

WORKSHOP

CHINA – EUROPE FORUM

THE REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

BARCELONA (SPAIN), 4 - 5 OCTOBER, 2007.

PRESENTATION

Higher Education:
Tensions and Dilemmas in the International Context

Contribution from: Ph. Raúl Baeza Aspée.

Executive President

Universidad del Mar

CHILE

Higher Education: Tensions and Dilemmas in the International Context.

Introduction

The present contribution for the Forum China-Europe workshop about the University Reformation (4 and 5 of September 2007), Barcelona (Chile), tries to analyze the international context of the Higher Education as far as its tensions and dilemmas.

For it, the own context of the development of the current University is approached synthetically, analyzing some specific transformations. As well, some distinguishing characteristics of the superior education and the University are analyzed.

Finally, some explanatory and comprehensive scenes of the development of the Universities and the superior education in the international scope are considered. With it, some new possibilities of actions are proposed and new focuses will be analysed.

I. The Higher Education in the Context of the Society of Knowledge

Our time is characterized by deep transformations. Not only we live in a scene of changes, but in a radical change of time.

Social, economic, political, cultural and educational transformations, have had unsuspected reaches. Changes in the development of science and the technology, in the access and the distribution of the information through computer science means use, in the forms of organization of the economies of the countries, in coexistence of the global village with the reappearance of the ethnocentrism, in the forms of government, resultants of the reclamation by the extension exist every greater time of the democracy, the freedom and the plurality, in a distribution of the wealth and more and more inequity of the social knowledge available.

At the moment the society demands deep transformations in the organization and operation of the education in general and the superior education specifically. The great challenge - like it was recognized in the World-wide Conference on Superior Education organized by UNESCO in 1998 - is to diminish the existing gap between rich countries and poor countries, diminution that demands a new distribution of the knowledge at world-wide level.

The educational institutions act today in qualitatively different contexts. Before emergent situations, problems and necessities, the answers to the new challenges must occur under new paradigms.

As it were recognized in the World-wide Conference on Superior Education, in a society based more and more on the knowledge, "the superior education and the investigation, they nowadays form the fundamental part of the cultural, socioeconomic and ecologically sustainable development of the individuals, the communities and the nations. Therefore, and since it must face imposing challenges, the own superior education has to undertake the transformation and the renovation more radical than never has had before". Even it is maintained that "the second half of our century will pass to the history of the superior education like the time of more spectacular expansion... But also it is the time at which the

disparity, that has already been enormous, between the countries industrially developed, has become serious still more, the developing countries and in particular the least advanced countries with regard to the access to the superior education and the investigation and the resources which they have” (UNESCO, 1998).

The 21st Century will be characterized for being the era of the society of knowledge. The knowledge will constitute the added value fundamental in all the processes of production of goods and services of a country, having caused that the dominion of the knowledge is the main factor of their self-maintained development. A society based on the knowledge only can occur in an open and interdependent world-wide context, every time the knowledge does not have borders.

The society of the knowledge, nevertheless, is not reduced to its economic dimension. It will be a society with capacity to construct and to retain his own history, to systematize his experiences, to face the challenges of the markets and the technological changes. The development of the nations will depend, fundamentally, of the capacity of generation and application of the knowledge by its society.

The strategic value of the knowledge and the information for the contemporary societies reinforces the role that carry out the institutions of higher education. The education constitutes the main value of the nations. A society that goes towards a stage based on the knowledge, offers new horizons to the educative institutions, as much in its tasks of formation of professionals, investigators and technicians, like in the generation, application and transference of the knowledge to take care of the problems of the country.

The superior education of the future will be an access door to the society of the knowledge, perhaps the most important door by its situation privileged for the generation and transmission of the human knowledge. In the society of the knowledge, the traditional university will coexist with virtual universities and other forms of university, as they are the “corporative universities” of the companies, created to satisfy the demand of permanent education of its workforce in different occupational levels. These universities have a strong technological base and a structure and an operation are characterized by a networked organization, under the principle to take to the education to the individual and not the individual to the education. The traditional universities will face a strong competition on the part of these educative organizations of the companies more and more. In the society of the knowledge, the education is conceived like an integral process without temporary limitations of age, level or school institution. The access to the formation and the creation is developed throughout the life, since the society of the information offers new horizons to the education. The institutions of superior level will not have to be conceived in a perspective of terminal education, or to be restricted to their educative mission to the granting of titles and degrees. They are called to play a strategic role for the update of the knowledge. As one settles down, “the superior education will have, thus, to incorporate the paradigm of the permanent education that implies to equip the students with a mental discipline giving the foundations for the self-learning in the diverse situations in which it is”.

