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ABORDARE COMPARATIVĂ A POLITICII ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI SUPERIOR ÎN UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ (PARTEA II)

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Prezentul studiu științific se referă la politica UE de învățământ superior, în special activitatea universităților, ca parte a ecosistemului educațional, oferind un amestec de abordări dovedite și experimentale ale predării și cercetării. Sinergii mai bune între cercetarea întreprinsă de universitățile europene și învățarea studenților este adoptarea unui Curriculum Conectat și regândirea asigurării calității. Situația în care universitățile publice aflându-se la răscruce, guvernele europene au încurajat concentrarea finanțării cercetării în clustere de „excelență”, iar agenda de reformă este înțeleasă atât în context național, cât și supranațional. Pe agenda globală de „modernizare” a universităților, reformele au vizat transformarea lor în instituții antreprenoriale, aliniindu-se reformelor administrative ample a serviciilor publice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *politica învățământului superior, sistem de învățământ superior, învățământ și predare universitară, asigurare a calității, digitalizare.*

COMPARATIVE APPROACH OF HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION (PART II)

This scientific research is about EU higher education, especially universities activity as part of education ecosystem offering a mix of proven and experimental approaches to teaching and research. Better synergies between the research undertaken by European universities and students learning is adoption of connected curriculum and re-thinking of quality assurance of higher education. Situation when public universities being at crossroads, European governments have encouraged the concentration of research funding in clusters of 'excellence' and the reform agenda being understood in the national as well as supranational context. On global 'modernization' agenda of higher education, reforms were aimed at transforming universities into entrepreneurial institutions, this was aligned to wider administrative reforms of public services.

Keywords: *higher education policy, higher educational system, university learning and teaching, quality assurance, digitization.*

APPROCHE COMPARATIVE DES POLITIQUES DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DANS L'UNION EUROPÉENNE (PARTIE II)

Cette recherche scientifique porte sur l'enseignement supérieur européen, et plus particulièrement sur l'activité des universités au sein d'un écosystème éducatif offrant un mélange d'approches éprouvées et expérimentales en matière d'enseignement et de recherche. Une meilleure synergie entre la recherche menée par les universités européennes et l'apprentissage des étudiants passe par l'adoption de programmes d'études connectés et une refonte de l'assurance qualité de l'enseignement supérieur. Dans un contexte où les universités publiques se trouvent à la croisée des chemins, les gouvernements européens ont encouragé la concentration du financement de la recherche dans des pôles d'excellence et l'élaboration d'un programme de réformes dans un contexte national et supranational. Dans le cadre du programme mondial de «modernisation» de l'enseignement supérieur, les réformes visaient à transformer les universités en institutions entrepreneuriales, en cohérence avec des réformes administratives plus larges des services publics.

Mots-clés: *politique de l'enseignement supérieur, système d'enseignement supérieur, apprentissage et enseignement universitaires, assurance qualité, numérisation.*

СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ПОДХОД К ПОЛИТИКЕ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В ЕВРОПЕЙСКОМ СОЮЗЕ (ЧАСТЬ II)

Данное научное исследование посвящено политике ЕС в области высшего образования, деятельность университетов как части образовательной экосистемы предлагает проверенных и экспериментальных подходов к преподаванию и исследованиям. Лучшая синергия между исследованиями, проводимыми европейскими университетами, и обучением студентов заключается в принятии Учебной Программы и переосмыслении обеспечения качества. Ситуация, когда государственные университеты находятся на перепутье, европейские правительства поощряют финансирования исследований в кластерах «превосходства» и повестку дня реформ как в национальном, так и наднациональном контексте. В глобальной повестке дня «модернизации» и реформы, деятельность университетов направлена на их преобразование в предпринимательские институты, что согласовано с широкими административными реформами государственных услуг.

Ключевые слова: *политика высшего образования, система высшего образования, университетское обучение и преподавание, обеспечение качества, оцифровка.*

Introduction

EU governments display interest in university quality assurance, reform and the adaptation of the higher education system to a changing environment. Aspects of university organization as well as the broader framework of higher education were to be affected by means of public policy-making towards directions considered desirable by system planners and decision-makers. For various reasons higher education public policy-making became highly visible and a source of serious social contention in societies. University reform and the transformation of systems of higher education also had the unintended effect that the search for knowledge about higher education and its organizational modes was turned into a respectable field separate from pedagogy. There was also a policy analysis interest in the logic and possibility of making and implementing a public policy in relation to the different parts of systems of higher education.

