 6-yearly by the ‘Performance Related Research Fund’ (PBRF), which then reassigns expenditures to universities based on the sum of quality scores of the individual staff;
- the development of teaching programs and broad areas of curriculum require centrally-organized approvals;
- the number of student places is broadly set by the TEC and teaching institutions are penalised if they enrol more than their centrally set quotas;
- teaching is monitored by a slew of university-specific evaluations designed to control congruence with course goals and to meet student perceptions;
- emphasis is placed on securing research funding and on commercial applications;
- traditional disciplines are being embedded within wider operational structures (e.g. Sociology becomes a semi-independent programme within a School of Societies and Cultures) and thereby diluted;
- the hierarchy of tertiary institutions is becoming reinforced as universities are being pressured to drop pre-degree teaching and as larger, metropolitan-based polytechnics are drawing apart from smaller provincial ones.

The net effects are that:

- tertiary staff are increasing pressured not only to achieve high quality research outputs published in overseas journals (thus reducing local relevance) but also to secure (usually locally-orientated) research funding, while, at the same time, keeping teaching at a high

level of performance as well as carrying out a far higher administrative load that this system inevitably requires.

- some students are now unable to secure places and, in particular, highly effective ‘bridging programmes’ that ‘staircase’ weak secondary students into tertiary education face cuts;
- competition among staff and among organizations tends to limit the cooperation required for higher level research activities;
- arguably, the knowledge produced is increasingly inadequate to support local industrial development or social management, let alone providing social criticism (which is one of the university’s legislated goals).

The increasing accommodation of Maori and other cultural values and knowledges in the tertiary system is a bright spot, although Maori-controlled universities (“wanaga”) struggle to continue their separate existence, and some staff are offended at what they see as an ethnic politicization.

The pressure on the system as a whole sometimes erupts into situations where academic staff feel their academic freedom to be curtailed, especially under the generalized pressure for knowledge generation to be tied to commercialized innovation. For example, fishing scientists seldom criticize the fishing industry which directly controls much of their data and also its own research operations. In late 2009 the Head of NZ’s security police wrote to various university administrators to warn against making appropriate knowledge and technology available to terrorists, although this was then publicized and thereby the numbing impact was limited.

The difficulties generated have largely been kept ‘under wraps’. Disappointed students quietly fade away, while tranches of staff redundancies seem frequent but garner little if any publicity. The only overt public action has been in late 2009 when the staff in several polytechnics withheld cooperation in assessing end of year exams. They staged marches in support of retaining their existing working conditions and leave entitlements as well as demanding a pay increase higher than the one they were offered. The slow corrosion of the current system and its resourcing means that other strains are likely to become more visible in the future.

# Ankara University Faces Market and State Regulation

*In Turkey on January 12, 2010 at 9:58 am*

By Aytül Kasapoğlu, Ankara University

The University of Ankara was established in 1946 and comprises faculties of Law, Letters, Science, Medicine, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Divinity, Political Sciences, Pharmacy, Dental Medicine, Educational Sciences, Communication, Health Education and Engineering.

Located in the capital of Turkey, it is a comprehensive state university with 44,952 students (10,557 graduate students), and 3624 members of academic staff as of January 2010. It has 15 faculties, 13 vocational schools, eight institutes, 30 libraries and full text access to 22,000 publications via e-journals.

Higher Education in Turkey comprises State universities (including Ankara University) and Foundation (private) Universities. The Higher Education Council (YÖK) was established in 1981 as a central regulatory body responsible for the planning, coordination and supervision of Higher Education within the framework laid down in the Constitution and the Higher Education Law. The establishment of new Faculties, is subject to parliamentary control, on the recommendation of YÖK. Creating new, or closing and merging old, departments and programs requires YÖK permission. In addition, there are three other administrative bodies; the Inter-University Council (UAK), the Turkish University Rectors Committee (TURK) and the Higher Education Supervisory Board. These parastatal bodies combine with government ministries to infringe upon university autonomy. Following new regulations introduced by YÖK in 2005 for “Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Institutions” UAK appointed a Council (YÖDEK) which outlined the basic requirements for internal academic evaluation and self assessment which are intended to form the basis of a national accreditation system – a system which does not exist at the moment.