In the society of the knowledge, the education does not play only a strategic role for the economic growth. It extends his borders to the configuration of a society model that provides well-being to its inhabitants; diminish the breaches between social regions and groups; impel the democracy as form of life in all the human battle areas; promote the tolerance and the respect for the social coexistence; help to the political maturity.

Without a doubt, so that the education in general and the superior education in individual can fulfill the new roles that the society of knowledge demands, these must be constituted in the high-priority investment of the country. Society and governments will have significantly to elevate the investment to this strategic sector for the development of all the sectors of the society. A new social pact between governments, society and institutions of superior education will have to take to the definition of a policy of State that makes the structural transformations viable that are demanded with a vision of long reach.

II. Some Distinguishing Characteristics

The Superior Education presents some structural changes at international level:

- Massification: the university enrolments happened of 13 million in 1960 to 79 in the 2000 and 132 in the 2004.
- Contribution to the world of work.
- Increase of students in foreign contexts.
- Increasing competition.

A tension between a conception of the World Bank that defends the competitive direction and of market of the superior education, and the UNESCO exists that reaffirms its statute of public service, pleading for greater state financing and, with it, to extend the equality of opportunities at its access to different social sectors.

In the same way, it is possible to indicate that the challenges and tendencies of the higher education to world-wide level are similar (Brunner, 2005) as far as which it is seen like a competitiveness pillar, increases opportunities of formation, diversifies its supply and platform of suppliers, tends to be different itself institutionally to respond to the specialization of the work and of the knowledge, it externally begins to be evaluated (accreditation processes), increases its relevance and pertinence, extends and diversifies its sources of financing. For that reason seven great tendencies can be identified:

1. Extension of the systems, product of the supply every greater time of access opportunities.
2. Horizontal and vertical differentiation of the systems and institutions.
3. Securing of the quality of the services and products through procedures of public responsibility of the institutions.
4. Increasing demands directed towards the institutions and the systems to evaluate the relevance and pertinence of its functions of knowledge.
5. Diversification and rationalization of the financing sources.
6. Adoption of organizational cultures centered in the innovation and undertaking.
7. Displacement of the center of gravity of the higher education from the spheres of the State and the corporative power towards the sphere of the market and the competition.

Analyzing the own transformations to the superior education, some specific characteristics are noticed (Lopez, 2007):

1. The Superior Education has become permanent dice the exponential growth of the knowledge.
2. The height of ITC has made its equipment more expensive.
3. The vertiginous increase of international academic mobility favors to the developed and Asian countries, tending to increase "the flight of brains".
4. Its privatization in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, countries of

the East of Europe and Russia is increased. Only in the regions of Europe Occidental and Africa it continues its predominance in financed public superior education in his totality almost by the State.

5. The crisis of the academic profession - derived in industrialists from the knowledge and consultants it is a phenomenon that occurs in acute form in the countries developing, but that also affect in the developed countries.

6. The inequity in the access by reasons for sort, ethnic, religious or of social class, continues prevailing many with merits sufficient university study.

7. The impulse towards the improvement of the management procedures, the evaluation, the surrender of accounts and the processes of accreditation, often has had a positive character. Nevertheless, also they have been characterized by its bureaucratic and formal aspect, serving as pretext to accelerate processes of privatization or reduction of state bottoms.

8. The private institutions are those of upper level and those of lower level, simultaneously. This is, are institutions that are denominated "of absorption of demand", because they receive students who do not fulfill the requirements to accede to the Universities of elite nor to the public ones.