The future of higher education is inspiring and thought-provoking, but should keep in mind that the diversity of voices and visions are enormous. In this way globalization as a trend might stabilize or intensify in a direction of even more openness, flexibility, marketization, and global orientation. The point here is that different assumptions lead to different conditions, opportunities, and threats for higher education

institutions and systems. And this implies that always futures should be imagined in the plural and never a 'fixed' future that are supposed to prepare for.

Quality assurance processes in higher education

Dutch higher education developed a system of evaluation of education and research in response to the government's willingness to grant more autonomy to the higher education sector and to higher education institutions. Originally, the Dutch evaluation system was clearly intended to act as an incentive for the enhancement of quality. However, as soon as the results of the evaluation reports in education became public, the media (especially the newspapers) immediately turned them into rankings. That completely changed the 'innocence' of the evaluation, transforming it into a system of accountability with all consequences. This emphasis on accountability was reinforced by the introduction in 2002 of a system of programme accreditation, which was the Dutch answer to the requirement of the Bologna process to develop a robust system of internal and external quality assurance in order to build trust between the participatory countries. As a result, the Dutch government asked for a system in which an evaluation of the programmes by peers had to be validated by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) in order to be funded and to be able to award degrees. The higher education institutions calculated their risks and developed internal quality assurance systems that demonstrated that they had done their utmost to be in control of the quality of the programmes. The internal quality systems thus became more focused on procedures and processes than the quality of the content and the outcomes. In addition, staff and students were trained to give the proper answers to questions posed by the evaluation committees. The robustness of the system took another unlucky turn when incidents came to the fore. A small number of higher education institutions appeared to have problems delivering even the minimal threshold of quality in some programmes. As soon as this was revealed, it led to significant political turmoil and put pressure on the NVAO to become stricter and more rigorous in its quality checks. This has had a devastating effect on the acceptance of the accreditation system by academics. The seeds of mistrust had been planted. Students, politicians, and the media became suspicious and began to question the positive results of the evaluations [1].

Although the external rules and regulations did not change much, the internal quality assurance systems did. More and more detailed protocols were developed, an increasing amount of data had to be collected, interim evaluations took place, and higher education institutions seemed to be trying to eliminate each and every risk possible. This development is in line with the broader trend seen today towards a risk-free society. In this day and age, mistakes are no longer accepted by politicians or by the general public. More importantly, each mistake is regarded as a failure of the system, irrespective of the sector in which it takes place and of who is responsible. Even when organizations or institutions have been given a large degree of autonomy, faults or mistakes lead to the traditional but unfortunate reflex on the part of the public that such mistakes are 'unacceptable' and that the government must take measures to prevent them from happening again.

Certainly, university administrators have become vulnerable and very much aware of the risk of a loss of prestige and negative publicity. They live in a world of metrics and rankings that are constantly under pressure to ensure that their university does not lose ground. The consequence has been that academic administration has come to resemble a shadow ministry intent on gathering as much data as it can get its hands on. This in turn has led academics to complain about the adminis-

tration's lack of trust in them and even about encroachments on their 'academic freedom', a holy principle of academia. Another consequence of administrators' keen interest in 'quality' has been the growth of policy staff involved in quality assurance. In a recently published report of the European Commission on the impact of quality assurance on the quality of teaching and learning, the growth of the number of quality assurance staff was seen as a positive sign of quality improvement. However, one could cast considerable doubt on this conclusion. Quality assurance seems to have become a new 'industry' with its own roles, rules, and culture, which runs the risk of becoming ever more formalized and all-encompassing. The administrative burden of quality assurance is currently one of the greatest concerns of academic staff and is seen as one of the main causes of the work overload and stress that many academics (especially the younger ones) experience. Although the need to publish (according to the old axiom 'Publish or perish') and the growing emphasis on global excellence have had negative effects on job satisfaction, academics consider their administrative duties as their number one burden. Universities, governments, quality assurance agencies, politicians, and the media should be much more aware of this situation. Each and every opportunity should be taken to lower the administrative duties of academics, which could also be seen as a necessary step towards restoring trust in the higher education sector. It would also help to direct everyone's attention back to the content of the programmes and away from processes and procedures, which inevitably lead to a box-ticking mentality within all levels of quality assurance.

