

Globalisation: Implications for Education and for Quality

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1 The Foundation of Globalisation

Globalisation refers to the increasing flow of technology, finance, trade, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders (Knight & de Wit, 1997).

Of course, technology, finance, trade, knowledge, people, values, and ideas have been flowing across borders for millennia. In 1265, Henry III wrote to the University of Paris: 'Greetings to the Masters and the whole body of scholars at Paris. Humbly sympathising with the exceeding tribulations and distresses which you have suffered at Paris under an unjust law, we wish by our pious aid, with reverence to God and his holy church, to restore your status to its proper condition of liberty. Wherefore, we have concluded to make known to your entire body that if it shall be your pleasure to transfer yourselves to our kingdom of England and to remain there to study, we will for this purpose assign to you cities, boroughs, towns, whatsoever you may wish to select, and in every fitting way will cause you to rejoice in a state of liberty and tranquillity which should please God and fully meet your needs'

An early attempt to poach top researchers in time for the next RAE?

The speed of the transborder flow has constantly increased, with faster methods of transport (of people and equipment) and faster methods of communication (of information and ideas). However, until the last century, we could move information around no faster than we could move people who knew or carried that information. The advent of electronic communication changed that. Now, through radio and television, we can be as immediately informed of a train crash half a world away as one half a mile away. This inculcates a mental orientation that further encourages globalisation.

Also, the combination of the affordable personal computer, powerful software packages, and cheap interconnection via world-wide networks has increased the flow of ideas and data by many orders of magnitude. We can now store, retrieve, manipulate and transmit data, representing information, knowledge and ideas. We can do it quickly, conveniently, and in bulk.

2 Why Globalisation?

Thus, there are **mechanisms** for globalisation, as defined above, but mechanisms can remain unused if there are no incentives for their use. What are the **reasons** for globalisation? The reasons are inter-related and cumulative, but they include travel, economics & education.

2.1 Travel

Travel has become more convenient and affordable for more people, and in educational institutions, this translates into increased staff and student mobility. This in turn brings with it a desire to have international recognition of credits and qualifications to facilitate travel as a current student or recent graduate.

2.2 Free trade zones.

Many groups of countries are setting up free trade zones, thereby encouraging the flow of trade and finance across the borders within the zone. The trade leads to the movement of people to support it. They take their knowledge, values and ideas. For education, this means the need to educate people who are comfortable with operating in different racial, ethnic and national environments, and whose qualifications to do so are accepted by the recipients of whatever service they are providing.

2.3 Multinational companies.

Multinational companies usually wish to be able to employ staff (professionals and other specialists) in different countries with known qualifications; or to move their staff internationally and have the staff's qualifications recognised; or to provide staff development activities wherever the staff maybe be, the results of which must be transferable. This movement is not restricted to free-trade zones.

2.4 Education

Following from the above, ways are needed to provide, internationally, information about the nature, level, and quality of education.

2.5 Mobility of education

A second educational reason for globalisation is that people learn about the education on offer elsewhere, and want it. This means that the people travel or the education does. There are many ways to achieve the latter, and each has its own characteristics, benefits and drawbacks.

2.6 The business of education

Building on these needs, education itself has become an international business.

This brief introduction indicates the central role played by education in globalisation. Education-related aspects that arise from the above considerations will now be addressed.

3 Education at a Distance

The first clutch of aspects are as follows:

- Transnational education
- On-line education
- Distance education
- Collaborative education

These concepts intersect, and a single educational activity may take two or more of these forms: distance education may or may not be online or transnational; transnational education may or may not be collaborative, etc.

3.1 Transnational Education

Transnational education (TNE) denotes any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country (the host country) to that in which the institution providing the education is based (the home country). This situation requires that national boundaries be crossed by information about the education, and by staff and/or educational materials (whether the information and the materials travel by mail, computer network, radio or television broadcast or other means).

This is a response to people's desire for an education offered by an institution abroad, and the institution arranges for the education to be available in their home country. Alternatively, the impetus comes from the institution, seeking markets for its education.

The following are some examples of TNE, to give a flavour of some possibilities.