9. Emergency of "pseudo universities" that do not respond to the classic concept of University, but that offers "training specialized in a variety of areas". Most of them they are organizations with profit spirit (for profit) whose essential preoccupation is not the values nor the quality of teaching, but the obtaining of gains.

10. Countries like the U.S.A., New Zealand, Australia and Japan, that obtain important gains by concept of foreign students, defend with force the initiative of the OMC to include the Education Superior like a subject service to the regulations of the GATS.

11. The developing tendency of institutions of countries exists that specially ask for accreditation by agencies of foreign countries - of the U.S.A., without considering that such agencies do not know the local values and regional necessities.

12. The ranking is more and more fashionable. Nevertheless, it is maintained that "to apply to the norms and values of the main academic powers it will not measure in exact form the quality at world-wide level, nor will give rise world-wide to interest ranking. In the competitive one and oriented towards the market academic world of century XXI, the ranking is inevitable and probably necessary. The challenge is to assure that they provide exact and excellent criteria and they measure the suitable things" (Altbach, 2006).

13. The debate around the Universities of world-wide category is every greater time (of excellence recognized world-wide level): Yale, Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, the Sorbonne, Tokyo, among others. The countries developing instead of emulating to obtain indicators difficult to obtain, must pay more attention to an ideal of University that promotes the sustainable development at regional or local level.

14. The processes of evaluation and accreditation have taken to a debate on which many consider an increasing phenomenon of academic corruption.

15. The Institutions of Superior Education are influenced and conditional by the policies of the Be-Nation and the global tendencies of the capitalist system-world.

By virtue of these elements, the University like democratic institution that creates and spreads the knowledge and that historically has demonstrated capacity of creation, critic and initiative, must lay ways so that the world that we want is not only more wise person, but more shared in common, and also more just more sustainable. Therefore, in the creation and consumption of the new knowledge, the Universities of developed countries and its systems of superior education they are in advantageous situation, by the financial resources, to be up-to-date in the subjects of investigation and by the easy access to the alert networks. Therefore, it is to have of the developed countries to fulfill the social commitment of being transforming elements, as much of the reality of the rest of the

developing countries.

In spite of the quantitative expansion of the Higher Education to international level, the inequalities in their access still persist for reasons of diverse nature, like geographic, sort economic-partner ethnic, religious, and intolerance towards the minorities.

In fact, the University must surpass the triple crisis: of hegemony (no longer it has the monopoly of the investigation), of legitimacy (it is perceived like an institution that prohibition the access to most underprivileged) and institutional (because of difficulties to preserve its autonomy before the pressure of the demands of the market and to the tendency to visualize like a companies). Therefore, it is required of a deep reform that has like itinerary the sustainable, equitable and democratic development socially of the participation of the new citizenship in the development and distribution of the advanced knowledge available.

In Latin America, the Universities have been victims of the oriented neoliberal reforms to the market. In 1950 75 existed Universities, almost all public. In 1995, there were 812 of which 60% were private and in the 2002 it is arrived at 1213 with private approximately 70%.

The image of the university like “ivory tower”, like institution that looks for the knowledge in itself, had to be something of the past. Often resistance to the reform and the innovation exists, to the change, justified by the defence of traditional academic values and certain attachment to the “old practices”. It is defined to the Universities like innovators when they essentially happen to be training of professionals to be modern institutions with an important development of scientific research and technological and an attitude and innovating practice. Therefore, the essence of the strategies of transformation of the University would be given by five common elements (Burton R. Clark, 2000): central command and control reinforced, extended periphery of development, diversification of financing sources, generation of innovating academic units, promotion of a culture of professional collaboration that adapts and promotes the change.

So that the developing University of countries becomes, it is required to journey from the classic methods of education, to the collective participation of discussion, reflection and new analyses of knowledge in a radically different paradigmatic context that is opened to the complexity and the centrality in the learning.

III. Scenes and Global Alternatives of the Higher Education

The medieval university – Bologna, Paris, Salamanca - took step in the following centuries to more and more rigid models that articulated around three approaches:

- The English model, or residential university system of Oxford.
- The French model, based on the “great schools” or faculties, denominated “Napoleonic system”, in which the university, submissive the trusteeship and guides of the state, must like function form professionals.
- The German model of investigation, derivative of the University of Humboldt.

