Building Capacity For Quality In Global Higher Education

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Abstract: International society has assumed a globalized emphasis, supported and sustained by rapidly advancing technology. In this swiftly changing environment higher education institutions are expected to offer the highest quality education to a widely diverse audience. Technology will often increase costs without easily measurable or discernible benefits, yet without adequate technology higher education will have limited resources to constantly assess the educational processes used to increase quality and innovation. Quality is an often arbitrary concept viewed as a primary driver in global higher education leading to the development of new organizational structures and systems that will provide quality learning. But building the capacity to apply change efficiently and effectively is one of the most critical factors facing global higher education.

Keywords: Globalization, capacity building, quality, global higher education, change

I. INTRODUCTION
As a result of changing missions, quality in global higher education has ascended to the top of the higher education policy agenda around the world (Altbach, 2016). The road ahead for global higher education is filled with challenges, risks and uncertainties while simultaneously increasingly perceived as a major contributor to social, technical and economic development (Austin & Jones, 2018). In order to hold universities accountable despite diminished governmental budgets, many nations have adopted performance-based university funding strategies as a method to assess quality (Antoine & Van Langenhove, 2019). Increasingly citizens and bureaucrats in many countries are asking more frequently what tangible benefits the society is receiving for the tax revenues being spent on higher education (Kallio, Kallio, & Grossi, 2017). Quality in marketing, selling and financing of global higher education has both positive and negative impacts on the future of global higher education because stakeholders are increasingly asking whether students are learning and whether institutions are providing a quality of service that justifies their cost (Kemp, 2016). Global higher education has become a crowded global marketplace that is not immune to changes affecting 21st century society—an increasingly global, digital, complex and dynamic environment (Altbach & Reisberg, 2018). Scholars and institutional decision makers, who actively shape the academic landscape, have attempted to predict how global higher education will be influenced by shifting trends mandated by quests for quality. Regardless, the future of global higher education will continue to be increasingly complex, challenging, and uncertain (Hackett, Lemoine & Richardson, 2017). Modern universities are extremely complicated, and face diverse political, legal and societal challenges. In addition, changes are occurring at such an accelerating rate that the quality production of knowledge makes institutional management mandatory (Said, Ahmad, Mustaffa, & Ghanni, 2015). In addition, perceptions of quality in higher education vary between countries and regions, and the designs of regional quality reflect these differences. Meanwhile, institutions of global higher education are attempting to redefine themselves in quality terms during a time when the only certainty is uncertainty (Khan, 2015). Perceptions of quality are changing in most countries. The growing emphasis on outcomes and standards appears to herald the potential of more dramatic procedures for assessing and evaluating the quality and productivity of higher education within a global context (Rege Colet, 2017). As a result, institutions of global higher education will be driven to an educational model where quality outcomes are the focus of teaching and learning activities with tremendous implications for assessment and evaluation of quality and what they mean for productivity (Richardson, Jenkins, & Lemoine, 2017).

II. GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION
Globalization, a key reality in the 21st century, has already profoundly influenced and changed higher education from a local enterprise to a global reality (Zhu, 2015). Globalization is an existence shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology, the emergence of an international knowledge network, and other forces often beyond the control of higher education institutions (Sotula, 2018). Globalization can be defined as
the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders (Guri-Rosenblit, 2010). It is this integration of world economy, information and communications technology that has created an intersection through which higher education leaders must traverse. The ubiquity of change in the environment makes this navigation challenging for even the most prescient of global higher education leaders searching for the elusiveness of quality (Mok, 2015).