Branch campuses: campuses set up by an institution in a host country to provide its educational programs to foreign students. Such campuses may be staffed by local people from the host country and/or staff from the home country on short or long-term visits.

Franchises: an institution (A) approves an institution (B) in another country to provide one or more of A's programs to students in B's country.

Articulation: the systematic recognition by an institution (A) of specified study at an institution (B) in another country as partial credit towards a program at institution A.

Twinning: agreements between institutions in different countries to offer joint programs.

Corporate programs: many large corporations offer programs, principally for their own staff. Where the programs are more extensive and/or form and/or structured, rather than small-scale and possibly ad hoc staff development, the term 'corporate university' is often being used. The programs are sometimes linked with an academic institution so employees can obtain formal and possibly transferable credit for the work. This often involves crediting across national borders.

Distance education programs: those distance education programs that are delivered - through satellites, computers, correspondence, or other technological means - across national boundaries.

A recent survey by IDP of involvement by Australian universities in TNE found that the typical program abroad has, inter alia, the following characteristics:

- In business, administration or economics
- In Hong Kong, Malaysia or Singapore
- four semesters
- involves a local partner that is an education institution
- face-to-face teaching or supported distance learning
- curriculum not adapted to local conditions
- intellectual property owned by home institution
- responsibility for curriculum, teaching assessment and QA with home institution
- responsibility for study location, marketing, financial administration with host institution

3.2 On-line Education: the 'Virtual University'

At present there is no generally accepted meaning of the term 'virtual university', or more generally 'virtual institution', but at present it is capturing the absence of a campus with a group of academics located together. Now, not only are the students likely to be in distant locations, but the staff may be too, so the programs are provided and serviced primarily on-line through some form of computer-mediated communications. Furthermore, the staff who develop programs may not be those who support them, and those who assess them may be different again. Without a campus, the institution has been dubbed 'virtual' (Butterfield et al., 1999).

The virtual university builds directly on the widely available computer power and computer networks I identified as mechanisms for globalisation. The options offered to education via the range of information-provision and information-handling techniques may change the whole character of education - or at least, of some of education.

The last phrase is an important qualification. The new modes don't mean the end of education as we know it. On the contrary, they may be the saviour we need. We've been trying to do things like increase enrolments, open access, and provide lifelong learning, while using traditional tools, methods and systems not well-suited to these new tasks. The new modes might enable us actually to do these things.

One new aspect is the unbundling of activities assumed to be integrally related to each other and to a place (the campus), such as information provision, admission & registration, program development, study, student support, 'library' access, assessment etc. This unbundling will lead to new models for education.

3.3 Distance Education On-line

Many existing 'non-virtual' universities who were not interested in distance education via print or video, are making increasing use of the internet to develop on-line distance education.

Many institutions are taking up on-line education because they envisage economies in staff costs: once a course is created, it can be repeated to indefinite numbers of students without further staff intervention. Increasingly, more careful study is showing this to be a chimera (unless one moves into the mega-open-university mode as described by John

Daniels). However, that there may be other benefits for the same costs, such as increased access and internationalisation.

In this new environment, existing practices or policies may be inapplicable. Copyright and intellectual property are two issues that have come to the fore with on-line education, as the ability to manipulate and re-combine information has increased.

It is worth remembering the term 'flexible learning'. As campus-based institutions are introducing distance options via electronic means (possibly for economy or to serve a new clientele) often they find that the major users are their own campus-based students doing some of their courses on-line. Universities that are effectively implementing on-line courses also report students appreciation of the high level of interaction with a greater number of other students than usually occurs in face-to-face learning.

John Seely Brown of Xerox suggests that we are moving from using technology to support individuals to using technology to support relationships. This will facilitate lifelong learning (Brown, 2000).

3.4 Collaborative Education

In the UK, this tends to mean franchising, and tends to subsume TNE on the grounds that all off-shore operations involve partners. This, however, is a rather restricted interpretation of the concept.