Instead of focusing on quality assurance, universities could concentrate on developing a quality culture. This idea has recently been getting some attention [Ibidem]. While difficult to define and very demanding for universities to cultivate, there are a number of conditions that must be fulfilled before one can speak of a quality culture:

1. Academics must be willing to accept that it is self-evident to watch in the mirror of quality regularly. Science and professions develop continuously, and therefore staff has to be aware that education is dynamic. New insights from research and from the professional world must be incorporated into university programmes in order to ensure that the education they offer remains up to date.

2. Universities must recognize that teaching is one of their key responsibilities. Research is seen as a necessity and still the best way to pursue an academic career, whereas teaching has traditionally been looked upon as a burden. Universities must reaffirm the importance of the quality of teaching and reward it. They should also strive to find a better balance between rewards for research and for teaching.

3. Academics must be self-critical, both on an individual level and as a team. Just as the concept of 'team science' is developing in the field of research, this will lead to changes in the way academics bear their responsibility for education. This self-critical attitude should lead to introspection and to a greater willingness to address each other. It should also encourage universities to invite prestigious peers from other universities to take part in the regular site visits of their programmes.

4. Academics must stay abreast of new pedagogical methods. Learning has changed significantly in recent decades, and so has teaching. Although the teacher-student relationship will remain the main route for acquiring knowledge of a particular discipline, the development of IT, the need to master IT skills for any profession, and the emergence of new gadgets have made education much more a process of developing a professional learning attitude.

5. University managers must show self-confidence when demonstrating how they ensure quality of teaching and learning.

Without ever denying the need to take a tough stand on the quality of teaching and learning, researchers have continously sought to look for new ways of convincing the outside world that academia deserves support and can be trusted.

Marketization agenda of higher education reforms

'Market logic' or marketization defines the process whereby new actors other than the state and the academic community acquire influence and power in the higher education system and are recognized by the policy community as legitimate actors. The existence of competitive or performance-based funding mechanisms has also led to the evolution of new and distinct incentive structures in higher education. Many European governments have encouraged the concentration of research funding in clusters of 'excellence', namely institutions that meet the highest research standards. In Germany, for instance, policies designed to foster research excellence have been implemented since 2006 via the Excellenz Initiativ. In France, similar policies have had profound effects on higher education governance, promoting a new institutional reconfiguration of the relationship between universities and the Grandes Ecoles. Despite important variation across nations, the reform agenda pursued by European universities has been remarkably similar across nations, a development that must be understood in the context of greater coherence and co-operation between higher education institutions in Europe. However, the Italian case is paradigmatic and worthwhile of further investigation. The resources allocated to research through competitive procedures in Italy are limited in size, and resistance to competition has arisen during the implementation phase. The increasing centrality of European programmes in developing a European Higher Education Area, as established by the Bologna Declaration, has generated a degree of policy diffusion and convergence, especially in the context of university governance and funding reforms. As such, the reform agenda needs to be understood in the national as well as the supranational context. Despite national variations in organizational form and design – both of which reflect normative, cultural and historical legacies – European supranational institutions have promoted the harmonization of degree structure across universities through the Bologna Process, as well as the mobility of students across universities in Europe through the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) programmes.

National universities in Europe are adopting strategies that are increasingly shaped by binding agreements adopted at the European level. Since its founding, the Bologna Process has led to similar reforms in many European university systems. The European Commission has likewise developed instruments such as ERASMUS to support internationalization and mobility of students. ERASMUS has expanded its scope from narrowly promoting mobility, intended for cultural and academic purposes, to a much broader programme supporting knowledge transfer and network formation. The Bologna Process, meanwhile, has contributed to the convergence of higher education infrastructure, including the cycle-structures of teaching programmes as well as quality assurance procedures of different national systems. Finally, the European Commission has contributed to this trend through its visible and significant financial support for higher education research: Framework Programmes, which guide nations to navigate funding schemes as well as various activities across thematic areas; similarly influencing national behaviour through the competitive grant processes on the supranational level.

