ISSN: 2717-8676

Higher Education Governance & Policy

Volume 2 | Issue 1 | Year 2021

YÖÇAD
YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM ÇALIŞMALARI DERNEĞİ • ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES

Higher Education Governance & Policy

ISSN: 2717-8676

Volume: 2
Issue: 1

Higher Education Governance and Policy (HEGP) is the scholarly journal of the Association for Higher Education Studies (Yükseköğretim Çalışmaları Derneği).

HEGP aims to inform an international audience about higher education policies and management practices around the world.

The core scope of HEGP is the development of higher education policies and their reflections in management practices in different countries' systems. Considering their policy-making and strategy-management functions together, the larger scope of HEGP includes shaping governance structures in the higher education sector from an institutional to a global level. Accordingly, HEGP prioritises studies with an international perspective on policy development and managerial practices in higher education. While authors take an institutional, local, or national case as a basis, they should enrich their studies through comparative and international discussions structuring on different higher education institutions such as universities, research institutes, community colleges, or vocational schools.

As an online, open-access journal, HEGP will be published **biannually** (June and December).

For the peer-review and publication process in HEGP, there is **no fee** for Manuscript Application or Article Processing Charge.

HEGP is **a peer-reviewed international journal** that publishes articles in English. HEGP operates a **double-blind (anonymous) peer-review** process presenting manuscripts to at least two expert reviewers.

HEGP strictly follows **the International Standards for Editors and Authors outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)**. COPE Code of Conduct guidelines are available at: https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines

HEGP also provides immediate open-access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. Therefore, HEGP supports **The Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI)**. See the details on BOAI at: http://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/boai-10-recommendations

Contact: hegpthejournal@gmail.com

YÖÇAD
YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM ÇALIŞMALARI DERNEĞİ • ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES

Higher Education Governance & Policy

ISSN: 2717-8676

Volume: 2
Issue: 1

YÖÇAD
YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM ÇALIŞMALARI DERNEĞİ • ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES

Higher Education Governance & Policy

ISSN: 2717-8676

Volume: 2
Issue: 1

Contents

YÖÇAD
YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM ÇALIŞMALARI DERNEĞİ • ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES

Higher Education Governance & Policy
ISSN: 2717-8676
Volume: 2
Issue: 1

Editorial:
Changing Higher Education, from Longstanding Matters to Future Evolutions

Higher education has always been sensitive to economic, social, political and cultural developments in the society. Higher education systems and individual universities have been struggling to survive the forces of change emanating from these developments. The unfolding COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a huge force impacting higher education governance and policy around the globe. International scholarly exchange of knowledge, experience and observation is expected to contribute to rethinking higher education governance and policy in the post-pandemic era. Committed to open science, the Higher Education Governance and Policy (HEGP) aims at contributing to the process of rethinking higher education in the post-pandemic era. In this issue we covered five articles from various country contexts, which we hope to contribute to the international exchange of knowledge on higher education governance and policy.

In the first article of this issue, Caliskan, Zhu and Dinh discussed the role of leadership in responding to the forces of change in higher education and highlighted the need to empower young academic leaders on this task. According to the authors despite their critical role in departmental level administration as well as research and teaching, the young-level academic leaders are under rated. Examining the conception of young academic leader through online discussion forums the study revealed the competencies needed to be an effective academic leader and the challenges of young academic leaders. The outcomes out the study were suggested as an input for an academic leadership training program. The second article of the issue which is titled “Higher Education and Equitable Life-Long Learning for Diversified Students in the Digital Era” by Arar, Saiti and Prokopiadou elaborated on the impact of digitalization on equity in higher education. The authors argued that various technologies provide unique ways for recognizing individual differences in higher education. The third article by Salomaa, Cinar, and Charles investigated the link between the rankings and regional development. The authors implemented multiple case design and conducted interviews in the Netherland, England and Finland in order to explore the link between regional engagement of the universities and the rankings. The authors concluded that the rankings lead to an emphasis on quantitative third mission indicators and shift the focus of the universities from regional relevance to global excellence. These two orientations weaken the regional engagement of the universities. The fourth article of this issue by Lee, which is entitled as “Research University Initiatives in South Korea: Accomplishments and Challenges,” investigated the performance of research universities towards the mission of becoming world-class university. Lee found that despite the financial commitment of Korean government, Korean research universities have not been performing adequately on doctoral training and academic freedom and shared governance. With the final article of this issue, Bernasconi compared university autonomy in Latin America and the US and stated that university autonomy has different locus in these two regions of the Americas. In the US the university autonomy was built in a bottom-up process as a construction of the community of scholars while in the Latin America the university autonomy is a top-down institutional phenomenon. In the Latin American case individual professor’s autonomy is vested in the autonomy of the university. Bernasconi documented historical underpinnings of this pattern of autonym understanding in the Latin world.

Hopefully the articles of this issue will prove beneficial to international scholars and policy makers in higher education around the world.

Yasar Kondakci
Editor

Higher Education Governance & Policy
ISSN: 2717-8676
Volume: 2
Issue: 1

Exploring Young-Level Academic Leadership: A Thematic Analysis of a MOOC Discussion Forum

Aysun Caliskan[1*], Chang Zhu[2], & Ngoc Bich Khuyen Dinh[3]
[1,2,3]Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel, Belgium

Abstract

Higher education institutions around the world have been experiencing a great deal of pressure resulting in substantial changes. In this transformative era, institutional-level governance and the capacities of academic leaders at all levels remain highly influential to the successful functioning of universities and the maintaining of their competitive advantage. Despite a number of studies on senior and mid-level academic leadership, there is still a scarcity of research on young-level academic leaders. In particular, young-level academic leaders are those who play a decisive role in their department and the operation of their research group alongside teaching and research to promote the development of a new form of higher education. They also constitute an important component of academic leadership as they have expressed excellent competencies in welcoming change, being a form of inspiration, their receptiveness to feedback, and setting stretch goals. However, they are challenged in teaching programmes, course coordination and research projects in an era witnessing the ever-increasing impact of neo-liberalism in a more competitive environment. Therefore, this paper is intended to fill the gap to study the concepts, competencies and challenges young academic leadership. Conducting qualitative content analysis to explore the perceptions about young academic leadership in a MOOC course's discussion forum, this study explores young-level academic leadership through online discussion forums to reveal further information in comparison to traditional qualitative methodologies. This study also documents the perspectives of MOOC discussants on three main issues: the concept of young-level academic leadership, the competencies to be an effective leader, and the current challenges they encounter. Moreover, it can offer some important insights into designing the leadership framework used in academic leadership development programs.

Keywords: Young-level academic leaders, concepts, competencies, challenges, leadership development

Introduction

Which leadership traits are required to effectively lead organizations has received considerable critical attention in research and been the subject of increasing discussion (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Boyatzis et al., 2012; Cuddy, Kohut, & Neffinger, 2013; Dasborough, 2006; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Johnson, 2002; McKee & Massimilian, 2006). In addition, the academic literature on effective formal leadership and management traits has revealed the emergence of the importance of leaders and leadership in improving the governance, learning, teaching, relevance and success of higher education institutions (Bolden, Petrov, Gosling, & Bryman, 2009; Bryman, 2007, Middlehurst, 2008; Parrish, 2013; Ramsden, 1998; Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008). At the same time, students, parents, employers and taxpayers have pressured academic leaders to further cultivate a more skilful generation to cope with the needs and demands of the 21st century (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012).

Despite the extensive literature on senior (rectors, vice rectors) or mid-level academic leadership positions (deans, vice deans, heads of department) in higher education, little is known about what young academic leadership means and what competences they need to develop and promote leadership (Juntrasook, Nairn, Bond, & Spronken-Smith, 2013; Middlehurst, 2008). As the future of higher education institutions, young academic leaders are expected to cultivate their ability to motivate others,

[*] **Corresponding Author:** Aysun Caliskan, aysun.calikan@vub.be
[1]ORCID: 0000-0002-2811-286X; ***[2]ORCID:*** 0000-0002-0057-275X; ***[3]ORCID:*** 0000-0002-6257-1680

(Research Article) **Cite as:** Caliskan, A., Zhu, C., & Dinh, N. B. K. (2021). Exploring young-level academic leadership: A thematic analysis of a MOOC discussion forum. *Higher Education Governance & Policy*, *2*(1), 1-18.