III. CHANGE IN GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Traditional universities have historically been the producers of knowledge in the form of human capital, research, and scholarship that are challenged to tap into the expanding need for quality teaching and learning (Caspersen, Frolich, & Miller, 2017). Universities and colleges meet this challenge in an environment fraught with uncertainty as professions undergo tremendous change with speed that is disconcerting (Daniela, Strods, & Kalnina, 2019). Tapping into the globalization model presents a tremendous challenge when coupled with an expectation that a higher education credential implies a graduate has mastered specific skills and that those skills will lead to employment in job markets that are also constantly changing (Jacob & Gokbel, 2018). While the need for global higher education is growing, concerns about the application of quality are also increasing because education is now a primary instrument for assuring socioeconomic security and stability (Lemoine & Richardson, 2019). This model for higher education will need to be outcomes-based, growth-oriented, and agile enough to meet the demands of quality from a changing global economy and society (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019). Governments across the world have steadily minimized their support for public higher education, and costs associated with gaining a degree have increased exponentially over the last decade (Feigenbaum & Iqani, 2015). Most global universities are forced to adopt a reorganization model for financing global higher education to make a profit from large numbers of students (Jibeen & Khan, 2015). Change is necessary for global higher education institutions to remain viable in the global marketplace (Khan, 2015; Mense, Lemoine, Garretson, & Richardson, 2018). Survival for global higher education institutions necessitates adaptation of traditional educational paradigms to incorporate concepts of quality in all university operations (Gale & Parker, 2015). While it is true that the changes brought to higher education by globalization, changing technologies, and changing expectations create challenges, those very same changes create a climate where institutions making the right choices may become much more significant, and relevant on a much greater scale (Wiiborg & Robson, 2018). Changes to the missions of institutions of higher education impact numerous sectors of a society that is increasingly global (Soliman, Anchor, & Taylor, 2018). Well-intentioned responses based on changes that have taken place, changes that are underway, or changes predicted by even the most expert of futurists can have vast consequences, many of them unanticipated (Riddell, 2018; Thompson & do Amaral, 2019). With the challenges provided by a climate of change that appears to be accelerating, global higher education is negotiating an intersection where even the infrastructure is exposed to constant transformation amid calls for increased quality (Richardson, Jenkins, & Lemoine, 2017).

IV. ISSUES OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Globally, knowledge is increasingly regarded as the solution to individual and collective social and economic problems, i.e., a new global religion (Natale & Doran, 2012). However, this new “religion” now faces inevitable deliberations regarding knowledge imperialism and the marginalization of those at the boundaries (Qureshi & Nair, 2015). As public sector funding plunges and the costs of postsecondary education are passed on to consumers. What was once considered a public good is now a commodity available only to those who can afford the cost (McGowan, 2018). Quality education is the largest consideration, but access is critically important (Jessop, 2017). The transformation from an industrial society to a knowledge society and a global knowledge economy was categorized by the increased status of knowledge (Froumin & Lisyutkin, 2018), both technical knowledge (know-how), and knowledge about attributes (information and awareness). A knowledge-based economy relies primarily on the use of ideas rather than physical abilities and on the application of technology rather than the transformation of raw materials or the exploitation of cheap labor (Corcoran & Duane, 2019). Researchers predict that 65 percent of new jobs created in the global knowledge economy will soon require advanced education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). However, global colleges and universities have moved from traditional means for preparing future workers and refining preparation to include innovation and entrepreneurship (Guri-Rosenblit, 2010). To stay viable in the digital, knowledge economy, postsecondary institutions are becoming business-like entrepreneurs by marketing themselves, building collaborative alliances, and preparing for newer, emerging disruptive events (Christensen, Gornitzka, & Ramirez, 2019; Goldin & Katz, 2018; Jongbloed, 2015; Lane, Lemoine, Tinney, & Richardson, 2014). The movement toward redefining the roles and missions of colleges and universities is creating tremendous debate regarding the quality of those roles and missions (Lemoine, Jenkins, & Richardson, 2017).

V. NEW TRENDS IN GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Richard Rorty argued that the future is not a predicition; rather, it is a project that must be collectively built (Goodman, 2008). While he did not specifically reference higher education institutions, his remark may be the most appropriate advice for global higher education institutions who have a unique role in building capacity for the future (Marginson, 2017). The components of truly revolutionary changes in the sphere of higher education were created by globalization, world integration and informatization, and the introduction of new technological processes into social and educational production (Davis, 2017). The global society dictated that radical changes in the phenomenon of “global higher education” make it necessary to review and improve quality in the face of change (McCowan, 2017). Globalization has influenced global universities to such an extent that they have become critical for economic growth by producing scientific knowledge and highly educated graduates (Oberoi, Halsall, Snowden, & Caldwell, 2018). University leaders face the twin trials of dramatic decreases in public financial support and the increasing cost of resources to avoid technological obsolescence. Yet, technology continues to evolve and continually disrupt
global higher education where access to higher education is a necessity for job mobility and economic success (Thambusamy, Singh, & Ramly, 2019). Survival for universities requires modification and adaptation, and increased need for building capacity for quality to enhance competitiveness (Pucciarelli, & Kaplan, 2016). The higher education agenda throughout the world is also determined by three interdependent phenomena: technology, globalization and competition.