Two models for collaboration in DE in the USA are Western Governors University (WGU) and the Southern Region Education Board's Electronic Campus (SREB) (Carnevale, 2000). WGU is a virtual institution that offers courses created by about 40 colleges and universities. Started in 1998, it offers a competency-based testing system to achieve its degrees, in competition with existing colleges. It has 950 courses, five degrees, and 200 students. It is seeking accreditation, and this is forcing four US regional accreditation commissions to work together.

SREB is a loose collective that started by providing members with little more than a common Internet site on which to advertise their on-line courses. Also started in 1998, it now lists 3,200 courses and 100 degree programs from 260 institutions. Students earn course credits and degrees from those institutions. SREB has yet to work out an easy credit transfer scheme.

Judging by the numbers, the low-key, de-centralised approach seems to have been more successful.

3.5 Supping with the devil: academia/business collaboration

(I did not suggest which is the devil!)

Other models for collaboration involve commercial partners. Peter Goodhew reports in a recent THES on what he calls 'Europe's first totally Internet-based global masters degree in IT', which was developed by an English University and an Israeli partner, who set up a Dutch company with the help of two American software providers. The government of

Egypt has signed an agreement with VirtualAcademics.com for the company's Barrington University to use satellites to transmit courses in English and computing to Arabic nations.

Universitas21 is planning to design courses for presentation via a commercial partner, with degree testamurs listing all the members of U21. This raises quality questions. Will the QAA allow the University of Nottingham to put its name to the testamur unless the course has been through the UK's audit and assessment procedures? Since AUQA is concerned with all academic activities to which an Australian university puts its name, would this mean that AUQA would have to audit U21 when it audits the Universities of Melbourne, Queensland and Sydney?

U21 has suggested that the venture permits the universities to earn money from the on-line educational world that will enable them to keep loss-making campuses open. Concerned voices ask what happens to copyright, intellectual property, integrity of courses, and academic freedom if the commercial partner decides that profit-making requires particular steps to be taken.

Other similar initiatives are under development.

4 Mobility and Recognition

One of the flows of globalisation is people. They move to work or study, and this means that they want their study and qualifications accepted in the countries to which they move. In fact, the pressure may be stronger than this. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) puts a requirement on its signatories that they facilitate the trade in services. This can mean that signatories are required to accept the competence of a consultant educated in another country. Countries within free trade areas (such as the EC, NAFTA, MERCOSUR) have similar requirements stemming from their local agreements (Woodhouse, 2000).

4.1 Recognition of Qualifications

Conventions about the recognition of academic degrees have been signed since 1953 in Europe. As a consequence of these treaties, networks of national agencies for academic recognition (the NARIC and ENIC centres) have been created to deal with the external validation of academic learning. The Lisbon Convention has extended their work, and now places the burden of proof on the recognition authority assessing the qualification, rather than its holder. The Convention also seeks information about the methods of assessing the quality of institutions and programs.

Australia is active in signing mutual recognition agreements, either bilaterally or via APEC.

Increasing mobility of students, either mid-course or to a subsequent course, is putting increasing pressure on institutional admissions officers, who find they have to use a great variety of information sources. There is scope here for a 'database of everything',

that would capture information on all quality agencies and all approved courses at all accredited institutions. We need accurate, up-to-date information on the nature and status of institutions, and the meaning of the qualifications they offer. Such an extensive information bank might be beyond our capabilities, even with the current information handling technology. The main difficulty might prove to be the manual step of keeping the information complete and current.

4.2 Employability

These recognition systems do not link intellectual power to employability, and European ministers signed the Sorbonne Declaration (May 1998) and the Bologna Declaration (June 1999) to push the development of a European HE Area, and point away from academic recognition towards competence appraisal. The Bologna Declaration calls for the 'promotion of European co-operation in QA with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies'. Active discussion throughout Europe is now taking place to set down some basic ideas about the outcomes of HE in European countries. It is leading to greater interest in accreditation, and harmonisation of external QA processes across Europe.

4.3 The Role of Professional Associations

Attention to the mobility of professionals has given a fillip to professional accrediting associations, whose members are demanded international collaboration between associations in order to achieve international recognition of the professional qualifications. The most-cited development in this field is the 'Washington Accord' between the Institutions of Professional Engineers in eight countries, agreeing that

- the criteria, policies and procedures used by the signatories in accrediting engineering academic programs are comparable; and
- the accreditation decisions rendered by one signatory are acceptable to the other signatories.