Received: November 24, 2020; ***Revised:*** June 11, 2021; ***Accepted:*** June 11, 2021; ***Published:*** June 30, 2021

establish high standards of expectations and performance, set clear goals, approve of their work, and should be encouraged to put their best performance foremost (Bass, 1990). They are precious talents with a high level of knowledge who provide creative labour and generally refer to those distinguished academics who have accomplished tremendous achievements. They are not only remarkable strategists and organizers, but also talents who are able to be a part of a team (Griffiths, 2000). Despite being leaders at a starting level who can either possess or lack a mandate in the organizational structure, they play a pivotal role as a component of the core competitive strength of an institution, and thus universities can benefit from taking advantage of their decisive role in both the practices of overall departments and of running research groups, and in ensuring the improvement of the quality of education and teaching (Zhang & Zhang, 2013). Linked to those, it has been increasingly realized by scholars that high quality education is only possible when young academic leaders cultivate their talent with a solid foundation, brilliance, dedication and creativity (Fullan, 2002; Zhang & Zhang, 2013). As they go through their leadership journey, they will come across numerous financial, organizational, managerial and educational challenges. These are mostly tackled through teaching programmes, course coordination and research projects in a time witnessing the ever-expanding impact of neo-liberalism in a more competitive environment (Mercer, 2009). It is therefore timely to explore young academic leadership and their competences as well as to consider the challenges they may face.

The subject experiences of the academic leaders in question may be collected through the rich source that is online discussion forums (Jamison et al., 2018). In connection to that, massive numbers of participants enroll may in one or more Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which offer high quality education and varied topics via a flexible form of course access (Boroujeni et al., 2017). Since 2008, MOOCs have had great impact on the educational field, particularly when it comes the distance education field (Siemens, 2013). Today, after over a decade since their conception, around 1000 universities in the world offer over 12000 courses to 100 million learners via MOOCs (Shah, 2019). In particular, Kop (2011) highlighted that MOOCs allow for an open-based' learning environment in which learners can learn externally from an institution without the barriers posed by those learning institutions (Daniel, 2012; Grover et al., 2013). As MOOCs differ from traditional online courses, there are larger course bodies of students participating in the courses than would normally be the case, with those students hailing from different backgrounds and contexts (Siemens, 2013). They range from people who are engineers or architects to housewives, and from young to old. This lays the ground for applying different approaches, pedagogical contexts and aims in their learning (Grover et al., 2013). Therefore, to reach their potential, MOOCs might provide supportive learning communities which allow learners to interact with one another, promote deep learning, maintain motivation and decrease the risk of dropouts (Gillani & Eynon, 2014; Kop, Fournier, & Mak, 2011; Ramesh, Goldwasser, Huang, Daume, & Getoor, 2013).

As MOOC-based lectures are only based on videos, students typically have less interactions with their peers and instructors relative to traditional face-to-face courses (Stephens-Martinez, Hearst, & Fox, 2014). Therefore, technology-based interactions through blogs and forums are offered as potential solutions. For example, thanks to discussion forums, students and instructors have the opportunity to communicate and interact with each other (Wong et al., 2015). This is especially pertinent given that a growing body of research has investigated that discussions among peers are helpful in improving student's learning performance as well as building a learning community (Smith et al., 2015). Additionally, research evidence suggests that instructors can monitor course progress thanks to discussions taking place in a physical forum or over a digital one (Stephens- Martinez, 2015). This capacity of MOOCs has been conditioned by the active engagement of several hundred to several thousand 'learners' who feel free to organize themselves based on their learning goals, learning pace, prior knowledge and skills as well as interests (McAuley, Stewart, Siemens, & Dave Cormier, 2010).

With these benefits, analysis of online discussion forums can reveal further information compared to traditional qualitative methodologies (Jamison et al., 2018). Thus, this study aims to conduct qualitative content analyses to explore the interactions and communications regarding young academic leadership in a MOOC discussion forum offered over Canvas. The research objectives that guided this study are:

1. What does young academic leadership mean as perceived by MOOC discussion forum participants?
2. What competences do they have as perceived by MOOC discussion forum participants?
3. What challenges do they face as perceived by MOOC discussion forum participants?

Literature review

The Concept of Young Academic Leadership

Higher education institutions involve a variety of leadership roles, such as formal line-management and budgetary control (vertical function) or more cross-cutting ones dependent on interpersonal and social influence (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008; Roberts et al., 2010). In general, the literature focuses on the formal roles of senior-level leaders (rectors, vice rectors) or mid-level leaders (deans, vice deans, heads of colleges/departments, heads of programmes and directors of teaching and learning) (Roberts et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2008). At the institutional level (Bolden et al., 2012), those leaders in senior or mid-level positions are mainly responsible for administrative rules, tasks and functions to manage the institutions more effectively (Ramsden, 1998). In light of this, their formal leadership responsibilities have a significant influence on work culture and productivity (Bryman, 2007). Likewise, they are viewed as being internally-oriented so as to guarantee the guidelines and strategies followed by staff and to oversee complaints. Some scholars questioned this interpretation. For example, Hofmeyer, Sheingold, Klopper, and Warland (2015) stated that those leaders have been depicted as dictatorial, which has directly impacted their relationships with staff and the culture of their work environment. Parrish (2013), Bryman (2007), and Ramsden (1998) argue that the main reason for this is that formal leaders in current academic settings have less of an outward orientation and less institutional validity to establish positive workplaces for staff due to their defined authorities.

Recent research has not treated in much detail those people who may not possess formal authority positions yet establish it through their everyday tasks and activities (Roberts et al., 2010), although there is a notional view that leadership is everyone's responsibility (Bolden et al., 2008). As Bryman (2007) laments, very little is known about the existence of a variety of leadership roles at the departmental level. This demonstrates that recent interest requires more applicable democratic societies and less hierarchical leadership (Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, & Ryland, 2012). To that end, young-level academic leadership refers to recognising and acting on opportunities without being in a formal managerial role (Roberts et al., 2010).

This definition is close to that of Taylor (2008) who emphasizes their influence on the relationships between leaders and their followers. He also added that young-level academic leadership involves establishing direction, aligning resources, generating motivation and providing inspiration to achieve mutual interests. Accordingly, young-level academic leaders, meaning those not in formal leadership positions yet who rather are perceived as leaders, must rely on distributed, collaborative, authentic models which are among the less hierarchical models of leadership (Jones et al., 2012) rather than dominating or ordering; tactics available to formal leaders (Pielstick, 2000). Accordingly, they do not have as much authority and power as senior or mid-level leaders have.

As they are not selected and thereby very often do not have any positional authority, they take initiative to address a problem or institute a new programme and thus influence people around them through their personal expertise and practice (Maxwell, 2002; Wells, 2002). Similarly, for van Linden and Fertman (1998), young-level academic leaders are those who think for themselves, communicate their thoughts, and act on their own beliefs. At the same time, they are willing to allow others to influence them in an ethical and socially responsible manner. For example, Roach and colleagues (1999) supported this idea in their earlier study, stating that young-level academic leaders are more interested in developing leadership in groups rather than as individuals, and that leadership is more about group participation and the distribution of knowledge and skills in a collaborative manner.

Based on ability, a further definition of young-level academic leadership is given by Armstrong and Gough (2019). For them, young-level academic leadership is the ability to work either individually or

within a group to create ideas, take initiative, to influence, educate and motivate others, and to undertake actions that will bring about change for a more sustainable future. The research conducted by Zhang and Zhang (2013) tended to focus on age rather than ability. According to them, young-level academic leaders are those at an age below 40 who hail from a particular high-end talented group and are the creators of high-quality education at universities. The following definition by Dopson and colleagues (2018) is intended to emphasize the importance of leadership in the complex organizational context of universities—for them, young-level academic leaders are similar to the transformational model which allows for creating a vision and involving others in it, thereby protecting other people's interests and needs. This definition accords with that of Bryman (2007) who highlights the effectiveness of participative leadership in higher education as it "fosters a collegial atmosphere and advances a department's cause."