Despite the rise of international policy trajectories and convergent pressures, national differences are pronounced with regards to marketization of uni-

versities and universities' adaptation to this changed environment. 'Marketization' is a broad term of reference, illustrated mainly by the American model of university governance, and distinct from the Italian or German higher education system. Since 2010, the Italian higher education system has experienced government reforms aimed at loosening the centralist bureaucratic grip on universities and granting them greater institutional autonomy. In Italy, the introduction of the market logic was resisted as it was mainly interpreted as 'meritocracy' and the introduction of selectivity and entry exams. In the Italian case, trade unions and students' protests have played a significant political role in resisting reforms aimed at opening public universities to the market logic. The claim that marketization is 'meritocratic' rests on a particular view of the self-serving 'insider' protection that this school says need to be blown open by the winds of competition [2]. First, not all the institutions are that much in need of drastic reforms – at least as indicated by the rankings. Second, if reform is needed it can perhaps be advanced by more democratic and consensual means. Third, even if some variants of marketization are healthy many are not. Finally, meritocracy was not originally intended as the socially optimum goal. Alternatives include 'republic of letters' fundamental research, and training students to be critical thinkers, rather than solely focused on exam results.

European public universities at a crossroads

In EU public universities are at a crossroads. Their drive for excellence and equity has come under mounting pressures arising out of economic and financial strains and stronger advocacies for further marketization. Over the past two decades, a multitude of structural reforms in public higher education systems have exerted increasing institutional pressures on universities to adapt to new political processes. Governments have reformed accountability mechanisms in ways that have a long-lasting impact on society and citizens beyond an instrumental economic view of public education. In this regard the challenges are: First, the sustainability of traditional funding sources and allocation methods for public universities has been under review for some time now. This gave rise to new competitive measures to distributing funding, academic performance evaluation and outright privatization. Second, the context of international competition in higher education has become increasingly relevant to the survival of universities in an ever more demanding global market for higher education. The rise of world rankings has created competition between universities globally and has increased the value of reputational assets. Whereas strains on the public purse underpinned decreasing levels of spending per student in most European countries from the 1990s onward, governments in East Asia have been investing an ever-growing share of their state expenditures in higher education. Economic growth models and strong state capacity lead this. Third, at the same time of public funding cuts and rising global competition, the demand for higher education across Europe and other parts of the world has increased relentlessly.

The process of massification within an overall declining budget has led to institutional changes and processes of internal adaptations to the changed external environment. The key challenge for the future is how public universities adapt their institutional autonomy to the pressures in the policy environment. Declining public revenues has accelerated reforms associated with new accountability and performance evaluation, output-based funding allocation, managerialism and entrepreneurialism. The predominance of traditional actors in higher education systems (the state and the academic community) has been transformed by the entry of new actors from the private sector. The role of the state has changed from being the main provider of pub-

lic services to being enabler of new hybrid forms of collaboration between public, private and non-state actors that have acquired the status of stakeholders in the system. For instance, the creation of new public engagement initiatives or public–private partnerships are consistent with the state's 'steering ethos' insofar as such mechanisms enable the government to inform university strategies without a traditionally statist direct intervention. Many scholars view the growth of the market logic in higher education systems as inevitable given the external and internal pressures threatening the sustainability of the public European university and, ultimately, its capacity to shepherd competing demands. The marketization of public higher education systems, more noticeably in the American model, raises fundamental questions about the role of the public university in the 21st century and the need to investigate the wider societal consequences of these landscape reforms.

This is not to say that the market logic has become predominant in EU. Traditional universities in France, Italy and Germany continue to be committed to a different model of governance. The Italian system underwent radical reforms in 2010, but it is still based on dense collusive networks between the leadership actors and local groups aimed at spoils distribution for funds, procurements and jobs. The autonomy of Italian universities generally is difficult to implement, due to the hyper-formalization of central administrative controls [Ibidem]. Selectivity remains at the margins of the public higher education system. However, this is not to say that venerable institutions have attempted to maintain their social capital and influential position at the local level.