Two other countries are on the verge of joining. This gives engineering graduates a high level of mobility.

Despite the wide attention to this Accord, it has not spawned many copies. This may be because the engineering associations are associations that 'belong to' their members, and people do not have to belong in order to be allowed legally to call themselves 'engineer'. Professions more tightly controlled by law or statute are finding the mutual recognition task more difficult.

4.4 Contradictions

We can note contrary tendencies in this area:

- i. increasing rigidity, as countries seek to harmonise structures, eg degree length, learning frameworks, to permit mobility and recognition
- ii. increasing flexibility, with more emphasis on outcomes, and/or equivalence at a more basic level - 'substantial equivalence' in the words of the Washington Accord.

5 Trade in Education

Not long ago, the international movement of students or education was seen as either for mutual benefit between equals, or for the purposes of aid to less wealthy or developed countries. Although these aspects have not entirely disappeared, these movements are now firmly in the basket of international trade. This brings into sharper focus such considerations as consumer protection and cultural impact. It also means that education falls within the sphere of GATS, and a country signing the agreement without making explicit reservations at the time of signing can find that it is required to accept from beyond its borders courses and providers about which it has some reservations.

Various Codes of Practice have been drawn up to address this. The GATE Principles for TNE (Woodhouse, 1997a) were written with a very strong consumer protection focus. Cultural impact is much more difficult to handle. One way is to require that courses be adapted to match the needs and nature of the society in the host country, but sometimes students do not want such an adaptation, and sometimes the provider uses the adaptation to provide a cut-down course.

Other Codes of Practice address the treatment of students who have travelled to study in the institution's home country.

6 Implications for Quality

At the 1991 INQAAHE conference, Malcolm Fraser said that the 90s would be the decade of quality. It may be that the 00s (the noughties?!) will be the decade of international quality. To support globalisation, educational institutions are paying increasing attention to **internationalisation**, which is the process of integrating an international / intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution (Knight, 1994).

As institutions internationalise their curricula or their research links, or offer courses abroad or enrol foreign students, all these activities should be subject to internal QA processes. By the same token, external QA agencies must be able to assess the nature and effect of these internal processes. This is the process of 'QA of internationalisation'. Where competence in QA in this area does not exist (whether internally or externally), it must be developed.

A similar phrase with a different meaning is 'internationalisation of QA'. Most QA agencies started as national agencies, but globalisation and internationalisation of HE mean that increasingly, QA agencies must be able to operate internationally.

Examples of international operation by QA agencies include

- A QA agency follows its institutions' courses abroad (which could be done in several ways, such as sending review panels abroad, or checking at a distance (electronically or otherwise), or contracting another body (eg another QA agency) to carry out the check)

- A QA agency takes responsibility for everything that happens in its region, so it checks educational imports at the border
- A QA agency recognises the activities carried out and decisions reached by another QA agency abroad
- There is a global 'certifying' agency, which can check and certify the quality of QA agencies themselves
- There is a global 'accrediting' agency, which can check and accredit any institution (perhaps by recognising the results of the check carried out by the relevant national agency).

6.1 A Global Accreditor

i. EUA

For several years, EUA has been offering an audit service to its members. This has been very popular, as universities choose the scope of the audit to best suit their needs, and the audit becomes a management consultancy carried out by people who have been part of academic management. There has been criticism of a conservative approach - possibly due to having panels comprising former rectors. It operates on a cost-recovery basis.

ii. IQR

The IMHE of the OECD developed, and now offers together with EUA and ACA, an audit of an institution's processes and progress in internationalisation (Knight & de Wit, 1999). This is at an early stage of its operation, and it remains to be seen how popular and useful it will be. There is a slight tension between whether it is an audit against the institution's own objectives in internationalisation, or against the definition given above.

iii. GATE

In 1995, the Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE) was established to address issues relating to the quality of educational offerings that cross national boundaries (Woodhouse, 1997a). It drafted Principles (a code of practice) to which HE institutions should adhere in these activities, and set up a process for certifying institutional adherence to the Principles. (GATE has now changed its structure, governance and focus, and in my view is no longer positioned to meet the growing demand for transnational recognition.)

iv. A general purpose accreditor

Many enquiries to GATE came from institutions wanting, not a review of their TNE, but a broad-scope review of their academic quality and standards. There is room for an agency that will offer such a service, and discussions continue on the best approach to establishing such a body. It would be of great value to institutions that want to feature on the international scene, but which are in countries where there is no QA agency, or the QA agency does not have a high international reputation.