With the blossoming of studies on the various types of academic leadership, the conceptions of young academic leaders have been defined above based on their mandate, age, ability and university context. Linked to these different definitions, there are several works of literature which have studied the capabilities of young academic leaders.

The Capabilities of Young Academic Leaders

'Capability' describes the level of talent, gift or capacity required to differentiate high performers from those who are average, and who deliver innovations under uncertain and changing situations (Boyatzis, 2008; Scott et al., 2008). It also exceeds the minimum set of expectations for all employees, or those described as the "price for entry" (Aziz, 2018; Marcus & Pringle, 1995). In this sense, 'ability' is more connected to a more youthful scholarly administration which possesses the ability to work effectively with others to accomplish persistent improvement and advancement with a focus delineated via consensus (Scott et al., 2008). This view is connected to Ramsden's (1998) observation that young leaders are more responsive, creative, contingent thinkers when it comes to relatively uncertain cases, in order that they may help people and provide a vision and change in the future. In this perspective, as the future of higher education, young-level academic leaders should possess intellectual, observational and self-assessment skills as well as emotional maturity and respect to be able to lead and be effective (Wells, 2002). Furthermore, academic leaders have the cognitive ability to precisely analyse what's going on when the unforeseen happens, to distinguish what the human, technical or administrative dimensions are, to decide whether the issue merits tending to in detail, and afterward being able to coordinate a plan according to this analysis (Schön, 1983; Scott et al., 2008). Zenger and Folkman (2015) explore how those capabilities function in young leaders—according to them, young-level academic leaders excel in challenging the status quo and looking for innovative ways to accomplish their work more efficiently and productively. They also added that younger level academic leaders are good at setting stretch goals that require a high need for achievement and that they put all their energy into achieving their goals. Moreover, as they are more open, they ask for feedback about their performance more often and seek ways to create development opportunities and identify development resources (Wells, 2002). It is essential to bring together all of the above-listed capabilities into an overall picture of academic leadership capability. Thus, as Scott and colleagues (2008) and (Dinh, Caliskani & Zhu, 2020) reflected for academic leaders, young-level academic leaders also have some of those capabilities with regard to different qualities.

Based on personal and interpersonal capability, it is crucial for young-level academic leaders both to manage their own emotional reactions and to better understand what is happening around them. This is referred to by Goleman (2008) as the emotional intelligence to recognize their own feelings and motivate emotions in their relationships. In uncertain conditions, they are able to first control their emotions by being creative, enthusiastic, honest, kind, calculative, open-minded, and original thanks to their multiple roles as a researcher, teacher, consultant, etc. At such times it is necessary for young leaders to be selfless, responsible, capable problem solvers, and enablers. They cultivate environments for both action and personal learning (Corriero, 2006). These traits are consistent with Rogers's (2009) research which identified several innate characteristics such as intelligence, wisdom and creativity. More specifically, young-level academic leaders' interpersonal capabilities are more related to shared needs, values and beliefs instead of the vision of senior and mid-level leaders. They also appear to better listen to and

understand others' needs. Thanks to this sense of inclusiveness and interactive dialogue, they are more inclined to share their ideas, provide/accept criticism, and display/demonstrate their appreciation. Similarly, communication makes them more inclusive and thereby, they fully engage others, collaborate with them, and recognize their needs. As such, they seem more empathetic and respectful towards others (Pielstick, 2009). These interpersonal capabilities are similar to those mentioned in Scott and colleagues' (2008) study that seemed to have focused on the importance of empathising, listening to others, motivating, and influencing others around you.

Moving on now to leadership capability, recent research has revealed that the most required leadership capacities are authentic or distributed leadership competencies (Bryman, 2007; Dinh et al., 2020). Challenging the view of formally appointed leaders (Pearce & Conger 2003), young-level academic leaders focus on the diversified leadership process in order to shape collective action. Additionally, to tackle the complexities of higher education and continue to effectively compete, they highly rely upon their task switching and self-managing team members (Cummings & Worley, 2004). Instead of traditional leader-centric approaches, young academic leaders lead team, in a distributed manner, to involve matters concerning the development of new products and to ensure organizational change (Thamhain, 2004). They behave not as dominant characters, but rather as those who may have more experience; as a result, knowledge work becomes more team-based and requires the coordination and integration of the expertise of different people (Pearce, 2004). Young-level academic leaders, without any given power and authority, always trust and respect contributions, and collaborate together to achieve identified goals. Through shared and active engagement, young academic leadership can result in the development of a leadership capacity that can sustain improvements in higher education (Jones et al., 2011).

Regarding academic capacity, young-level academic leaders are grounded both in demonstrating teaching excellence and recognizing learning programs, as well as disseminating research and scholarship about teaching and learning. Through learning-centred approaches, these leaders pave the way for learning processes and overcome the obstacles in the way of a better future (Weimer, 2013). They are also expected to be skilled at certain social functions such as having more resources, better research collaboration, productivity, and popularity in the market (Zhu & Zayim-Kurtay, 2018).

Taken together, these studies present the different capabilities of young academic leaders, although some scholars have questioned why this potential has not been adequately harnessed. In response to this criticism, Bolden and colleagues (2008) and Hofmeyer and colleagues (2015) mentioned that, in the context of higher education, formal or top-down leadership is more embedded and possesses a significant influence over the inherent culture and power structures; thus, young academic leadership (even if potentially unplanned for) is often neglected. Smith (2005) supports this notion that less formal roles such as informal leadership positions have attracted less attention due to the main focus being on institutional, faculty or departmental leadership. Tsai and Beverton (2007) reached a similar conclusion that HEIs are too resistant to a collegial or bottom-up management style by young leaders because senior or mid-level leaders are not open or receptive enough to introduce balance. Indeed, Bryman (2007) commented that a collegial environment for mutual support among all levels of leaders is the desired context in higher education.

Challenges of Young Academic Leaders

Researchers of the field of higher education have explored some of the challenges impacting young academic leaders. For example, young academic leaders working below the level of mid-level academic leaders (Mercer, 2009) come across a number of obstacles and challenges, with a number of these challenges relating to engagement of different kinds. For example, some scholars cite that due to reduced government funding and increased accountability, young-level academic leaders must compete for financial resources, encountering difficulties in receiving subsidies and funds, having to deal with paperwork and struggling to retain high-quality staff (Cohen, 2004; Drew, 2010; Ramsden, 1998). Indeed, their leadership competencies and experience would not be adequate to deal with the magnitude or complexity of these problems, (Gardner, 1998). Additionally, some may become overwhelmed by the

lack of funding, and the political, social, and economic forces and changes within the higher education context (Dopson et al., 2018).

Other scholars point to the challenge for young academic leaders in regard to organizational issues. Their inability to be flexible and adaptable to change can represent a formidable barrier to meeting the demands of an increasingly complex, dynamic and changing university context due to neo-liberalist ideologies and the *New Managerialism* notion (Huisman, 2016). In this regard, they have difficulty in engaging their teammates in change and innovation, thus they have to cultivate a solid capacity to accept and adapt to change in others (Zenger & Folkman, 2016). In doing so, they may face new issues and challenges wherein their leadership competencies and experience are not adequate for dealing with the magnitude or complexity of the problems, alongside their inability to handle or manage an increase in workload and/or responsibilities (Gardner, 1998). In concurrence with Drew (2010), young-level academic leaders should possess critical thinking skills and be willing to take risks and to assist staff with managing the effect(s) of change and progress.

Further writers suggest that they must respond to tension in terms of educational challenges by striking a balance between teaching and research (Drew, 2010). Additionally, over the past thirty-to-forty years, as universities grew in size and complexity, young leaders have become overloaded with work, making it more difficult to find such a balance between research and teaching as well as the intensification of academic work (Mercer, 2009). In connection to that, they also face challenges in assisting students with cultivating both knowledge and values as well as equipping them for the changing context of universities (Drew, 2010). This is because they can be looked up to as spiritual guides, as mentors, as teachers, as inspirers, and/or as models (Wells, 2002). Regarding research, the barrier is to strengthen their research capacity through rigorous inquiry that yields peer-reviewed, published works at the national and international levels in a limited timeframe (Fields et al., 2019). Equally as important, research expertise can function as a barrier to young-level academic leaders because of the pressure caused by changes in most academic institutions (Evans, 2012; Scott et al., 2008).

Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopted a qualitative research approach to facilitate as detail-oriented a study regarding young-level academic leadership (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, a phenomenological design was adopted to explore the essence of this phenomenon from the perspective of the ones who have experienced it. Phenomenology mainly questions what was experienced and asks, 'What was the experience like?' (Teherani, et al., 2015). Phenomenology also attempts to interpret and describe meanings with a broader aspect; however, it does not report on any statistical relationships present among the variables (van Manen, 1990), instead focusing on the relationship between a person and the lived world (Lanigan, 1988). In this study, lived experience refers to an online discussion experience.

To that end, this study conducted a thematic analysis of discussion forums of an online course. This approach enhances the understanding of a fairly heterogeneous set of sources of data, (Bryman, 2016) using an asynchronous discussion forum. The reason why these forums are the focus is that they are accessible to a diverse context in a safe and anonymous environment. Thus, the learners have the opportunity to interact, reflect and contribute their ideas for a longer period of time and of their own volition (Bowker & Tuffin, 2004). Moreover, as they are independent in terms of time and place in an asynchronous discussion forum, they may respond more deeply and friendlier than in synchronous discussions (Hara, Bonk, & Angeli, 2000). Additionally, this approach allows for a time and cost-efficient process which results in reaching a geographically diverse sample (Fielding, Lee, & Blank, 2008).

Dataset

The dataset used in this study is comprised of the discussion forums of the MOOC course offered over Canvas entitled: "MOOCs on Leadership Development of Young Academic Leaders." This course was designed to cultivate leadership skills in emerging academic leaders based on related theories, practices,

and the sharing of experiences in this field, and thus was free and open to everyone. This course was 17-weeks long and lasted from *05.10.2020* to *29.01.2021* and was structured into five modules with each covering a different aspect of young academic leadership. The course grade was based on a quiz, discussion and assignments in each module, and at the end of the course all participants who had completed all of the modules received a certificate. In our study, we included the discussion forum posts from 05.10.2020 to 15.11.2020. This was a moderated forum, set up as part of the aforementioned course with the scope of facilitating online communication among the learners, so that they may share their experiences and information on young level academic leadership. Each student can join and contribute to discussion forums and only students and teachers, facilitators can see these forums. As the facilitators, course designers and teachers of this course, we signed in and accessed the discussion forums to extract data. In total, there have been 271 posts from all of the modules so far. We restricted our analysis to the discussion forums of four modules, as our focus has been on tracking the evolution of discussions related to young academic leadership. We intentionally excluded the discussion forum of Module 2 because this module is generally centred around the university governance structure. Thus, our study resulted in 97 messages by 68 different participants (see Table 1) being analysed. We allocated each participant a number and coded them as *P1, P2, P3,... P68* and so forth in order to protect their identity (Thomas, et al., 2019).

Participants

Participants in discussion forums were 68 registered users of MOOC course on Young Academic Leaders. Among 68 participants, we could only reach demographic characteristics of 50 participants. More than half of the participants (55%) were male. Regarding their ages, the participants were predominantly between 18 and 30 years (50%) and the percentages of those who are older than 45 years were 35%. As to their country, a considerable number of them were from the countries located in Asia (54%) while 3% were from Europe. In terms of their current role, majority of them (72%) reported working as non-academic staff members and followed by 21% non-manager academic. An inquiry into the degree each participant held revealed that most of them (47%) are holding bachelor's degree followed by PhD (23%) master's (15%) and college or high school degree (13%).

Data Analysis

Online posts have the advantage of appearing in written form, thus there is no translation or transcript needed. Although emotional communication is limited, the use of emoticons, capital letters and exclamation points were found to be ways of expressing emotions by posters in face-to-face interaction (Sullivan, 2003). In order to be better familiarized with the content, we first read all of the posts in the final data. Then, we implemented inductive thematic analysis to produce and arrange any issues that arose by following the methods suggested by Braun and Clarke (2008). With the inductive nature of the study, we derived theoretical ideas from the data rather than being formed before we collected data. Moreover, inductive approach allowed us to find answers to our research questions more explicitly than the more structured research (Bryman, 2007). As such, all of the posts were coded to identify answers to our three research questions by determining young academic leadership in terms of concept, competencies and challenges. Thus, we read all of the posts three times to ensure a consistent, systematic coding style. At first, there were 113 free codes. Then, we examined all of the codes in order to aggregate them under broader themes. During this cycle, we returned to all of the extracts to guarantee the recommended themes integrated all of the information sections, and accordingly ensure the three final themes really spoke to the complete data set. However, we did not provide direct quotations as it may jeopardize the anonymity of the learners (Thomas, et al., 2019).

To ensure validity, we consulted interrater reliability. The first author initially coded the data, then another researcher coded 10% of the randomly selected discussion threads (Bryman, 2007). This assisted with assessing any potential discrepancies in the coding (of which none were identified) and to develop further codes. In the later stage, the codes were grouped under themes and sub-themes. The themes, associated sub-themes, and codes were discussed among the three authors to reach a consensus and any disagreements were resolved during this discussion (Wigginton, Meurk, Ford, & Gartner, 2017).

Because of the latest improvements in MOOC courses, some ethical considerations are evolving. For this research, learners in discussion forums did not provide their individual consent forms. However, the MOOC courses indicated a consent statement in general. In this statement, the participants are informed that their participation in the discussion topics may be used for analysis for research purposes if this would be needed. In addition, the British Psychological Society advises it is not necessary to obtain informed consent if the data is similar to that from observations of behaviour in [a]public situations where those observed would expect to be observed by others (British Psychological Society, 2014). Linked to that, previous research suggest that it is ethical to use these data from discussion forums for research without explicit consent as there were no specific participants in the research (Beckman, 2005; Giles et al., 2015). Nonetheless, we omitted usernames and any identifying details from the study (Salzmann-Erikson & Fathers, 2013; Salzmann-Erikson & Liledda, 2012) and reported fragments of responses as well as paraphrase longer discussion points.

Findings

The analysis resulted in three key themes with nine sub-themes (see Table 1). We have designated each sub-theme to a theme as can be seen below in our detailed description.

Table 1. Themes about young academic leadership based on the MOOC discussion forum participants

Themes	*Sub-themes*	*Most frequent codes*
Conceptualization		
	Multiple dimension	organizational change, age, mandate, emerging leader
Capabilities		
	Personal/interpersonal capability	creativeness, motivation, role model, targeted goal Social effectiveness, sharing, close relationship, communication, trust, resilient
	Leadership capability	mediators, advice, autonomy,
	Academic capability	teaching, research, science, change
	Digital capability	techonology user, contribution to university governance
Challenges		
	Financial	salary, promotion
	Managerial	power, pressure
	Interpersonal	competition, demanding
	Gender issues	health, isolation, physical strength

Conceptualization of Young Academic Leadership (RQ1)

In discussion forums, academic leadership has been defined in multiple ways based on the perspectives of the forum participants: organizational context, future of higher education, age, hierarchy, and emerging position. A number of participants discussed young academic leaders' roles in developing the educational system in the changing organizational environment of universities *(P1, P6, P17).* Participants also drew attention to the effect it has on envisioning the future of global higher education as they have the ability to make positive changes in the teaching and research fields, to create a vision as well as to contribute to society *(P6, P18, P34, P35, P36, P39, P46, P52).*

Also, as importantly, age is mentioned when defining young-level academic leadership. One individual reported that being young is not just related to the age of the person but rather their role as a guide in what field they are in *(P49).* This is also supported by another *(P63)* who expresses young academic leaders are those who are more of neophytes when it comes to governance instead of being young merely in terms of age.

Furthermore, participants repeatedly expressed that young academic leader (with or without a mandate) can act as policy makers or academicians that contribute to the decision-making process *(P22, P25, P29, P36, P45)*. This can be summarised by one participant who opined that young academic leader can be involved in university governance irrespective of their formal leadership position *(P16, P22)*.

Additionally, there were multiple references to the notion that young academic leaders are emerging leaders that can help develop universities *(P12, P13, P18)*. Furthermore, forum participants attributed that young leaders are typically Master's or PhD students that conduct research and present it in the name of universities *(P54, P21)*. Another participant added that this could help universities democratize and become more effective organizations *(P37)*.