These models predominated during century and means. In the middle of century XX mixed models emerged, like the North American model that insisted on the departmental structure, today in discussion by their excessive fragmentation. The present university, not

only in the developed countries of the OECD, but also in the countries developing of Asia, the Arab Africa, States and of Latin America and the Caribbean, is resembled some of those models or a combination of them. In the case of the developing countries, these models reached the colonial and neo-colonial domination along with. In spite of the endogenous characteristics of the systems of superior education of the countries developing and of its regional and national peculiarities, those are these models that prevail. Also the global policies of UNESCO and the World Bank, have contributed to this homogenizing tendency. For that reason the changes in the systems of superior education of the metropolitan zones of the center (OECD) repel with force in the periphery.

An interesting analysis on the future of the Universities in terms of possible scenes in the countries of the OECD exists (Lancrin, 2004):

- **Scene 1: Tradition**

The Universities conserve their present profile. They continue simultaneously practicing teaching and the investigation without excessive dependency or involvement with the private sector. The Governments of the countries of the OECD continue playing a key role in the financing of the universities and the regulation of their management. Many directed initiatives are not developed to obtain gains and/or financing and the fairness, like the surrender of accounts, continues being priorities. The permanent education and e-learning are developed widely outside the traditional frame of the universities.

- **Scene 2: Enterprising universities**

Selective institutions that provide with knowledge to the young people in their initial preparation for the life. The essential difference with the previous scene is that the universities (public or prevailed) can act with great autonomy before a variety of financing sources. There is a greater mixture of the models of public and deprived financing. The resources for the university come from great diversity of sources. The investigation is considered like an important and lucrative activity. Nevertheless, the universities take this oriented attitude "towards the Market", without losing basic the academic values. Due to prestige and income that the investigation receives the teaching staff maintains a character elitist. The permanent education takes place single in merely educational universities with a status lower than the investigation universities. The three missions of the university - teaching, investigation and services to the community (extension) - well are balanced, in spite of the great differentiation between IES. Important approaches to the international markets and the initiatives of e-learning take place. The resources of the Universities improve like the wages and the prestige of the teaching staff.

- **Scene 3: Free market**

The forces of the Market reign in this scene. This private sector is regulated by companies deprived in which it talks about the accreditation and guarantee of the quality and is financed through market mechanisms. The forces of the Market give rise to IES specialized by function (teaching, investigation), disciplinary area (administration of businesses, humanities), types of hearing (young students, in time partial, remote education, education of adults, permanent education), whereas the corporations grant academic degrees to their employees by means of training ad hoc. The hierarchy between these diverse IES is emphasized by means of the ranking, appears a global super-elite and a great polarization in the status of the professors takes place. It is increased the

competition to catch students and the income of enrolments. These last ones acquire great importance like main source of financing of the IES. The Technology has a high presence in the education methods. The international dimension of the educative market acquires a high relevance. Because most of the students and their parents are not interested in the investigation (that it increases the costs of enrolments), the investigation is transferred towards public research centers and the divisions of I & D of the corporations. The investigation that remains in the universities acquires an elitist character still more, whereas teaching, directed to massive markets, tends to the standardization of curriculum and the educational methods. The investigation tends to respond to specific demands and provides to important income via the copyrights and property.

• **Scene 4: Permanent education and Open Education**

The Universities characterize by the universal access - in agreement to the classification of Trow- for all the ages and much less investigation. The economy of the knowledge has bloomed and the superior education is a source to which people recur repeatedly to obtain the professional development, financed by companies or by the own individuals that aspire to a social ascent. In a society that ages, many people university study like entertainment and not for professional reasons. The Universities orient more towards the short demand, courses, the remote education and e-learning. The independent Governments or Agencies have the accreditation in their hands. Most of the investigation is made outside the system of the superior education. The investigators are transferred to the universities towards the corporations, the institutes specialized, or towards the few universities of elite (World-Class Universities) that subsist. The corporative Corporations and universities as Phoenix acquire great relevance and influence. The university education adopts a distant professionalizing character of the Humboldtian model. The receptivity towards the forces of the market is elevated in this scene, in which a high investment in e-learning oriented to the gain takes place.

