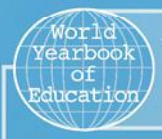


WORLD YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2008

# GEOGRAPHIES OF KNOWLEDGE, GEOMETRIES OF POWER: FRAMING THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

EDITED BY
DEBBIE EPSTEIN, REBECCA BODEN,
ROSEMARY DEEM, FAZAL RIZVI
AND SUSAN WRIGHT

# World Yearbook of Education 2008

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## Geographies of Knowledge, Geometries of Power: Framing the Future of Higher Education

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**Debbie Epstein, Rebecca Boden, Rosemary Deem, Fazal Rizvi and Susan Wright**

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At Christmas 2005 Gunnar was taken ill in Senegal and due to unfortunate circumstances he died. He was a young scholar with outstanding potential who was dearly loved by his colleagues in Senegal and at Bergen, who still mourn and miss him.

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# Series editors' introduction

This 2008 volume of the *World Yearbook of Education* explores the state of higher education in globalised conditions of knowledge production, use and exchange. Its title – *Geographies of Knowledge, Geometries of Power: Framing the Future of Higher Education* – illuminates the perspective on knowledge and power that shapes the volume, and that provides energy and critical direction to the discussion of the global university contained in its pages. It also signals the attentiveness of the contributors to emergent trends in higher education, and their identification of key technologies and relations that map its production into the future.

Put briefly, this volume is focused on the uneven and unequal consequences of changing knowledge production, especially where different countries and regions find themselves positioned in different ways in relation to knowledge production, control, use and exchange. The fragmented and uneven distribution of intellectual resources – within nations and regions as well as across them – has significant consequences for the crucial, informed assessment and study of processes of change, which in turn generate unequal conditions of knowledge production, with consequences for the protection of democratic practices and relations in research. In adopting this perspective, the volume editors – Debbie Epstein, Rebecca Boden, Rosemary Deem, Fazal Rizvi and Susan Wright – have created a focused and securely grounded counter-narrative to the rather dominant themes that direct the university towards service of the 'knowledge economy'. The outlines of that economy – its shifting locations and its consequences for producers and users in higher education – are made more visible through the contributions in this volume, and pertinent questions are raised about the impact of 'mobility' on regional and national capacities; the steering of knowledge production by transnational agencies and agreements, and the emergence of powerful trading 'blocs' for the production and use of knowledge. As well as addressing questions that focus on the production and circulation of knowledge, and the marketing and consumption of knowledges to different audiences, the volume interrogates the assumptions that drive this circulation, and records their impacts on academic workers and on the increasingly mobile students who consume knowledge in different contexts. In addition, there is a necessary focus on the relationship between various funding regimes and the kinds of knowledge

that are preferred by publishers and that attract investment from business and industry.

As series editors of the *World Yearbook of Education*, we are fortunate to have worked with such insightful and committed editors. Debbie Epstein, Rebecca Boden, Rosemary Deem, Susan Wright and Fazal Rizvi have combined to bring a formidable range of expertise together and have exploited a rich vein of continuing work on higher education and its management, politics and directions that has ensured that the volume is serious, substantial and combines theoretical resources with empirical evidence. The reach of the collection is impressive, as networks have been drawn upon to provide contributions drawn from or directly addressing contrasting contexts, including central and eastern Europe, China, India, England, North America and Australia.

The volume continues the project for the *World Yearbook of Education* that we are committed to as series editors; that is to go beyond the documenting of worldwide developments in education in order to map significant emergent issues as a contribution towards framing research agendas at the cutting edge of the field. This volume achieves that ambition, and does so in new ways that foregrounds the old and essential questions about 'who benefits' and 'who loses' in the university in globalised conditions.

As the editors point out, the *World Yearbook of Education 2008* challenges those who work in universities, engaged in research and technological development, to consider the implications of their work for the transformation of geographies and geometries of power/knowledge.

Jenny Ozga, Terri Seddon and Evie Zambeta
Edinburgh, Melbourne and Athens, 2007

# 1 Introduction

## Geographies of knowledge, geometries of power: framing the future of higher education

*Debbie Epstein*

Does it matter what happens in and to higher education (HE) either locally – in specific nation-states – or globally – in terms of developments that can be seen across countries and continents and in the role of inter-, trans- and supra-national organisations in determining and influencing what happens in and to universities? It is the contention of the editors and authors of this *World Yearbook* that it does for a number of reasons. First, participation in the global 'knowledge economy' has become an increasingly important policy imperative in developed and developing countries, as discussed in the *World Yearbook of Education 2005* (Coulby and Zambeta 2005). Second, one of the key functions of universities is to act as both producers of knowledge through research and transmitters of knowledge through their teaching role. Third, the massification of higher education in very many countries, with ever more young people (mainly) becoming undergraduates, is both a result of these policy imperatives and a reason for being concerned about what is happening in and to universities, what the experiences of students and academics are, and what technologies of control and regimes of truth are in place (and in contention) within them. These, then, are the primary reasons for the choice of higher education, its globalisation, commercialisation and the impacts thereof as the key themes of this particular *World Yearbook of Education*.[1]