Capabilities of Young Academic Leaders (RQ2)

Four sub-themes encompass the results on the competencies of young academic leaders as perceived by the MOOC discussion forum participants: personal/interpersonal capability, academic capability, leadership capability and digital capability.

Most commonly, forum users attributed personal competencies to 'creativeness' *(P22, P32, P52)*. As such, we identified several variations on this theme: some understood it as 'personal motivation and self-learning' *(P12, P33, P38)*, while others suggested that young academic leaders are role models to their peers *(P5, P16)* and lead and motivate their collaborators/followers in order to reach/achieve the targeted goal *(P29, P34)*. Furthermore, interpersonal skills could be regarded as a subset of social intelligence, but as mentioned by some participants *(P14, P28)* these encompass the more relationship-oriented aspects of social effectiveness just like a democratic leader would possess. Another participant posted young academic leaders should both have interpersonal capability and possess the willingness of their followers to perform the assigned tasks. A skilled young academic leader from the forum users' perspectives not only acquires new knowledge to share with the team but also to promote change within the university *(P37)*. Furthermore, interpersonal capabilities were repeatedly expressed by forum users as social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making *(P21, P24, P38)* or communication skills, delegation, understanding and teamwork *(P49, P50, P51, P57)*. However, discussions regarding personal and interpersonal capabilities usually centred on being inspirational, making positive changes, building trust, overcoming challenges, remaining resilient, and being receptive to the opinions of their teams *(P2, P6, P38, P50)*. Furthermore, one user *(P63)* commented that their personal and interpersonal strengths lie in their capability to learn quickly. Additionally, once having grasped or harnessed the advantages offered by this ability, they can make innovations, find more collaborators, and form a solid and supportive team.

Forum posts discussing academic capabilities often mentioned that good governance and effective academic leadership are required to promote quality in teaching and learning. For example, there was a great deal of discussion regarding assisting young academic leaders with creating a vision and cultivating/developing their skills. For instance, some users reported that young academic leaders must develop their leadership knowledge skills and competences because being an academic leader is a noble thing and an academic leader can bring about positive changes in the teaching and research fields, thereby paving the way for potential leaders in the arena of higher education *(P21, P38)*. In connection with that, one user provided an example for master students' leading roles. Participant *P37* added that a master's student leads research about a specific topic and provides their perspective besides proposing a solution to address the issue; thereby, they will promote change in the university. Another *(P3)* expressed that young academic leaders promote research and science practices as they are a source of inspiration to the diverse educational communities, because they create shared visions of science, research, and culture, and because they can bring about significant changes in higher education *(P15, P24, P27)*.

Forum users mostly expressed that young academic leaders can take an active part in the decision making process to demonstrate their leadership capacity. One user discussed this idea by stating that young academic leaders can participate in university governance directly by being the mediators

between students and the university administration. They take issues of concern (especially among students) to the university board. Furthermore, that user implied that young leaders can provide advice to university administrators regarding issues affecting students since they know students better and are more closer to them (in both age and views) than senior or mid-level leaders *(P52).* As well, some forum users repeatedly expressed that young academic leaders should display their collaborative, diversified, flexible, adaptable, accountable capabilities soa as to act actively in university governance *(P8, P30).* Similarly, most participants stated that the most essential qualities a young academic leader could have are transformational leadership abilities *(P2, P6, P49, P63, P66).* This is because followers would like to see a leader who can adopt or cultivate a smart way to lead throughout specific, measurable, and time-bound goals that are achievable for all of the stakeholders at the university *(P8, P30).* To achieve this, as stated by one participant *(P7),* they require a level of autonomy which enables them to conduct their own projects/work on their own and to learn from experience so as to promote improvement at the university.

In the discussion forums, there were certain references to the opinion that university governance should not only focus on management but also on developing skills at collaboration, problem solving, innovation and being digitally/tech savvy. They repeatedly expressed that university governance must be open to adopting the most rapid-growing technology and techniques to achieve excellency in their field. In connection to that, one user *(P39)* wrote that young academic leaders, in fact most of them from generation Y (more often referred to as *millennials*), are highly skilled technology users. Some of them *(P33, P38, P49)* supported this idea by adding that digital skills justify their interest in contributing to university governance practices. Thanks to digital means, young leaders may strengthen the academic performance and ranking to manage administrative tasks, teaching and research.

Challenges of Young Academic Leaders (RQ3)

Discussions about challenges usually centred on several topics including financial, managerial, and interpersonal challenges as well as challenges related to gender. Regarding financial issues, discussion forum participants mostly focused on promotions and salary—one *(P28)* commented that young academic leaders should further focus on whether they receive enough of a salary and/or other compensation from university administrations. They added that salary is the best motivation for them to compete among their peers as there is competition among young leaders. Besides, another *(P32)* specifically mentioned the competition among colleagues because their peers feel they have more expertise and are more experienced and talented. Yet, this can be summarised by one participant *(P2)* as young academic leaders facing the challenges in working in a demanding and competitive environment, dealing with difficult people, and being at the front-line of the most essential part of society.

As for the managerial challenges, some forum users *(P7, P20, P37, P54)* questioned whether students have any formal power in the decision-making processes in institutions or at the national level, or whether they can do so only through informal ways. This issue requires the ability to make common sense of a situation no matter how complex the environment is. Furthermore, this turbulence, as emphasized by one user *(P24),* leads to pressure on the young academic leaders who try to enhance their capabilities and improve the university as a whole.

The remaining key findings defining the challenges are those related to gender issues (as perceived by the forum participants). One individual *(P63)* reported that young female academic leaders often encounter problems specific to women, which include health, equality of interests, and influence. It is easy to see that women are often perceived as weak because they have inferior physical strength to men, while at the same time, people tend to prioritize and trust men more in leadership positions. This is strongly supported by another user *(P2),* who also provided a reminder that women in leadership positions can create productive, respectful, and inclusive environments.

Discussion

Due to the presence of vast amounts of scholarly work on senior-level and mid-level academic leaders, exploring young-level academic leadership through online discussion forums utilize a holistic presentation to uncover additional materials in comparison to traditional qualitative methodologies (Jamison et al., 2018). This study documents the perspectives of MOOC discussion users on three main issues: the concept of young-level academic leadership, the competencies necessary to be an effective leader, and the current challenges they encounter considering our participants.

In this study, the findings indicate that young-level academic leadership is an emerging position which affects and enhances their colleagues' teaching and learning experiences. This study has also revealed that young-level academic leaders ensure that tasks are completed without any problems, and also help to transform attitudes and behaviour alongside motivating people. In addition, they improve the opportunities, satisfaction, and outcomes for potential academic leaders (Samman, 2018). Furthermore, this empirical paper has promulgated a definition of young-level academic leadership based on the related literature and the findings from multi-dimensional aspects instead of one single dimension. Thus, young level academic leaders refer to academic talents who perform or take up leadership roles spontaneously and organically with or without a mandate, and who have distributed leadership skills evolving from within a networking group in the changing organizational context of universities. They are emerging leaders among professors, lecturers, researchers, PhD candidates, master's students, etc. who perform and lead academic groups, in order to work within a group or academic organization, to motivate others, and to facilitate the development of a new form of higher education.

This definition, on the one hand, complements some of the studies present in the literature, yet the other hand, it lays the emphasis on the concept of young academic leadership in regard to multi-dimensional elements which may or may not in fact be related to age, and their level (with or without a mandate) in the changing organizational context of universities. In other words, this conceptualization furnishes researchers with a notion of academic leadership that transcends individual leaders as well as including changing leadership processes in higher education contexts in more social and relevant terms. Additionally, when this term is put together with senior-level and mid-level academic leaders, there are both overlapping and diversifying elements. In terms of overlapping elements, all academic leaders in a university context must remain close to teaching, learning, research, and scholarship to bring out the best in them and their peers/students without considering the formal or emerging leadership positions (Sathye, 2004). However, as formal leaders in a vertically organized hierarchical university structure, senior and mid-level academic leaders must deal with a diversified cohort of people constituting academic, administrative, technical, and other supporting staff and students as well, on the other hand, having to deal with the complexities of administration, finance, and academia alongside a plethora of other issues in managing the university (Pani, 2017).