• **Scene 5: Global network of Institutions**

The post-secondary studies adjust to the demand and the necessities of the market. Two main innovations are: 1) The students define and design their own courses and academic degrees of between which they offer themselves. 2) The IES form partnerships with the industry. E-learning has a great development in this scene. The educational contents tend to the standardization and modularization. Most of the investigation it is developed outside the scope of the system of superior education. A great polarization of the academic status takes place, between super capable stars in the use and development of "tools of learning" and little qualified professors who distribute standardized modules and that much more have a status under which the gurus. The programs and courses acquire a greater relevance than the institutions. The rights of intellectual property by contributions in the investigation and the methods of education give great income to their proprietors.

• **Scene 6: Disappearance of the Universities**

In this scene the formal sector of tertiary superior education disappears. The people learn throughout their life - in the work, in the house - according to personal and professional motivations, sharing experiences in such fields. Certain knowledge like the surgery, for example, that requires a certain practice will be transmitted through systems of learnings ad hoc. The open education will be what will predominate. The paper of the learning by means of the networks will have a great weight. Specialized agencies will credit to the

knowledge acquired by the people by means of the presentation of specific credentials and tests to these effects. The investigation will less tend to be specialized in those disciplines that do not require great investments to obtain results like the humanities, whereas the investigation that it requires great investments is carried out in public institutions and the divisions of I & D of the corporations. Peter Drucker has bet by this scene.

Scene 1 predominates in the countries of Western Europe. To a great extent it is the model for which it pleads the Declaration of the World-wide Conference of UNESCO on Superior Education of UNESCO (1998).

In the same way, in a document presented/displayed in a meeting of Ministers of Education, the OECD (June, 2006) has formulated four scenes for the superior education:

- **Scene 1: Open networks**

The superior education has a high degree of internationalization that implies intense bonds by means of diverse networks between IES, professors, students and diverse actors of the productive sector. This model is based more on the cooperation than in the competition. The English like lingua-frank consolidates. A strong hierarchy between the diverse IES stays. The IES that are not properly investigation universities benefit from the advances in the knowledge in the universities of world-wide ranking. The Network offers information in the state-of-the-art that can be used freely by academic and students of diverse countries. The voluntary cooperation between IES prevails and it tends to the harmonization of the systems of superior education. The process of Bologna is a model on the matter. Will be this model sustainable in an economy of knowledge?

- **Scene 2: Serving the Local Communities.**

The superior education is administered and financed by the State. The academic ones direct the IES and control the curricula, programs, and other key aspects of university education. A small number of IES of elitist character is tied to international networks. The IES average focuses their teaching and investigation to the national and local problems. The study is emphasized, through social sciences and the humanities, of the national culture and the native social problems.

- **Scene 3: New Type of Public Administration.**

The private IES have their own financing. The public IES still to a great extent depend on the public funds. Nevertheless the IES tend to diversify their sources of financing and to less depend on the public funds. The sale of diverse, clear services, consultancies and other forms of diversification imply a greater financial autonomy. The students and their families pay a significant percentage of the cost of their studies. The borders between the public education and the prevailed one become blurred. The IES are evaluated and render accounts periodically, as much the public ones as the prevailed ones, which contributes to the obtaining of bottoms of diverse sources. The student loans become an important form of the financing of the university studies. The thickness of the investigation projects is financed according to their economic perspective mainly. There is a strong competition at national level between the IES to obtain bottoms that finance their projects of investigation. The surrender of accounts, the transparency, the efficiency and the effectiveness are in the daily routine. Will be able east model of superior education to give diverse and suitable answers? , or on the contrary it will tend to increase the inequalities.

Scene 4: Inc. Superior education

In this scene the IES compete globally to provide with educative services and investigation on commercial bases. A disconnection between teaching takes place and investigation, as always is it been in the GATS. The corporative university Phoenix type is the model that predominates. The universities are rather pseudo universities with oriented specific programs to specific necessities of the market. The superior education considers merchandise and not an ethical value. A fierce competition between IES by students takes place. The educative services and of investigation are included in the negotiations of the GATS. The tendency of some countries such as Australia, EE.UU. Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom is reinforced to turn its sector of superior education an export industry.