Article 130 of the Constitution defines all Higher Education as a public service and therefore State institutions are supported through public funding but via mechanisms defined by the Ministry of Finance. In 2003 the Public Financial Management and Control Law 5018 was approved and in 2006 this began to have an impact on Universities. We are still assessing its likely influence with some optimism that the allocation of budgets will free up room to maneuver, which to date has been limited. Currently the number of academic and administrative post within universities is determined by the Government. Appointments to senior positions, such as Faculty Deans are only on the recommendation of the Rector. The number of Vice Rectors is restricted to three. The line management of all administrative units, through the Office of the General Secretary, is to be standardized. Admissions to Universities are to be organized centrally through the ÖSYM (Student Selection and Placement Centre) based on scores from the national Student Selection Examinations (ÖSS) and Universities will not be able to control the number of students entering their programs.

This close regulation is not conducive to the development of an innovative and dynamic institution of higher education. As a signatory of the Bologna process the government controls

the allocation of human sources as well as costs and revolving funds. At present the taxation system appropriates 50% of earned income through revolving funds.

Administrators are appointed as follows:

- The Rector (head of university) is appointed by the President
- Vice Rectors are appointed by the Rector
- Deans are recommended by the Rector but appointed by YÖK
- The General Secretary is appointed by the Rector
- Directors of Graduate Schools are appointed by the Rector
- Heads of Research Centers are appointed by the Rector

Candidates for Rector of the University are nominated to YÖK through election. The Council considers six names and forwards three to the Turkish President for final determination.

Within the university the Senate is the key committee for developing academic policy.

Strong state control of higher education has become the major external constraint on Ankara University. The allocation of human resources and their reallocation for new purposes are outside the control of university management. There is a bureaucratic assignment of posts instead of posts being based on performance evaluation. This system causes a loss of scientific initiative and creativity. There is the evidence that decreasing salaries has badly affected the structure, motivation and performance of academic staff. The proportion of young academic staff is dramatically declining. The lack of flexibility in budget spending together with investment rules further constrains university autonomy. The overall organization of education and research becomes too complex and bureaucratic. Since the faculties are dispersed among five campuses there is an inefficient duplication academic and administrative services.

According to a recent report on “strategies for marketization,” YÖK plans to decrease the “cost of higher education” by increasing the number of students, and replacing free university education with fee-paying students. “Paid higher education and the commodification of knowledge” is now a slogan of the new management strategy. There are plans afoot to differentiate universities “according to the needs of capital” and that the university should be open to the influence of business. YÖK is now calling on universities to adapt themselves to the production of both “cheap and highly skilled labor.”

# Budget Cuts Hit Research Funding in Japan

*In Japan on January 11, 2010 at 1:37 pm*

By Yoshimichi Sato, Tohoku University

The new cabinet in Japan is planning to substantively reduce the budget of the Global Centers of Excellence (COE) Program. The purpose of the program is to foster excellent research/education centers in Japan so that they could be competitive in the international arena and create excellent junior scholars active in the world. There are fourteen COE centers in social science, and all of them are under the risk of a 33% budget reduction.

During the general election the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the current dominant party, appeared to support an increased budget for science and technology, and so scholars were optimistic. However, after winning the election and forming the cabinet last summer, the new government found itself with a huge budget deficit for the next fiscal year. Accordingly, the cabinet organized open debates between “budget cutters” and bureaucrats demanding their funding. Many bureaucrats lost the debates with the result that many scientific activities and grants now face considerable budget cuts. The Global COE Program, in particular, became a target for fiscal austerity.

When examining the budget for the construction of a super computer, a “budget cutter” asked bureaucrats why scientists need the fastest computer in the world. “Why is a second or third rank computer not enough?” She seems not to understand that only the first scientific finding is valuable. Once Watson and Crick discovered the double helix of DNA, discovering it again would have been worthless. Science has to keep up with the latest techniques if it is to be innovative. Part of the problem has been that the bureaucrats, unskilled in such debate, were no match for the budget-cutting politicians and executives of private firms. Thus, it is not surprising that the “budget cutters” won the debates.