Secondly, our study reveals that an effective young-level academic leader has the ability to support their vision, develop effective relations and consensus among team members, and can convince others by discussing their plan which is being proposed to lead to improvement and bring about changes in the academic system. They also have the capability to diagnose what is happening around them, and they do not allow setbacks to inhibit their initiatives (Zafar, Hmedat, Chaubey, & Rehman, 2019). These capabilities are analytical for all leadership levels in the current complex university leadership environment (Cohen, 2004; Hanna, 2003). To expand their roles, all academic leaders should possess certain capabilities such as creativity, enthusiasm, honesty, humour, kindness, listening, calculative, open-mindedness, originality, perseverance, problem solving, reading, writing, social studies, athleticism, and positive work ethic and teamwork (Zafar et al., 2019).

In addition to the research mentioned above, this study moreover reveals the fact that young-level academic leaders should possess the personal capability to control their own emotions by being creative and open-minded (Scott et al., 2008); in particular, they should possess the interpersonal capability to empathise, listen to and motivate others when compared with senior or mid-level academic leaders (Zafar et al., 2019). This is because they are more open to sharing, engaging, collaborating, and communicating with others than senior and mid-level academic leaders (Pielstick, 2000). Specifically,

senior-level, and mid-level academic leaders have critical influence and power over teaching workloads to distribute, change and reward (Bryman, 2007; Hofmeyer et al., 2015). Instead of traditional leader-centric approaches, our findings in the literature call for more distributed or collaborative models among less hierarchical forms of leadership in higher education (Jones et al., 2012), with a capacity to unite people and influence their development towards change, integrity, and collective goal achievement (Avolio et al., 2004; Boyatzis et al., 2012). Being associated with Bryman's (2007) study, the results essentially affirm that building agreement through a young leader's efforts is crucial at universities.

Apart from these capabilities, the discussion forum participants placed the most emphasis on research, science and teaching when it comes to what will lead to significant changes in higher education institutions, all of which are closely linked to the literature review about competencies that confirmed the effectiveness of young leaders (Scott et al., 2008; Weimer, 2013). In particular, every academic leader at each level might be expected to possess these essential capabilities (Dinh et al., 2020). Furthermore, the results revealed that young academic leaders may promote change and bring people together in higher education institutions through their perspective and their strength at addressing the issue (Boyatzis et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the forum users mostly expressed that young academic leaders should possess digital competencies such as creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and computational thinking skills, and digital literacy, (Cohen, 2004; Kirschner & Stoyanov, 2018; Vial, 2019). Consistent with the literature, this research specifically found that young academic leaders are capable of solving complex problems by linking together numerous elements as well as proposing new ideas (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Vuorikari et al., 2016). This result may be explained in a sense that they are born and raised in a computerized age (Coombes, 2009).

As a last point, the forum users identified a group of matters that young-level academic leaders face when it comes to financial, managerial, interpersonal challenges and challenges related to gender. These challenges are an indication they must rise to another level, must test themselves and thereby improve in the process (Burkinshaw, 2015; Zenger & Folkman, 2015). As well, relevant studies have demonstrated that senior-level or mid-level academic leaders may be trapped by similar challenges (Creswell & Brown, 1992; Gmelch & Burns, 1993; Scott et al., 2008) to those identified in this study.

More specifically, the discussions have indicated that the emergence of 'managerialism' in the administration and direction of universities may be reflected in more managerial and entrepreneurial departmental objectives (Huisman, 2016; Sotirakou, 2004). This is precisely the point at which the roles of senior-level academic leaders change from being task-oriented, such as dealing with research and teaching which scholars have had years of training and practice in, to those in which they may have precious little prior experience and expertise. Young leaders are therefore expected to be skilled at media and crisis management, fundraising, departmental relations, financial management and the principles of governance. These results are consistent with the literature (Bebbington, 2018; Scott et al., 2008) that explains that higher education institutions are often saddled with managerial and financial challenges such as reduced state funding and must make an effort to identify alternative fundraising options, and to focus on the rising importance of accountability, changing demography, growing demands for higher education, and excessive privatization and marketization. Under the recent pressure on HEIs, mid-level academic leadership positions may be characterized by high levels of role conflict for stronger institutional management and weaker departmental power in favour of the institution. It has been argued that they must therefore serve as buffers between the various conflicting forces stemming from the various internal operation modes and they must manage the academic, state and market forces effectively (Gmelch & Burns, 1993), which is also common among young academic leaders (Zenger & Folkman, 2015). Regarding interpersonal challenges, discussion forum participants reveal the fact that young academic leaders generally face challenges working in a demanding and competitive environment (Mercer, 2009). A possibility for this might be that there are issues of trust among younger leaders, their direct superiors, and peers (Zenger & Folkman, 2015).

In addition, discussion forum participants reported challenges related to gender issues, repeatedly expressing that women are being faced with certain specific challenges such as health, equality of interests, and family work balance/imbalance. Thus, people tend to prioritize and trust men more in leadership positions. This result matches those observed in previous studies that also found that universities are still granting privileges to qualifications identified with masculine traits, prioritizing men, and continuing to be shaped by highly masculinized contexts (Burkinshaw, 2015; Burkinshaw & White, 2017). This difference becomes more apparent especially in senior leadership positions which implies a resistance to the transformation of the cultures present in higher education which have been dominated by a masculine hegemony (Tomàs et.al., 2010). The findings also reveal that diverse women in leadership positions can create productive, respectful, and inclusive environments, since it has been commonly acknowledged that gender operates as a constitutive element in forming social structures, processes, and relations of power (O'Connor, 2011). These findings in our study and literature are rather disappointing since women are still seen as mere additions to ongoing processes rather than being seen as integral parts of those processes (Acker, 1990).

Implications

The discussion and findings throughout the paper contribute to the existing literature in the sense that academic leaders, irrespective of their level of seniority or experience, are more afflicted by stress and burn out today than they were in the past according to our participants (Blackburn et al., 1986; Pulkkinen et al., 2019). In this regard, developing young-level academic leaders both on their professional and personal aspects provides further benefits (both tangible and intangible) to institutions since young leaders voice new ideas, and use their energies and youthfulness to fulfil organizational goals while contributing to the well-being of the institution as a whole (Wakawa & Yamta Ali, 2018). Commonalities and differences among all levels of academic leadership suggest that higher education should strive to develop academic leadership practices to engage institutions and their faculties in coping with change in order to respond effectively to complex educational, social, political, economic, and globalisation-related concerns (Spendlove, 2007). Additionally, the analysis of online discussion forums is arguably an underused research design (Jamison et al., 2018), thus, our results potentially offer additional insight compared to traditional interviews due to the experiences of discussion forums about young academic leadership having remained unexplored (Sullivan, 2003). Similarly, compared with traditional qualitative studies, this study strengthens the idea that the participants from a wide geographical area are more open to communicate their ideas (Schneider, Kerwin, Frechtling, & Vivari, 2002) and more free to participate on their own (Mudry & Strong, 2016). Within this context offered by discussion forum, this study confirms that participants are more responsive to express their deep personal opinions and discuss sensitive issues (Allen, Vassilev, & Kennedy, 2016). Online cross communication in this study may enhance understanding, trust, and shared support through anonymity, thus, result in adding depth to the themes in qualitative research as also described by Gill and Whisnant (2012). Taken together, our findings may be useful for policy makers, researchers, online facilitators, instructors, academic leaders who may want to consider the different levels of academic leadership as well as recognise the importance of young academic leaders who do not have a formal managerial role.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite reflecting the perspectives of young-level academic leaders in a MOOC course's discussion forum, the results of this study are subject to certain limitations. First, one potential limitation of this study is that forum users may not represent all potential young academic leaders, including professors, lecturers, researchers, PhD students, master's students, etc. This issue might therefore pose a constraint to the extent to which the findings can be generalized because of the nature of qualitative research. Linked to that, being limited to the participants' posts, this study sometimes lacks the deep meaning derived from the data. Therefore, a natural progression of this work is to conduct a further study so as to establish generalizability and to transfer the findings to a more broad, inclusive, and larger discussion groups as well as identify more meaning. Given the accessible nature of online mediated research, the study is limited by the lack of direct opinions of participants because of the intention of ensuring anonymity. Thus, future qualitative data collection techniques such as face to face interviews are required to represent participant's real opinions.