The fundamental value of excellence in universities

The quest for excellence is very often associated with competition. Speaking about competition in the EU academic sector can, according to the context or background, be considered either a basic value or a major problem. Academic competition has always been at the heart of academic life and is based on the central importance of competition in the research process. Researchers have always tried to be the first to find and the first to open new pathways of knowledge. However, the word competition used nowadays really describes strive for excellence and the quest. In fact, there are two types of academic competition: the first one is market-oriented, i.e. to compete for a 'market' such as student registration fees, or some sources of private or even public money. In this type of market-driven competition, higher education is treated as a commodity. The second type of competition is centrally concerned with the quest for excellence and does not involve any aggressive or predatory behaviour. In this meaning of the word, competition is more a basic value - a non-interested, unbiased quest for excellence. Two brief examples show that implementing excellence schemes is not straightforward and can lead to misunderstandings and tensions.

In France, universities are under a uniform rule regime, with only a single set of regulations serving a wide diversity of situations. For example, the budget allocated to universities is based on a single algorithm, whatever the specific profile of the university. Even the basic notion of 'research university' is seen as not acceptable by some unions or civil servants, precisely because it introduces diversity into the system. Following the model adopted earlier in Germany, France has launched a so-called 'excellence initiative' of pushing forward some ten world-level campuses. This has led to some misinterpretation and fears. If universities failed the competition, this failure was too often attributed to the supposed inequality and biased structure of the competition itself. The basic principle of such a competition is also being questioned by some unions, which believe it would open the door to a biased, unequal

public academic system. In fact, the quest for excellence without underlying values is useless. When implementing excellence schemes of any kind, one too often points out the 'winners' and 'losers', and this perspective ends up yielding much frustration and opposition [3]. To avoid this frustration, it is necessary that these schemes only come on top of a global academic system that ensures that all types of academic enterprises are funded and sustained at the level that they deserve. In this way, the 'winners' do not steal anything from the 'losers'; they just receive an extra reward for specific excellence, whatever the scale.

In the European agenda on research, one can always feel a tension between excellence and widening. The quest for excellence in research, which is a cornerstone of the European Union's Framework Programme, is sometimes seen to lead to an increase of inequalities in research and innovation, with certain countries lagging behind the rest of Europe in terms of scientific output. Is needed to avoid widening this gap, and those two notions should urgently be reconciled in order to avoid a loss of value and to ensure that the impact of EU investments in research and innovation is maximized. One possible solution would be to address this issue as a core dimension of the European Research Area, where the funding of excellence and the support of widening activities should be complementary and coordinated.

The University of Strasbourg succeeded in the very competitive 'excellence initiative'. This led some teams in the university to receive significantly more support than others. When presenting first assessment report to the international jury, university demonstrated that were able to avoid the 'more money, more problems' syndrome or the 'ivory tower' syndrome. The successful implementation of the initiative itself had been a major factor in increasing corporate identity and pride. This success brought all actors together, while it could have been a violently dividing agent. In fact, University of Strasbourg had achieved inclusive excellence. In this state of mind, the excellent teams and structures can 'radiate excellence' towards the rest of the institution, and excellence can trickle down far beyond what is sometimes defined as an excellence perimeter. This can help to deepen a culture of excellence and spread group work across the various areas of the university. Thus, inclusive excellence is not a race to the bottom; it is inclusion without dilution. It can combine the highest quality standards with a true sense of sharing and solidarity or 'esprit de corps'. Finally, excellence is not only the privilege of large, world-class universities. Observations of the results of excellence schemes in Germany and France, or at the European level with the European research council, demonstrate that pockets of excellence are to be found in a wide array of institutions and that excellence is not just concentrated in some champion institutions. The notion of distributed excellence has been used to describe this situation [4]. In academia, excellence is not a nasty word, or at least it should not be. Excellent universities are not there to crush the competition. They have a strong responsibility to be flagships, to act as beacons and examples. This is 'what universities are for', as was stated in one of the founding papers issued by the League of European Research Universities.

American academic institutional logic of public higher education

In contrast with European Union, higher education in the United States of America (USA) is not regulated directly by central government. There are a wide variety of institutions, some are among the most prestigious in the world, and other are a little more than degree mills. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the USA has the second largest number of higher education institutions after India. Universi-

ties are large by European standards, and those that are not private are operated by individual states. Tuition is charged everywhere, although public universities have lower fees and most have considerable endowments. In policy terms, capacity remains an issue as demand increases during and immediately after recessions, in states as California are prioritizing the development of appropriate policies in the face of likely legal challenges. An allied issue is that of undocumented students, those who are not USA citizens or legal residents, who face legal or financial barriers when trying to access higher education.

