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Challenging Existing Paradigms: Critiques of Internationalization

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Challenging Existing Paradigms: Critiques of Internationalization

Altbach, Philip G. 2013. *The International Imperative in Higher Education*. Global Perspectives in Higher Education Series. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Hébert, Yvonne and Ali A. Abdi, eds. 2013. *Critical Perspectives on International Education*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Peterson, Patti McGill and Robin Matross Helms. 2014. "Challenges and Opportunities for the Global Engagement of Higher Education." CIGE Insights: Global Higher Education. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Reviewed by Kati Bell, Dominican University of California

Universities are now more globally connected than ever before through technology, partnerships, and student mobility as teaching and learning increasingly moves beyond borders into a transnational realm of global education. In response to this globalization of higher education, universities around the world are feeling the pressure to intentionally develop and implement comprehensive internationalization policies, further motivated by a variety of factors including competition and financial growth. However, after nearly a decade of uncritical acceptance and support for the positive merits of the internationalization of higher education, internationalization is recently experiencing an emerging backlash of criticism. The publications presented in this review represent some of the limited but growing body of literature and research that take a critical lens to higher education internationalization paradigms and policies. While each piece reviewed applies varying levels of critique, they all share a common thread of examining 1) the impact of globalization on changing priorities in higher education, and 2) the effect of internationalization policy on global social justice-related educational issues.

Peterson and Helms's article (2014) examines the rapid advancement of rationales for internationalization. The writers describe how globalization currently changes the priorities of higher education, as seen through both individual and institutional contributions to campus internationalization, e.g., from faculty-to-faculty collaborations to institution-to-institution level approaches. The increasing amount of institutional activity most often results in the development of comprehensive internationalization strategies. The authors explain that one or more of the following factors motivates these strategies: financial impetus, competition and prestige, governmental pressure (notably more influential outside of the United States), and a movement advancing the ideal of the greater good of public higher education. The authors understand the "greater good" as the responsibility of higher education to "go beyond the exclusive interest of individual institutions and countries towards addressing...issues that affect humankind worldwide" (Peterson and Helms 2014, 4). This concept also parallels the values of the international education community that stem back to Senator J. William Fulbright's world peace through educational exchange discourse. It is a paradigm that continues to be the ideological

backbone of international education. However, the authors stress that this paradigm has gradually been subjugated by profit and competitive aims. Their article seeks to both remind the international education community of its ideological roots and challenge practitioners and researchers to critically explore and understand the varying motivations behind the increase in international activity in the higher education community.

Peterson and Helms only touch upon the impact that internationalization has on global social justice issues of equity, access, and diversity of global education. They see individual institutions as responsible for the bulk of the work of creating internationalization policies and partnerships. In order to address these global social justice issues, the development of new policies must carefully balance three potentially conflicting goals: profit, diversity, and the greater good (of public higher education). In order to do this, the authors argue that institutions must work toward identifying mechanisms that promote and support transparency and ethics at all levels of the internationalization policy process including development, implementation, assessment, and reporting.

Altbach (2013) puts forward a decidedly edgier stance toward internationalization in his book *The International Imperative in Higher Education*, which includes a comprehensive breakdown of nearly all the major issues facing international education today. This collection of previously published essays from the journal *International Higher Education*, discusses everything from rankings, mobility, and academic freedom, to corruption, use of agents, twinning-branch campuses (which he refers to as the “franchising of international education”), and brain drain. It also includes three chapters devoted to specific, topical issues in China, India, and Asia. The 40 essays are generally short in length, but the topics still receive deep enough treatment to be relevant. Additionally, this collection of essays features many contributors from outside of the United States, providing a rich and refreshing perspective to international education issues across the globe.

Altbach holds globalization responsible for the increasing commoditization of higher education. His book points to a recent movement away from an academic culture traditionally separated from business toward one with an increasing focus on entrepreneurial activities. Two common manifestations of entrepreneurial activities include the recruitment of larger and larger numbers of international students from around the globe, and the proliferation of branch campuses. In line with the views of Peterson and Helms, Altbach frames this issue around the archetype that higher education is to be seen as a public good. He warns that internationalization is focusing less on education as a public good and is increasingly replaced by incentives and motives from private enterprise. As with Peterson and Helms, Altbach challenges the administrators and faculty involved with internationalization efforts to recognize the perilous shift toward financial motivations and to steer the ship back to its ideological roots.