6.2 Mutual Recognition of the Activities of QA Agencies

I have already mentioned the Washington Accord that provides mutual recognition of the actions of eight accrediting agencies. INQAAHE is the only vehicle linking national accreditors world-wide. Full Membership is open only to bona fide QA agencies, and applicants' procedures are checked to ensure they satisfy this criterion before admission. However, the check is only on paper, and no attempt is made to investigate the substance, nor the implementation of the proclaimed procedures. Therefore, membership of INQAAHE is not a sanction of the member's procedures.

The reason for this approach is that INQAAHE was established for mutual support and information sharing. In this situation, a QA agency that is not operating very well can still benefit from membership, and does not detract from INQAAHE by being a member.

However, INQAAHE could tighten the membership requirement, in the sense of carrying out a fuller check of the prospective member's operations. Then, INQAAHE membership would be the organisational equivalent of an engineer or lawyer being a member of his or her professional association, which has checked its members' credentials before admission. In this situation, INQAAHE could be a vehicle for mutual recognition of qualifications, as INQAAHE membership would provide a guarantee of the performance of the QA that has accredited the institution (using that term loosely) that has granted the qualification (Woodhouse, 1997b).

Even without the INQAAHE Board imposing more restrictive conditions for membership, which could be considered unhelpful, exclusive, or impractical, more formal links can be established between members to facilitate this mutual recognition of qualifications. An INQAAHE Action Group is trying May to take forward the thinking and discussion on Mutual Recognition of QA agencies.

There are a great many thorny questions in this area. For example, can an agency that reviews at program level and one that reviews at institution level meaningfully recognise each other's activities? Autonomous institutions are not bound to give credit to a student for work done at another institution that answers to the same accreditor. Therefore, even if two agencies accept the other's activities as valid and rigorous, will it have any effect on what their respective institutions will accept?

6.3 A Quality Hallmark

Another INQAAHE Action Group is working on the concept of a quality hallmark for QA agencies. A 'quality hallmark' would need a Code of Good Practice for QA agencies, and possibly then an independent body to certify to this code. Such a process would be analogous to that used in the general QA world, where organisations can be accredited to certify to standards such as ISO 9000.

The proposal under discussion by INQAAHE for an international Hallmark (Vroeijenstijn, 2000) proposes the following criteria:

- The mission and vision of the agency are clearly formulated and made public
- The agency has competent and qualified staff
- The agency has a system to assure its own quality, and is itself periodically reviewed
- The agency's work draws on the services of competent and qualified people

- The agency's protocols for institutional self-assessment and for the agency's subsequent external assessment are clearly stated and firmly adhered to
- The methods for setting standards (for processes and outcomes) are open
- The criteria used for making judgments are clear and public.
- The assessment is a regular and cyclical activity
- The assessment is carried out by an independent group, panel or committee, and stakeholders have no influence on the judgment
- The report of the assessment addresses the most important aspects
- There is a public report in some form that permits public understanding of the quality and standards assessed.

Clearly there are problems in getting international agreement on such a protocol, from the philosophical (what constitutes independence?) to the practical (can we apply the same process to a program-review and an institutional-review agency?) Nonetheless, meta-evaluation - ie evaluation of the evaluators - is a major priority:

- Note the theme of the 1999 INQAAHE conference.
- Note the recent THES headlines about the total explicit and implicit, external and internal cost of the external review processes.

I have often remarked that, with the possible exception of the US regional accrediting agencies, no external QA agency has been set up by institutions totally voluntarily. Either they are set up by governments, or by the institutions because the latter fear the government is going to set one up.

