

EDITORIAL

The Effect of the Present Pandemic on Globalization and Internationalization in the Universities

Two of the key notions that have been powerfully affected by the recent global pandemic of the SARS-CoV-2 virus are “globalization” and “internationalization.” Globalization is a relatively recent economic notion connected with international business and the fact that most of the economic activities in any of the countries or nation states recognized by the United Nations in our time depend on things either mined or produced or manufactured in some other country and transported by sea or air to another or others. Internationalization as it is understood in universities in our time is usually about either the kind of educational experiences one own native students have in being able to travel abroad to other countries and cultures or the educational experiences of those who come from other countries and cultures to one’s own country and local universities. Sometimes these two notions are quite separate. But sometimes, they overlap or are even causally connected. But both have been affected very strongly by the advent of the pandemic. Because workforces everywhere have been decimated by the pandemic, the mining, production or manufacture of raw materials, parts or finished products has been equally disturbed. No longer are all the skilled workers needed available around the world, not least because of severe travel restrictions. This problem with the workforce has also affected transportation necessary to take raw materials, parts or finished products from one location to another. Thus local manufacture and distribution are equally affected as international manufacture and distribution.

Internationalization, on the other hand, is not a terribly recent notion so far as the university movement is concerned. In the early Middle Ages universities in Italy, Spain, France and England were centres where anyone who could understand Latin from anywhere in Europe might migrate to sit at the feet at a number of famous

scholars in Greek medicine, Roman law and Christian Theology at places like Padua, Paris or Oxford. As long as a scholar from anywhere possessed the necessary Latin (and perhaps Greek), could pay the fees for the university and for the necessary food and accommodation he was characteristically welcome. There were few cases of female scholars, though of course the famous case of Eloise and Abelard points out the rare and potentially dangerous exception when teacher and pupil get involved romantically.

The notion that scholars from elsewhere could be used to significantly supplement the coffers of a local university is a very recent notion. My own earliest acquaintance with it was in 1967 when I had been invited by Gilbert Ryle, a famous professor of philosophy, to come and do graduate study in Oxford. His letter of invitation was followed by one from the head of the graduate college I was about to enter to the effect that I might have to pay a much larger fee than British students as the government in Westminster was attempting to pass legislation that would require foreign students to pay double fees to go to Oxford and Cambridge. Happily for me Oxford fought the government and treated me exactly like my British counterparts for my entire five years there, which included two graduate degrees, including a doctorate. Oxford eventually lost but I always appreciated their argument opposing the government's plans that from the early Middle Ages Oxford had been an international institution and had never made any distinction among its students. It did not intend to make any distinction now. Unfortunately in the end even Oxford had to yield to government power. But I certainly benefited from its principled stand though those following me studying in the United Kingdom from abroad had to pay much higher fees.

Part of the spillover of the notion of globalization to many other things is the notion that everything (including students) can be considered an economic product that can be produced anywhere and where international expertise might be involved in the making of that product. This has encouraged some universities and university systems to consider their students as "products" and part of the greater global economy. Thus by this reasoning internationalization came to mean something quite different than it had for most of the history of universities and was now influenced by the prevailing views of globalization which themselves had been the result of the rejection of Keynesian economics that had been very influential during the Great Depression and following the Second World War, an economic view that emphasized the importance of government

intervention in the economy of a national state in order to maintain the economy bolstered by the idea that a country could never on its own go bankrupt. This assumed that a national economy was essentially independent of any other. At about the same time that President Roosevelt invented his approach to solving the Great Depression by building massive national infrastructure projects Keynes in Britain was arguing that governments should support the national economy by printing money when necessary and carefully regulating corporations.

Under the influence of Milton Freedman and the Chicago School of Economics the Keynesianism that had dominated the actions of governments in Britain and the U.S. from the late 1930s until the 1970s was replaced by a form of neo-classical economics as developed by Alfred Marshall as a form of libertarianism that was powerfully expanded by Frank H. Knight at the University of Chicago. Freedman joined that school in 1946 and with his friend George J. Stigler revolutionized both the understanding of macroeconomics and microeconomics respectively. The general tenor of the Freedman/Stigler approach was to emphasize minimal government, little regulation for corporations, maximum competition, laissez-faire and free trade worldwide. So far as this spilled over into everyday life this school tended to emphasize human liberty. Indeed the school appears to be the origin of the American hope that by opening up and developing the economies like those of Russia and China that they would tend to move from authoritarian regimes and dictatorships to free and open economies and ultimately develop powerful democracies. Certainly the result, in the case of China, is to have massively developed the economy of the world's most populous nation. It does not seem, however, to have moved either China or Russia towards Western-style democracy.

The effect of all this picture of globalization on internationalization was to completely change the picture that universities from the Middle Ages onward had of their students. Now students from elsewhere were welcome provided that they came able to pay much larger fees than the local students, often two or three times the regular fare. These crippling fees could sometimes be paid for the students by their home governments, most obviously in the case of students from Saudi Arabia, Iran or China. This impact of the Freedman form of globalization on the universities was to provide for a time a very large injection of cash from abroad to their coffers. As the English language was one of the primary drivers of student movements around the world countries

like their United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and Canada often benefitted from the desire for student to do both their undergraduate and their graduate studies in the universities of English speaking countries.

The universities that became primarily dependent on this injection of foreign funds suddenly found themselves bereft of cash as the students from abroad were unable to come due to travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. And unfortunately for many there was no plan B. At the same time many universities simply closed their doors and offered all of their courses online. This meant that students from abroad could stay home and still take courses unless they involved a laboratory or perhaps an internship which meant potentially dangerous direct human contact. In the business sector of many of the English speaking countries dependence on the previous globalization of their economies meant that shortages of crucial items like rare minerals or metals or such items as computer chips often led to their inability to produce the usual items they had previously had no difficulty in producing, for example, automobiles or computers.

The end result of all this disruption is by no means clear. However, one suspects that in the near future many counties are going to emphasize the manufacture of a number of items that they had, under the globalization assumptions of the Chicago School of Economics, turned over to countries like China, India, Vietnam, Japan and South Korea. Now many of these items will be increasingly manufactured completely at home. The most obviously striking case for some countries like Canada is their loss of the ability to produce their own vaccines at all and shortages of many goods normally filling the shelves of supermarkets and pharmacies. Perhaps the long-term effect of the present pandemic will be a salutary wake-up call for most of us both educationally and economically.

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