Similarly, a greater focus on quantitative methods could produce interesting findings that follow-on to the data collected by this study. Thus, this study offers a framework for future research on developing a research tool and investigating academic leadership competencies at various levels in empirical studies. An additional uncontrolled factor is the impossibility to assess the perceptions of other stakeholders in a university context; therefore, further studies regarding the perceptions of students, senior-level leaders, mid-level leaders and/or policymakers would be worthwhile. Findings from the analysis show that the participants often harbour various cultural differences from different geographical areas. As such, considerably more work will need to be done to determine the different needs of academic leaders from different contexts and to enable stronger linkages to the actual working context.

Funding

This research was conducted in the framework of an EU project supported under the Erasmus + programme.

References

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society, 4*(2), 139-158.

Allen, C., Vassilev, I., & Kennedy, A. (2016). Long-term condition self-management support in online communities: A meta-synthesis of qualitative papers. *Journal of Medical Internet Research, 18*(3), e61.

Armstrong, P., & Gough, A. (2019). Developing and motivating young leaders for sustainability: A developmental framework. In D. Zandvliet (Ed.), *Culture and environment weaving new connections* (pp. 163-191). Leiden: Brill Sense.

Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. (2004). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *Leadership Quarterly, 15*(6), 801-823.

Aziz, D. (2018). *Competencies and strategies utilized by higher education leaders during planned change* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Wayne State University, Michigan, USA.

Bass, B. M. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics, 18*(3), 19-31.

Blackburn, I. M., Eunson, K. M., & Bishop, S. (1986). A two-year naturalistic follow-up of depressed patients treated with cognitive therapy, pharmacotherapy and a combination of both. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 10*(1), 67-75.

Bolden, R., Petrov, G., & Gosling, J. (2009). Distributed leadership in higher education: Rhetoric and reality. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 37*, 257-277.

Boroujeni, M. S., Shirvani, M., Hecking, T., Hoppe, U., & Dillenbourg, P. (2017). Dynamics of MOOC Discussion Forums. *LAK'17*, March 13-17, Vancouver, Canada.

Boyatzis, R. E., Passarelli, A. M., Koenig, K., Lowe, M., Matthew, B., Stoller, J. K., & Phillips, M. (2012). Examination of the neural substrates activated in memories of experiences with resonant and dissonant leaders. *Leadership Quarterly, 23*(2), 259-272.

Bowker, N., & Tuffin, K. (2004). Using the online medium for discursive research about people with disabilities. *Social Science Computer Review, 22*, 228-241.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2008) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Sharma, R., Wigginton, B., Meurk, C., Ford, P., & Gartner, C. (2017). Motivations and limitations associated with vaping among people with mental illness: A qualitative analysis of Reddit Discussions. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 14*(7). doi:10.3390/ijerph14010007.

Bryman, A. (2007). Effective leadership in higher education: A literature review. *Studies in Higher Education, 32*(6), 693-710.

Burkinshaw, P. (2015). *Higher education, leadership and women vice chancellors: Fitting in to communities of practice of masculinities*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burkinshaw, P., & White, K. (2017). Fixing the women or fixing universities: Women in HE leadership. *Administrative Sciences, 7*(3), 1-14.

Cohen, P. (2004). The crisis of the university. *Campus Review, April 21-27*, 9-12.

Coombes, B. (2009). Generation Y: Are they really digital natives or more like digital refugees. *Synergy, 7*(1), 31-40.

Creswell, J. W., & Brown, M. L. (1992). How chairpersons enhance faculty research: A grounded theory study. *The Review of Higher Education, 16*(1), 41-62.

Cummings, T. G., & Worley, C. G. (2004). *Organization development and change*. Ohio, OH: South-Western.

Dasborough, M. T. (2006). Cognitive asymmetry in employee emotional reactions to leadership behaviors. *Leadership Quarterly, 79*(2), 163-178.

Dinh, N. B. K., Caliskan, A., & Zhu, C. (2020). Academic leadership: Perceptions of academic leaders and staff in diverse contexts. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220921192

Dopson, S., Ferlie, E., McGivern, G., Fischer, M. D., Mitra, M., Ledger, J., & Behrens, S. (2018). Leadership development in higher education: A literature review and implications for programme redesign. *Higher Education Quarterly, 73*(2), 218-234.

Drew, G. (2010). Issues and challenges in higher education leadership: Engaging for change. *Australian Educational Researcher, 37*(3), 57-76.

Einarsen, S., Aasland, M. S., & Skogstad, A. (2007). Destructive leadership behaviour: A definition and conceptual model. *Leadership Quarterly, 18*(3), 207-216.

Evans, L. (2012). Leadership for researcher development: What research leaders need to know and understand. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 40*(4), 423 435.

Fielding, N., Lee, R. M., & Blank, G. (2008). *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods*. London: SAGE.

Fields, J., Kenny, N. A., & Mueller, R. A. (2019). Conceptualizing educational leadership in an academic development program. *International Journal for Academic Development, 24*(3), 218-231.

Fullan, M. (2002). The role of leadership in the promotion of knowledge management in schools. *Teachers and Teaching, 8*(3), 409-419.

Gardner, H. (1998). A multiplicity of intelligences. *Scientific American, 9*, 19-23.

Gill, P. S., & Whisnant, B. A. (2012). A qualitative assessment of an online support community for ovarian cancer patients. *Patient Related Outcome Measures, 3*, 51-58.

Gmelch, W. H., & Burns, J. S. (1993). The cost of academic leadership: Department chair stress. *Innovative Higher Education, 17*, 259-270.

Goleman, D. (2008). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. London: Bloomsbury.

Griffiths, M. (2000). Collaboration and partnership in question: Knowledge, politics and practice. *Journal of Education Policy, 15*, 383-395.

Hanna, D. E. (2003). Building a leadership vision: Eleven strategic challenges for higher education. *Educause, July-August*, 25-34.

Hara, N., Bonk, C. J., & Angeli, C. (2000). Content analysis of online discussion in an applied educational psychology course. *Instructional Science, 28*, 115-152.

Hénard, F., & Roseveare, D. (2012). *Fostering quality teaching in higher education: Policies and practices* (An IMHE Guide for Higher Education Institutions). Paris: OECD.

Hofmeyer, A., Sheingold, B. H., Helen, B., Klopper, H. C., & Warland, J. (2015). Leadership in learning and teaching in higher education: Perspectives of academics in non-formal leadership roles. *Contemporary Issues In Education Research, 8*(3), 181-192.

Huisman, J. (2016). Higher education institutions: Landscape designers or contrived Organisations? In P. Scott, J. Gallacher, & G. Parry (Eds.), *New languages and landscapes of higher education* (pp. 188-203). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jamison, J., Sutton, S., & Mant, J. (2018). Online stroke forum as source of data for qualitative research: Insights from a comparison with patients' interviews. *BMJ Open, 8*, 1-7.

Johnson, C. (2002). Evaluating the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership performance. *International Leadership Association Conference*, Seattle, WA.

Jones, S. Lefoe, G. Harvey, M., & Ryland, K. (2012). Distributed leadership: A collaborative framework for academics, executives and professionals in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 34*(1), 67-78.

Juntrasook, A., Nairn, K., Bond, C., & Spronken-Smith, R. (2013). Unpacking the narrative of non-positional leadership in academia: Hero and/or victim? *Higher Education Research & Development, 32*(2), 201-213.

Kirschner, P. A., & Stoyanov, S. (2020). Educating youth for nonexistent/not yet existing professions. *Educational Policy, 34*(3), 477-517.

Lanigan, R. L. (1988). *Phenomenology of communication: Merleau-Ponty's Thematics in communicology and semiology*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Marcus, S., & Pringle, A. (1995). What new competencies are needed in a changing environment? *Human Resources Professional, 8*(3), 19-24.

Maxwell, J. C. (2002). *Leadership 101: What every leader needs to know*. Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson.