Budget reduction in hard times of decreasing revenues is understandable. However, if the cabinet implements a huge reduction in funding for scientific activities, this could deal Japanese science a major blow from which it might never recover.

## **Closing Sociology at Birmingham (UK)**

*In United Kingdom on January 5, 2010 at 11:28 am*

By John Holmwood, Nottingham University

The history of Sociology at Birmingham University has been fraught. A Department of Sociology was first set up in 1964, but was closed in 1986. The University set up a Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology in 1991 only to close that Department in 2002. In 2004 it re-established the Department of Sociology, but in early November 2009, the Head of the College of Social Sciences announced his intention to close it and withdraw all its programmes (with the exception of a reduced undergraduate degree in Sociology to be taught by the Institute of Applied Social Studies). Sociology staff are to be reduced from 17 to 3 with corresponding reductions in administrative staff from 3 to 1 (or none).

This followed a review of the Department which was unprecedented in so far as all of its members were senior managers of the University and members of the management boards to which the review reported. There was no sociologist appointed to the review group and although respected external sociologists were asked to take on an advisory role, they were marginalised. The Department was not given a copy of the report until after the decision to close the Department was announced. The Department was not in deficit and its programmes are popular with students. Its undergraduate degree in Sociology is ranked 4th out of 84 in the Guardian league tables, while its undergraduate degree in Media, Culture and Society is ranked 5th out of 79.

[Keep Sociology at Birmingham] The situation at Birmingham is not unique and is indicative of the pressures that all academic activity is under in the face of neo-liberal modes of governance of higher education. Management style at Birmingham is perhaps unusually harsh and unyielding, but many of its characteristics are shared by other Universities. Essentially, neo-liberal governance has involved the de-regulation of the market sectors of the economy alongside the search for proxy measures for auditing the public sector (most UK Universities receive the bulk of their income from Government sources), such as the Research Assessment Exercise which is used to determine levels of funding and also creates various league tables against which Universities measure their performance and that of their constituent Departments. The paradox of this situation is very evident in the recent financial crisis brought about by an under-regulated banking system where the bail-out of banks by the public purse is now putting pressure on public services such as education. The threat to Sociology at Birmingham comes at a time when all Universities are expecting severely reduced budgets and cutbacks in hiring.

Neo-liberal governance has also transformed the internal relations within Universities as managerial hierarchies replace collegial relations. The sociology of organisation suggests that 'knowledge industries' should be relatively flat and de-centred structures. In contrast, the forms of audit that determine University funding in the UK encourage centralised management structures and hierarchical relations. Universities are run like Corporations with Executive Boards (and equivalent remuneration), and collegiate bodies such as Faculty and Senate allowed to atrophy.

Sociologists at Birmingham put up a fierce resistance to closure, with a web-site and e-petition launched within hours of the announcement of closure. The e-petition has gathered more than 7,000 signatures and there have been messages of support from Sociological Associations across the globe. Students in the Department also organised petitions and campaigns showing that the internet and traditional rallies and demonstrations are incredibly effective. Local Members of Parliament also joined the campaign, and there was excellent media coverage. The damage to the reputation of the University will be great if it does not back away from its plans to close Sociology. However, throughout it all, the University has remained implacable, refusing to meet with the MPs, refusing to discuss the Department's reasoned response to the review report, and disallowing the Department from presenting papers at Council (the decision-making body of the University). Statutes of the University require a period of 'consultation' when a decision to close a department is made. For the moment, the University is pretending that the consultation is real and that 'all options' are under discussion. The final decision will be made in February, but, in the meantime, the planning for redundancies continues. Redundancies are also now threatened at other Universities, including University of Sussex, which is mounting a strong campaign. Universities in the UK, as elsewhere, are entering a period of financial crisis, which is also a moment of social and political crisis in the global system. This is a time when critically relevant social science is an urgent necessity, but the hierarchical organisation of Universities and their neo-liberal agenda seeks to contain and constrain that critique by keeping our heads bowed down to local matters. The global crisis requires a global response by sociologists operating across borders.