Higher education practices, processes and institutions are widely acknowledged to be both globalised and marketised (Marginson 2004a), exhibiting a compression of time and space, flows of people and ideas across national boundaries and a significant degree of homogenisation (Scott 1998). In other words, higher education is an increasingly global business, with international markets for both students and knowledge. This increasing commodification and marketisation has led to a rapid rate of change, which, together with the ability for (some) people to move to and from their own countries to others and the push towards international collaboration (though simultaneously towards international competition) all contribute to what Jane Kenway so memorably called the ' "now" university', operating in the context of 'fast capitalism' (Kenway with Langmead 2000: 155).

Two market contexts appear important in HE: that for knowledge and the capacity to produce it (the so-called 'knowledge economy') and that for students (Naidoo 2003; Ram 2003; Sauve 2002). The knowledge market is

marked by a high degree of knowledge commodification (Baskaran and Boden 2004), competition, increasing homogeneity through managerial practices, and mobility of highly skilled research labour. The whole is embedded in discourses of 'governance' and 'accountability' – managerialist regimes that may serve to capture and control what happens in universities (Deem 2001; Strathern 2000; Vidovich 2004). Simultaneously, the global supply of and demand for student places is marked by commercial, competitive pressures (Walker 2001). As in all markets, there are imbalances of power within the markets for knowledge and of higher education: between institutions in single countries; between countries; and between the richer countries of the 'West'/global North and poor to middle income countries of the global South, struggling to enter, develop and maintain their place within the global knowledge economy.

There is a symbiotic relationship between knowledge production activities and the international movement of students. It is widely believed that a prestigious research reputation, measured by formal (but contested) performance indicators (Codd 2004; Strathern 1997), fuels student demand (Currie *et al.* 2007). Recruiting overseas fee-paying students offers both the prospect of enhanced funding and the possibility of students carrying different social, cultural and intellectual capitals back to their own countries. Moreover, graduate students bring with them ideas and knowledges that have the potential to make inroads into the hegemony of 'Western' knowledges at their host institutions (Marginson 2004b). This global market for education may in turn create global labour markets for highly skilled workers that exhibit inequities between different countries and their peoples (Brown and Hesketh 2004).

Universities participate in global developments in knowledge recognition, production, control and usage, acting as incubators and conduits for knowledge production and flows. They achieve this by research 'outputs' and the movement of real bodies. These processes have repercussions for local educational practices, likely to be most severely felt in places subject to 'epistemic colonisation'. Appadurai (1999, 2001) argues for producing and sharing knowledge about globalisation in ways that create new forms of critical dialogue between academics from different societies in the 'globalisation of knowledge and the knowledge of globalisation' (Appadurai 2001: 4).

The globalisation of HE is, thus, best analysed in terms of relations of power that are spatial, historic and economic. There are distinct *geometries of power* as the knowledge production capability of HE is increasingly globalised. As argued above, the changes in HE organisation and practice and the demands on universities have tended to travel from the 'West to the rest', making for interesting developments in the *geographies of knowledge:* its recognition, production, control and usage in different regions of the world. As Appadurai (2001: 4) argues:

> Globalisation as an uneven economic process creates a fragmented and uneven distribution of just those resources of learning, teaching, and

> cultural criticism that are most vital for the formation of democratic research communities that could produce a global view of globalisation. That is, globalisation resists the possibility of just those forms of collaboration that might make it easier to understand or criticize.

In producing this book, we have resisted the temptation to try to achieve maximum coverage of the countries of the world. Rather, this *Yearbook* explores the consequences of the developing global market and the reinscription of universities within new globalised socio-cultural meanings and economic roles in four key areas that provide the interlinked themes for the volume, each with its own part editor:

- Producing and reproducing the university, edited by Rosemary Deem
- Supplying knowledge, edited by Rebecca Boden
- Demanding knowledge – marketing and consumption, edited by Susan Wright
- Transnational academic flows, edited by Fazal Rizvi

These themes, introduced more fully by the respective part editors than can be done in this brief introduction to the *World Yearbook*, are explored by authors from a variety of different disciplinary backgrounds: education; sociology; critical management studies, science and technology studies; anthropology; public policy studies; accounting and finance; and human geography. Drawing on a range of empirical and policy studies, they use their own disciplinary approaches to theorise and illuminate questions, problems and issues that arise in most universities in most countries, albeit nuanced by local visions, discourses and materialities that create diversity in the mission and focus of particular higher education systems and institutions.