In a similar vein, I now find my QA agency colleagues rather conservative. They talk about the difficulties of mutual recognition; they balk at the idea that anyone may judge them for the purposes of giving them a quality stamp and find them wanting. But they may find that the world has flowed on, and marooned them on their island.

As I've already noted, governments are pushing the issue of mutual recognition; QA agencies are sometimes disparaging of the NARIC-type recognition community, but it is the latter that are at the sharp end of making judgments that can make or break an individual's profession; professional agencies are moving faster, but again because of the pressure of free trade agreements and the clamour by their members for mechanisms to facilitate their mobility.

As the new flexibility increases the variety of educational programs and providers, QA systems aligned to conventional modes may be a force for conservatism. If so, they will be ignored by employers and governments or bypassed by new structures. A more profitable evolution is to develop appropriate guarantees for the new modes.

7 The Flexible QA Agency

One consequence of globalisation is an enormous amount of activity in the QA world, much of it beyond the capacity of individual institutions, and much outside the purview of the QA agency as usually conceived. This suggests that the responsibility for action should be spread more widely. Unfortunately, if something is everyone's responsibility, it may be **no-one's** responsibility, so there may always be need for some 'agency' or 'body' to check what steps are being taken and how effective they are, but it may not need to look much like an EQA **agency** as we currently conceive it.

In the commercial world, organisations with strong internal auditing practices are negotiating with their certifying body alternative EQA arrangements to rationalise costs and simplify the process (Kable, 1997). Audit sampling and self-surveillance audits witnessed by the certification body are being implemented by several organisations. HE needs to move in the same direction.

The 'external quality manager' (EQM) could be a body that interacts with institutions and operates by monitoring, reviewing and validating the peer and other activities of institutions and other agencies (Woodhouse, 2000). Mechanisms it might use at institution level include:

- Audit by the EQM
- Evidence from international benchmarking
- Validation by international consortia
- Accreditation by foreign accreditors
- Accreditation by validating institutions (eg the CVU members)
- Accreditation by international accreditors
- Evidence from the achievement of quality awards
- Evidence from ISO 9000 certification

Mechanisms it could use in relation to programs and qualifications include:

- The EQM's own program approval function. This would assist institutions that want a single body to actually carry out all their external quality activities.
- Program work could be 'subcontracted' to other bodies, with the EQM auditing the program approval operations of its 'subcontractors'
- The EQM may permit institutions to approve their own programs ('self-accreditation') subject to EQM audits of the procedures. This would assist institutions with well-developed and secure internal processes.
- Evidence from international benchmarking
- Institutions could undertake a system-wide program-level, discipline-oriented review (cf The Netherlands)
- Validation by international consortia
- Certification by international accreditors
- Evidence from ISO 9000 certification
- Evidence from professional association accreditation

The EQM could further customise the procedure by taking account of the academic maturity of an institution in determining the scope, stringency and frequency of audits of the institution and its program-level activities.

Our mental image is always of a one-to-one relation between the QA agency and each of its institutions. Perhaps we should move on from this and encourage more interaction between institutions (whether in formal consortia or informal clusters), with the EQM relating to groups of institutions. Taking this further, perhaps the emphasis on the inter-institutional interaction should be on benchmarking, with the detailed management-level parameters being shared between the institutions, but the more global descriptive parameters being revealed to the EQM(s). If the institutional cluster spans various EQM jurisdictions, the agencies should co-operate in their interaction with the group.

8 Conclusion

Partly as a consequence of globalisation, matters that are now envisaged when the word 'quality' is used are very wide-ranging, from academic excellence through national development to international recognition. It is time to take a more flexible approach to our concepts of quality, qualifications, quality assurance, and mutual recognition.

QA agencies or EQMs will become **less** direct checkers of quality and **more** orchestrators and gatherers and authenticators of evidence from a wide variety of sources. Their integrity will be essential, but other things will be less important. For example, it should not matter whether institutions or government **own** it, provided they **trust** it. Also, the marshalling of international evidence will give an international dimension, regardless of whether the EQM is notionally national or international.

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