In terms of global social justice, Altbach indicates a recent shift of the academic profession has contributed to the decreasing quality of education for larger and larger numbers of students. The book devotes six essays to a discussion on current threats of internationalization to the academic profession. These essays cover topics ranging from the crisis facing academic salaries to recent threats against academic freedom. Altbach’s essays leave a clear impression that internationalization impacts all sides of academia and that academics, in addition to administrators, are responsible for stemming the tide to maintain an essential balance. Additionally, Altbach addresses an increase in the inequality of educational access. As the world

population increases, according to Altbach, higher education becomes less accessible to an increasing number of tertiary qualified students. The world responds to this phenomenon with what Altbach refers to as mass higher education or “massification” (Altbach 2013, 8). Massification in higher education is the result of developed and developing countries working to meet the educational needs of a rapidly increasing number of students. This number, according to Altbach, has increased 53 percent in the past decade. Altbach contends that massification lowers the quality of education and increases dropout rates for students, especially in developing countries such as China and India. He calls for further steps toward accreditation networks and quality assurance measures to keep the process in check. These are important, vital issues, he concludes, that can and must be addressed by educators and university administrators worldwide through a more engaged, equitable, and responsive internationalization policy at the individual institutional level.

Hébert and Abdi’s *Critical Perspectives on International Education* (2013) provides an impressively detailed and complex analysis of internationalization in higher education. The nearly 400-page book starts with a thorough and serious examination of the links between education and globalization, and then develops a highly critical stance that campus internationalization policies currently lack an ethically defensible vision of international education. By including essays from education researchers from several countries, the authors explore the theme of how different views of knowledge can inform and redefine international education in varying cultures and contexts worldwide.

Consistent with the other reviewed works, the contributing authors in Hébert and Abdi’s book also subscribe to the view of education as a public good. They present a wide variety of fascinating discussions on how knowledge as a shared good can be understood and actualized through the internationalization lens. These knowledge constructs include new discussions around the topics of migrant and youth mobility for educational purposes, the role of technology in the knowledge economy, and the rise of diversity and multicultural educational policies. The essays in *Critical Perspectives on International Education* contribute to the understanding of the important responsibility individual universities have in reshaping the existing educational hegemony. The authors’ collective belief is that higher education owns this responsibility and it should not be left to market forces or government regulation. With global education now well established beyond borders and political lines, the authors deem governmental regulation to be less important and useful for enacting meaningful changes in global education policy. They make the same case as the other two publications that individual universities should be working together to develop and implement policy changes through this shared vision of education for the common good.

Because of its in-depth and detailed analysis, this book represents a significant contribution to the critique of international education policies and paradigms. It provides new perspectives on internationalization areas such as education abroad and globalized curriculum. It also introduces new research domains in internationalization such as adult or lifelong learning and teacher education. As with Altbach’s book, *Critical Perspectives on International Education* offers a worldwide perspective beyond the traditional North American and European points of view by highlighting contributions from countries as varied as Jamaica, South Africa, Japan, Australia, and China. This multicountry perspective is vital for North American and European international educators to better understand the impact of the hegemonic force of the existing

global education landscape. It also presents new understandings for how other cultures and countries are addressing the same internationalization issues.

The critique of international education is a research area of vital importance not only to our own professional field, but also to the rapidly evolving and shifting arena of global education worldwide. Each of the publications reviewed here represents a part of a recent surge of interest in the critique of the internationalization of higher education. These articles will interest and be of use to internationally minded faculty members, as well as practitioner advisors and administrators directly within the international education field. As we re-envision and redesign education from a global perspective, international educators still face many challenges. Through frequent and honest critique of our own internationalization efforts, we can work toward the continued development of policies and practices with high levels of transparency, inclusivity, and ethical standards so that the shared ideal of education for the public good can be maintained for generations to come. Hébert and Abdi provide a moving summary to this subject area by concluding that, “we have moved from the knowledge-as-economic capital towards knowledge-as-shared socio-cultural capital while seeking to better understand the new directions in creating knowledge as a shared social good rather than as a saleable good. In so doing, we end with critical perspectives on the role of education on human well-being and citizenship development” (Hébert and Abdi 2013, 2).