## Part I: Producing and reproducing the university

This part is concerned with the ways in which the higher education sector has been re-formed and has reformed itself in the face of globalising pressures. The chapters in this part are concerned with complex questions not only of how such reforms (reformation) have worked themselves out in different local contexts and with regard to the politics of different places and nations but also with the deep questions of what universities are and how they can be understood in current times. In considering these issues, the part throws light on both the ways in which we think about universities, what they can do, what their purposes are, and what the consequences of globalisation and the accompanying commercialisation of knowledge are for students, academics, the nature of knowledge itself and socio-economic development.

As Rosemary Deem points out in her introduction to the part, debates about the nature and purposes of universities have existed virtually for as long as universities themselves, but have intensified over the past two or three decades. The part consists of five chapters beginning with the broad sweep of

Roger Dale's critique of existing work on universities, illustrated by reference to policies and strategies in the European Union. It continues with Marek Kwiek's fine-grained account of the reform of universities particularly in the former communist countries and how this relates to the transformation of both welfare and nation states, in part through the intervention of supra- or trans-national bodies such as the World Bank. Steve Fuller's provocative examination of 'Academic Caesarism', that is the current state of leadership/management of higher education, and the development of universities as 'part Vatican and part Vegas' draws on developments in the USA and the UK to develop possible strategies for their futures.

The final two chapters of the part, by Penny Ciancanelli and Maria Nedeva, provide nuanced theoretical accounts of how pressures of funding and the ways in which this takes place are changing the nature of knowledge and what counts as knowledge produced within universities. Ciancanelli offers detailed exploration of the impact of neo-liberal policies and globalisation on the sharing of knowledge and the free exchange of ideas through an economic analysis of academic publishing. Nedeva suggests that the emphasis on 'third mission' functions with their overt link to business and economic development, is significantly changing both the nature of knowledge and of universities themselves.

## Part II: Supplying knowledge

Moving on from questions about the production and re-production of the university, this part, edited by Rebecca Boden, picks up some of the questions raised by Ciancanelli and Nedeva and interrogates the re-forming of universities as free market suppliers of knowledge. The four chapters in this part explore the structural and cultural changes required for universities to make the transition to being able to fulfil, at least in part, the role thus assigned to them. The part begins with Antoni Verger's critical appraisal of the regulatory framework developed by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) as part of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) wider brief to bring about free markets in goods and services – a framework which purports to open the field to competition but which actually weights the scales heavily on the side of the already rich universities (and the nation states within which they are primarily based).

Of course, regulation takes place not only at the level of international agreements but also within countries (and, indeed, individual universities). Jani Ursin's chapter picks up the question of how 'quality' can be 'assured' for the purposes of marketing universities and the knowledge they produce. Using Finnish universities as a case study, he gives a detailed account of the impact of the globalised discourse of 'quality assurance' (QA) and the regulatory regimes that accompany it, on the disposition of universities in local contexts. Drawing on empirical data from universities in Wales and England, the next chapter, by Matt Waring, considers how 'human resources management' (HRM) tools are used to control and pacify workers in universities through

the individualisation of employee responsibility and accountability and the imperative for them, individually, to respond and adapt to risks to the organisation within which they work.

The final chapter in the part, by Jane Kenway and Johannah Fahey, is concerned with the ways in which the 'mobility' of academics is a key element of the globalised knowledge economy. They use a range of metaphors to describe the different ways in which researchers are (and are made to be) mobile – as 'tourists', 'exiles', 'explorers', 'strangers' and 'hobos'. This chapter looks forward to the final part of the book in its consideration of the mobility of academics, knowledge and power and the relationship between such movement and the cultural and economic geographies of the world of higher education and beyond.

## Part III: Demanding knowledge – marketing and consumption

This part, edited by Susan Wright, moves the focus from the supply of knowledge to its marketing and the demands for it. The part as a whole questions the assumption that western countries will automatically dominate in the global market for knowledge. It consists of six chapters, beginning with Phillip Brown, Hugh Lauder and David Ashton's challenge to the notion of a global division of knowledge labour. Based on extensive empirical work, involving interviews in several countries with senior managers from 20 leading transnational companies and policy makers, they show that the emergent economies (particularly of China and India) are in the process of generating their own knowledge-workers, transporting the previously well-established Taylorisation of manufacturing to financial and service industries. They argue that this is a process which is beginning and will continue to happen in the university sector, with consequent 'unbundling' and outsourcing of different aspects of academic work to places where knowledge work comes cheaper than in the global North. Wei Shen's study of Chinese students' roles and motivations on their international migrations follows. He shows that these people tend not to migrate permanently but to return to family and other social responsibilities at home once they have acquired the education and skills they came for. Thus, while they may act as a 'cash cow' for universities which charge fees, as in the UK, they do not join the local labour force in the countries in which they are attending university. Shen's study of migratory Chinese students is followed by Rachel Brooks' chapter in which she explores how graduates in England view their education as a kind of credentialising process in which they gain the basic ticket for employment and which does nothing to disturb existing social differentiation.