Higher education policy at the federal level is largely concerned with two areas: research finding and student financial aid. Federal student support is approved through the Pell Grant and Stanfford loan programmes, as well as through the guaranteed student loan programme, in which banks provide education loans to students at lower interest rates and the federal government pays the difference in interest and guarantees payback of the loans. Recent developments in policy include the use of federal student loan eligibility as an enforcement tool to require colleges and universities to provide access to student records for military recruitment and to closely monitor adherence to visa requirements for foreign students. The federal government also stimulated expansion of two-year community colleges through the Higher Education Act of 1965. Affirmative action policies implemented by higher education to increase enrollment of minorities and women have been gradually narrowed through Supreme Court decisions, beginning with Bakke v. California Board of Regents (1978), which excluded the use of quotas. In 2003, a pair of cases (Gratz v. Bollinger, Grutter v. Bollinger) challenging the admissions policies of the University of Michigan resulted in a 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court that banned the use of a point system to advantage students based on race but upheld the use of race as a factor in admissions to achieve diversity [5].

As an alternative to academy logics, academic bureaucracy logics, and market logics, Arizona State University (ASU), has adopted the academic enterprise model to pursue excellence in outcomes and enhanced effectiveness in access. Under the academic enterprise model, ASU as public university continue to receive state support and maintain public purpose, but also take responsibility for innovating, adapting, and differentiating themselves from other institutions according to the unique needs of their community and social context. Academic enterprises therefore can be identified as public because they achieve economic and social progress in the public interest. As enterprises, they cultivate multiple sources of revenue through collaborative partnerships, commercialization of research, spinoffs, and novel reconfigurations of business operations. Public academic enterprises lessen their dependency upon the state by treating the state as one of many key investors. Bound neither by inertia nor by fear of external pressures and resource constraints, the academic enterprise defines success on its own terms and charts its trajectory accordingly. The responsibility of the academic enterprise is to ensure a sufficient return on investment for the state. The transition to a model of academic enterprise requires a strong entrepreneurial vision at the executive level that is disseminated and adopted throughout the university. Rather than becoming more centralized, leadership becomes more diffuse, as faculty and administrators take ownership for achieving better outcomes by acting as knowledge entrepreneurs rather than as bureaucratic functionaries. Although public academic enterprises continue to value efficiency, the rationale for efficient operations shifts from a model of ‘doing the best with scarce resources’ towards maximizing effectiveness and elevating the quality of the university’s core activities of teaching and discovery. Rath-

er than seeking to achieve the minimum acceptable outcomes as defined by the state, and at the lowest possible cost, public academic enterprises encourage risk-taking that works towards the university's unique mission. The academic enterprise model affords public universities with the resources to offer value to its stakeholders at scale rather than treating knowledge as a luxury good that is limited to the few. It gives public universities the ability to provide access without sinking into mediocrity and to achieve excellence without restricting admissions.

Through strategic organizational streamlining designed to cut costs while preserving the quality of the academic core, ASU has become one of the nation's most efficient producers of both college graduates and high impact, socially meaningful research. ASU's cost per degree is nearly 20 per cent below the national median, these achievements demonstrate capacity to deliver its legacy mission of access at great efficiency. But in doing so, ASU has also established new capacities that enhance its ability in terms of excellence. ASU is among the top ten public universities in its enrolment of National Merit Scholars, enrolling more than Stanford, Duke, Brown, or the University of California, Berkeley. ASU is also among the top three producers of Fulbright Scholars in the nation, tied with Princeton and Rutgers and coming in behind only Harvard and the University of Michigan.

Arizona State University is proof that the academic enterprise model can succeed, which offers a path for public universities to escape dependency upon the state and achieve excellence without restricting access. Not all public universities need to follow ASU's specific pathway to success - on the contrary, the academic enterprise model will look different for every institution [6]. By allowing institutions to grow and thrive on their own terms, freed from artificial constraints that bind public bureaus, academic enterprise offers public higher education institutions not only a way out of state dependency but also a path towards differentiated development according to the needs of the communities that they are mandated to serve.