VI. BUILDING CAPACITY FOR GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS

Globalization creates and encompasses markets and competition between institutions and between nations. Competition, performance funding and transparency render some institutions and systems more prepared for the global challenge of capacity building for quality programs, services and productivity (Wadhwa, 2016). Many researchers and policy makers have speculated on the difference between internationalism and globalization. One difference is whether national systems become more integrated as suggested by globalization, or more interconnected as with internationalization (Carnoy, 2014). Integration presents a wide range of opportunities for innovations, assessment of quality, alliances and markets (Mok, 2015) in addition to increasing probabilities to build capacity to utilize global systems. To maximize capacity in the global environment it is essential to retain a strong sense of identity and purpose; conversely, it is essential to be open to and engaged with others (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014) while being prepared to change (Kaplan, 2000). Global capacity is transformative, and all policies and institutional habits are exposed to a global challenge (Sharma & Vyas, 2017). In today’s evolving global educational marketplace students are accustomed to instant access, any time, any place (Kahn & Agnew, 2017) and global higher education institutions are building capacity by positioning themselves as entrepreneurial models (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019). The globalization of higher education places a new emphasis on both the content and process of education coupled with global ramifications for delivery. Globalization implies a need for content and process that has educational and employment relevance (Bourn, 2018). Economic considerations related to international competitiveness have become a significant driving strength behind the globalization of learning, all in an attempt to improve quality (Jacob, 2015).

VII. BUILDING CAPACITY AS A PREREQUISITE FOR QUALITY

For this discussion, globalization and global higher education are the contexts through which capacity building is examined and quality is determined. Organizational capacity is focused on the internal processes and systems for meeting customer needs to provide competitive advantage (Lavergne & Saxby, 2001). Therefore, the main objective of capacity building should be understood as targeting knowledge, skills, and capacity in global higher education (Brown, LaFond & Macintyre, 2001). In principle, capacity building is directed at solving (changing) problems and improving performance. According to Milen (2001), “It is essentially an internal process, which may only be accelerated by outside assistance. Capacity needs to be built on what exists” (p. 1).

Capacity building is not about the use of outside resources or consultants; rather, it calls for the use of all internal resources to improve the quality of the global higher education institution (Means, 2017). Milen (2001) defined capacity “as an ability of individuals, organizations or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably” (p. 1). It therefore follows that capacity building is the process of “building the ability of organizations (global higher education institutions) to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably” (p2). For this to happen “building” implies growth, the growth of each individual in the organization to grow their capabilities to “perform their appropriate functions more effectively, efficiently and sustainably” to increase the productivity of the institution (Hiusman, 2011; McClure, 2016). If increased quality is the goal, capacity building implies that everyone is to be involved individually and collectively in improving quality. However, capacity involves ability and willingness; one may be willing to do something but not be able to and vice versa. (Tang, 2018).

Capacity building is not about a procedure for administration or policy makers to mandate a particular collection of change mandates to the institution (Mistry, Berardi, Roopsind, Davis, Haynes, Davis, & Simpson, 2011). Wing (2004) defined “capacity building as increasing the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission” p, 155). Capacity is essential to the global higher education institution’s ability to achieve its mission effectively and to sustain itself over the long term. Capacity is also highly dependent on the skills and capabilities of individuals within the institution because it is the ability of individuals to perform appropriate functions and address issues and concerns effectively, efficiently and sustainably that permits the institution to survive (Sobek & Agius, 2001). Sterling (2001) argued that much of the dissatisfaction with current efforts to integrate capacity building comes from an industrial management perspective. He stated: “the managerial approach in education reflects mechanistic beliefs in determinism and predictability--which leads in turn to a belief in the possibility and merits of control” (p. 40). The approach specifies educating people to adapt to change, rather than building their capacity to shape and create change. However, in light of scientific advances, strong evidence is accumulating that a new phase of systematic education capacity building will be needed, much of which is articulated in the move to globalization as a functional, operational, and philosophical means to increase quality (Dunkerly & Woh, 2017). Finally, a global higher education institution should always strive to improve, both process and product quality (Blanco-Ramirez & Berger, 2014). Based upon the findings presented herein, building capacity for quality is the most significant method for managing and improving both process and product quality (Toma, 2010). Capacity building is not a product, but a process (Sterling, 2009). Process improvement must show sustainability which will support the strengthening of the product quality of education services.

VIII. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Global higher education is essential to the creation, exchange and implementation of knowledge in a global marketplace with many unintended outcomes (Marshall, 2018; Zhou, 2016). Globalization creates an atmosphere in higher education where knowledge and information are more vastly
prized and more highly globalized than are localized concerns (Surock, 2016). In today’s marketplace, global universities are required to build their capacity for quality. The value and need for quality are expanding every day making the assurance of quality a top concern for global higher education institutions (Wilkins & Juusola, 2018).

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Author Profiles

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