Are the systems of superior education of the countries developing prepared to compete globally? What will happen with those areas of the knowledge - tropical diseases, environmental contamination - that are not commercially viable? What impact will have this in the cultures and national languages? Will be able to survive? , or they will succumb to global a cultural and linguistic homogeneity?

Scene 1 is the one that is in force in Western Europe and to a certain extent constitutes the ideal of the Process of Bologna. Although in this process there are forts tendencies to mix this scene with aspects of the 3. Scene 2 is own of the systems of superior education of countries like Cuba and some Latin American countries like Uruguay, where still public the superior education has a great weight. Scene 3 is typical of EE.UU. Scene 4 is advancing vertiginously from 90s, and is being impelled by certain countries members of the OMC that aspires to turn to the superior education a good of import and export, regulated by the norms of the OMC and according to the policies of the GATS.

IV. Some Combat abilities: as a Conclusion

The established expositions previously, allow to visualize a set of combat abilities relative to the Superior Education (Lopez, 2007):

1. To consider the superior education like a public service, independently of which is their source of financing. This implies that the IES, as much public as prevailed, assume a public commitment with the society in which they are inserted. They must provide to the society not only the knowledge how (know how) but in addition the knowledge so that or so that (know why). It means to heighten the paper of the IES in the construction and development of share capital and human, for which the State must establish policies ad hoc, promote, regulate and finance the superior education. One is due to start off of the principle from which it is not possible to be excluded anybody from the knowledge and its benefits.
2. To generate access policies that are "equal for all, based on the respective merits" so and as indicates in its article 26.I the Universal Declaration of the Human rights. It is essential to manage certain levels of social fairness to universalize the access to the university, thus to obtain a permanent education for all and all the life.
3. To consolidate the university like a center of critical thought, like "a species of being able intellectual that the society needs so that it helps it to reflect, to include/understand and to act", (Report Delors).
4. To fortify in the University its ethical dimension, as much in its internal organization as in

its commitments with the social world.

5. To harness in the university the prospective and anticipatory capacity that allows to construct the best possible option of future.

6. To allow that the Systems of Superior Education fortify the own cultural identity.

7. To impel an authentic agreed international vocation with the tradition of the universities, to enrich the singular with the universal thing.

8. To act like social institution as that the society hopes, not only as soon as fairness in the access, but also in the state-of-the-art in knowledge, information and proposals of solutions.

9. To guarantee a suitable relation with the world of the work that makes possible a permanent dialogue with the new knowledge and professional developments.

10. To form the students so that they participate actively in the constructive critical society as much subject and of a worthier and human world.

11. To make possible cognitive mediations that allow significant learnings, this is, to contribute to reform the education for a reform of the thought.

12. To integrate the national systems of superior education, like key strategy in the formulation of policies of superior education. All with the intention of generating, harnessing and to advance in new educative proposals on the base of knowledge networks.

13. To articulate autonomy with the surrender of accounts to the society and the state (accountability). This is, to develop institutional actions for participating with responsibility in the social construction.

14. To articulate the formative processes with institutions and preceding educative levels, applying different centered forms of cooperation in the investigation, cultural and institutional capital improvement and integration.

Bibliography

Altbach, Ph. (2006): "International Higher Education. Reflections on Policy and Practice". Boston College CIHE, Boston.

Brunner, JJ (2005): "Tendencias recientes de la educación superior a nivel internacional".

Burton R. Clark (2000): "Creando Universidades Innovadoras. Estrategias Organizacionales para la Transformación" UNAM, México.

Lancrin, S.V. (2004): "Building future scenarios for universities and higher education". En

Policy Futures in Education.

López S., F. (2007): Educación Superior Internacional Comparada (Escenarios, Temas y Problemas).

UNESCO (1998): “La educación superior en el siglo XXI: visión y acción”. Conferencia Mundial sobre Educación Superior. París, Francia.

Raúl Baeza Aspée.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/fr/deed.fr>