Higher education policy excellence moving eastwards

The past decade has seen a fundamental shift in academic dominance with an increasing number of Asian universities, both established and new, starting to challenge 'Western' hegemony in this regard. This development reflects the changing nature of global power, especially in terms of economic development, commerce and industry, and military strength. Taken together, this has produced new political trends that impact academia. It certainly belies the popular view following the fall of the Berlin Wall, and as enunciated by Francis Fukuyama as 'The End of History'. This applies to Asia universities, like the University of Tokyo one of leading institution in region. Japanese universities have a high international profile and outlook. Also South Korea universities have shown a parallel increase in global status. Taiwan has experienced a similar growth path to increased academic investment. The cities of Hong Kong and Singapore represent new and successful economic models, as a result having extremely highly ranked universities.

Asia appears to have escaped much of populist movement. This is very much a 'Western' phenomenon compared with the high regard in which experts, universities, and learning are held in Asia. Part of this disillusion has to do with a fear of the future. Historically, this always occurs at a time of dramatic change and uncertainty. The industrial revolution based on coal, iron, and steam drove the movement from the country to the cities; the electricity revolution that followed was seen by some as a threat to jobs even though it created modern society. This has been followed by the recent information technology revolution, again accompanied by the same fears. Now

society face the challenge of big data, digitization, robotics, and AI in revolution coming so quickly on the heels of the IT revolution. The likely impact is unclear, but the threats are perceived by society at large. This time the impact will be felt more widely, with even law, medicine, and accountancy likely to be affected by AI, in addition to effects such as driverless vehicles. A feeling of unfairness, partly due to rising inequality, exacerbates such fears. This represents a major challenge for university leaderships. Academic leadership must not hide behind academic dogmas and ivory towers but address these challenges in a flexible manner. It has to convince society at large of the benefits of knowledge to strengthen economies and maintain democratic values. It calls for a better understanding of its learning processes.

Today can be seen a growing Asian presence in the top ranks of universities. Scholarly publications increasingly have Asian authors, even though such papers may come from institutions in the Europe and the USA. This is accompanied by a rise in the citations from such publications, so that Asians are having an increasing impact on knowledge production. In addition, this represents a change from the old, two-way brain flow across the Atlantic. What is seen is a triangular movement between Asia, Europe, and North America, with Asian universities and institutes not only attracting Asian 'returnees' but also attracting both junior and senior academics from the West. This is particularly evident in the English-speaking cities of Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore [7]. This is no accident, as Asian countries devote an increasing share of their gross domestic product to education, research, and development, with Japan and Korea well above the 'magic' three per cent of Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) according to the World Economic Outlook Database of the International Monetary Fund. GERD as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) represents the total intramural expenditure on research and development performed in the national territory during a specific reference period, expressed as a percentage of GDP of the national territory.

In examining global trends, one sees the growth of Asian economies and an increasing assertiveness in their relations with the rest of the world resulting from this new economic power. In turn, this has led to the embrace of the knowledge economy, an increasing commitment to research and knowledge generation and, as a consequence, to higher education and learning. Thus, it is not far-fetched to predict that within the next two decades, Asian universities will have achieved parity with Western universities and that Asia will dominate future, technology-based societies. Should not be underestimated such major shifts of power and influence, as they will change the landscape of knowledge and political leadership in the world.

Conclusions

Universities are often venerable institutions with high social capital and strong local visibility. Unlike commercial enterprises their social value needs to be assessed using multiple metrics. Financial viability is essential of course, but they have not hitherto been exposed to bankruptcy risk. The social costs of any liquidation would be considerable. An effective balance between order and autonomy is to be created not only at the national, but also at the EU level. As a consequence of emerged global 'modernization' agenda of public higher education, the reforms were aimed at transforming public universities into entrepreneurial institutions, enabled by their newly acquired independent legal status with legal autonomy, as self-governing institutions responsible for their own teaching and research strategies, staffing and investment policies. This was aligned to wider administrative reforms of public services. Processes of autonomization of public agencies from ministerial

control have challenged existing hierarchical and pyramidal mechanisms of coordination, as well as traditional relationships between different levels of government. Also radical diversification of the higher education system is urgently needed, along with experimentation and innovation, in order to survive in a context of fierce global competition from public as well as private providers of higher learning, both within and outside universities.

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