The fourth chapter in this part, by Rajani Naidoo, offers a closely argued and critical examination of the actions of the World Bank, which first compelled developing countries to disinvest in universities as part of structural adjustment programmes and is now pressurising these same countries to create the market conditions for private and foreign universities to trade. This

can be seen as a process of knowledge colonisation that clearly demonstrates both the geographies of knowledge and geometries of power that we are concerned about in this volume.

Gigliola Mathisen's chapter continues the theme of de/regulation of markets in higher education. The role of two further international agencies, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), are examined here. Whereas Ursin, in the previous part, investigated quality assurance measures in Finland, Mathisen records how the OECD and UNESCO, worried about the impact of free trade in higher education allowing all and sundry to offer something called 'university education', drew up guidelines to try to provide quality control and good information about providers in the global market in higher education. In this context the question arises as to whether poor countries have either the infrastructure or the resources necessary to be able to follow these guidelines and whether, even if they did, this would have any impact on the potentially damaging effects of free trade as required by GATS (see also Verger, this volume). The final chapter in this part by Gunnar Guddal Michelsen provides a case study of Senegal which is very much to the point. He vividly outlines the Senegalese government's inability to follow the UNESCO guidelines, or to provide any quality control, leaving the field open to 'academic entrepreneurs', who hoped that Senegal could become a hub in the global knowledge economy from which they could profit.

## Part IV: Transnational academic flows

The final part of the *Yearbook* explores both the flows of people, knowledge and capital that characterise contemporary, globalised capitalism, and the disjunctures that this creates. In his introduction, Fazal Rizvi points out that student flows, as discussed in the previous part, have not been the only type of movement. University teachers and researchers, too, have become part of global knowledge networks and, as Kenway and Fahey (this volume) showed in their chapter, have joined the flows of people to and from universities around the world. Rizvi notes that flows are never smooth but are always disjunctive. Neither do flows look the same from every angle.

The part begins with Simon Marginson's chapter about the cross-border flows of academics. Marginson shows that, notwithstanding Brown *et al.*'s caution in Part III, the global academic labour market is shaped by and infused with the dominant Anglo-American linguistic and cultural traditions in higher education. Nevertheless, as Marginson notes, local/national career structures, systems and traditions continue to operate, albeit at a level residualised on the global scale, leading to the problem of 'brain drain' from poorer to richer countries in ways that entail the effective subsidy of the knowledge production in the global North by the global South. However, as Terri Kim points out in the next chapter, the picture is more complicated than simply a brain drain to the US. While academic mobility is not new, it has

intensified and speeded up in the twenty-first century, while simultaneously being constrained by exclusive national policies in a number of countries and by the 'war on terror' insofar as access to the US is concerned.

The third chapter in this part follows on with Anthony Welch and Zhang Zhen's study of Chinese-born academics around the world conceptualised as an intellectual diaspora. Unlike Shen's students, these academics do not necessarily intend to return to China, but retain emotional and familial connections with home, and make a significant contribution to the development of China's scientific stature. They argue that China is able to draw on its diasporic intellectuals as a resource in the building of its knowledge economy through the use of extensive communication and collaboration that deploys contemporary electronic methods.

Rodrigo Britez and Michael Peters also consider the social networks produced through cross-border mobility. Just as Welch and Zhen's Chinese diasporic intellectuals use contemporary information technologies to stay in and make contact, Britez and Peters point to the importance of digital communication in the creation of the term 'cosmopolitical university', which might form part of a democratic, ethical project which is international in scope and origin.

In the final chapter of this part and, indeed of the *Yearbook*, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis also point to the importance of digital technologies not only in flows of knowledge but also in the emergence of new 'social webs', which have the potential to blur boundaries of institution, space and time. The *World Yearbook 2008* thus ends with a challenge for those engaged in research, technological development and higher education to develop relationships of learning that are 'more apt to today's social conditions, more dynamic, and which engage learners more effectively'. In meeting this challenge, it may be that both geographies and geometries of power/knowledge can be transformed.

## Note

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