McKee, A., & Massimilian, D. (2006). Resonant leadership: A new kind of leadership for the digital age. *Journal of Business Strategy, 27*, 45-49.

Mercer, J. (2009). Junior academic-manager in higher education: An untold story? *International Journal of Educational Management, 23*(4), 348-359.

Middlehurst, R. (2008). Not enough science or not enough learning? Exploring the gaps between leadership theory and practice. *Higher Education Quarterly, 62*, 322-339.

Mudry, T. E., & Strong, T. (2013). Doing recovery online. *Qualitative Health Research, 23*, 313-325.

Oblinger, D., Oblinger, J. L., & Lippincott, J. K. (2005). *Educating the net generation*. Boulder, CO: EDUCAUSE.

O'Connor, P. (2011). Where do women fit in university senior management? An analytical typology of cross-national organizational cultures. In B. Bagilhole & K. White (Eds.), *Gender, power and management: A cross-cultural analysis of higher educatio*n (pp. 168-191). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pani, A. (2017). Academic leadership: Concept, attributes and practices. *University News, 55*(49), 17-25.

Parrish, D. (2013). The relevance of emotional intelligence for leadership in a higher education context. *Studies in Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.842225

Pearce, C. L. (2004). The future of leadership: Combining vertical and shared leadership to transform knowledge work. *Academy of Management Executive, 18*(1), 47-57.

Pearce, C., & Conger, J. (2003). All those years ago: The historical underpinnings of shared leadership. In C. Pearce & J. Conger (Eds.), *Shared leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pielstick, C. D. (2000). Formal & informal leading: A comparative analysis. *The Journal of Leadership Studies, 7*(3), 99-114.

Pinheiro, R., Aarrevaara, T., Berg, L. N., Fumasoli, T., Geschwind, L. Hansen, H. F., ……Söderlind, J. (2019). Does it really matter? Assessing the performance effects of changes in leadership and management structures in Nordic higher education. In R. Pinheiro, L. Geschwind L., H. F. Hansen, & K. Pulkkinen (Eds), *Reforms, organizational change and performance in higher education* (pp. 3-36). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ramsden, P. (1998). *Learning to lead in higher education*. London: Routledge.

Roach, A. A., Wyman, L. T., Brookes, H., Chavez, C., Brice, H. S., & Valdes, G. (1999). Leadership giftedness: Models revisited. *Gifted Children Quarterly, 43*(3), 13-24.

Roberts, S., Butcher, L., & Brooker, M. (2010). *Clarifying, developing and valuing the role of unit coordinators as informal leaders of learning in higher education* (Final Report). Strawberry Hills: Australian Learning & Teaching Council.

Sathye, M. (2004). Leadership in higher education: A qualitative study. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 5*(3), 1-11.

Schön, D. (2003). *The reflective practitioner*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Smith, R. (2005). Departmental leadership and management in chartered and statutory universities: A case of diversity. *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership, 33*(4), 449-464.

Schneider, S. J., Kerwin, J., Frechtling, J., & Vivari, B. A. (2002). Characteristics of the discussion in online and face-to-face focus groups. *Social Science Computer Review, 20*(1), 31-42.

Smith, M. K., Wood, W. B., Adams, W. K., Wieman, C., Knight, J. K., Guild, N., & Su, T. T. (2009). Why peer discussion improves student performance on in-class concept questions. *Science,* (323), 122-124.

Sotirakou, T. (2004). Coping with conflict within the entrepreneurial university: Treat or challenge for heads of departments in the UK higher education context. *International Review of Administrative Sciences, 70*(2), 345-372.

Spendlove, M. (2007). Competencies for effective leadership in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Management, 21*(5), 407-417.

Stephens-Martinez, K., Hearst, M. A., & Fox, A. (2014). Monitoring MOOCs: Which information sources do instructors value? In the proceedings of *First ACM Conference on Learning at Scale Conference* (pp. 79-88). ACM.

Sullivan, C. F. (2003). Gendered cybersupport: A thematic analysis of two online cancer support groups. *Journal of Health Psychology, 8*(1), 83-104.

Taylor, A. C. (2008). Promoting sustainable practices: The importance of building leadership capacity. *The Enviro 08 Conference*, May 5-7, Melbourne, Australia.

Thamhain, H.J. (2004). Team leadership effectiveness in technology-based project environments. *Project Management Journal, 35*(4), 35-46.

Teherani, A., Martimianakis, T., Stenfors-Hayes, T., Wadhwa, A., & Varpio, L. (2015). Choosing a qualitative research approach. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education, 7*, 669-670.

Tomas, M., Lavie, J. M., Duran, M. del M., & Guillamon, C. (2010). Women in academic administration at the university. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 38*(4), 487-498.

Tsai, Y., & Beverton, S. (2007). Top-down management: an effective tool in higher education? *International Journal of Educational Management, 21*(1), 6-16.

van Linden, J. A., & Fertman, C. I. (1998). *Youth leadership: A guide to understanding leadership development in adolescents*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Vial, G. (2019). Understanding digital transformation: a review and a research agenda. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems, 28*(2), 118-144.

Vuorikari, R., Punie, Y., Gomez, S. C., & Van Den Brande, G. (2016). *DigComp 2.0: The digital competence framework for citizens – Update phase 1: The conceptual reference model*. Joint Research Centre.

Wakawa, M. Y., & Yamta Ali, B. Y. (2018). *Developing young leaders: Needs and implications on organizational growth and sustainability*. SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3157157.

Weimer, M. (2013). *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice (2nd ed.).* New York, NY: Jossey-Bass.

Wells, B. C. (2002). Academic leadership: One dean's perspective. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 66*, 459-60.

Zafar, T., Hmedat, W., Chaubey, D. S., & Rehman, A. (2019). An exploration of academic leadership dynamics: A literature review. *International Journal on Leadership, 7*(1), 28-36.

Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2015). What younger managers should know about how they're perceived. *Harvard Business Review*. Access: https://hbr.org/2015/09/what-younger-managers-should-know-about-how-theyre-perceived

Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2016). *Speed: How leaders accelerate successful execution*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Zhang, W., & Zhang, Q. (2013). *An* analysis of factors in professional growth of young academic leaders in universities. *International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Management Science*, September 28-29, Shanghai, China.

Zhu, C, & Zayim-Kurtay, M. (2018). University governance and academic leadership: Perceptions of European and Chinese university staff and perceived need for capacity building. *European Journal of Higher Education, 8*(4), 435-452.

Higher Education Governance & Policy
ISSN: 2717-8676
Volume: 2
Issue: 1

Higher Education and Equitable Life-Long Learning for Diversified Students in the Digital Era

Khalid Arar[1*], Anna Saiti[2], & Georgia Prokopiadou[3]
[1]College of Education, Texas State University, San Marcos, USA
[2]School of Administrative, Economics & Social Sciences, University of West Attica, Athens, Greece
[3]School of Education, University of Athens, Athens, Greece

Abstract

The educational sector has particular sensitivities and there is a huge concern that technological innovations may interfere with the real role of education in social development. With particular reference to higher education, this educational level is the foundation for changes in society. Higher education institutions (HEIs) should shape the prerequisites, in a dynamic way, for the establishment of an open society with life-long education for all. Moreover, HEIs today are called upon to welcome technology and to consider technology as a tool for learning rather than a problem. Hence, HEIs should facilitate a transition to collaborative educational communities in society and the cultivation of critical thinking, creativity, and self-efficacy. This commentary which stemmed from a discussion between three scholars, suggests how major technologies might improve the equity and efficacy of HEIs by recognizing and addressing the issue of individual differences and diversity in future HEIs. It considers adaptive education through "learning analytics" and the usage of artificial intelligence in knowledge spaces and provides alternative curriculum choices to meet personal learning needs, while fulfilling UNESCO's initiative of rethinking higher education in an increasingly complex world so as to shape the future of higher education.

Keywords: Higher education, policy, governance, knowledge revolution, digital era

Introduction

Recent higher education trends including widening accessibility, privatization, accountability, and technological implementation, have largely neglected consideration of human individual, social and cultural diversity. Two distinctive scientific perspectives relate to these individual differences. The older perspective of differential psychology, psychometrics and cognitive psychology described the bell-shaped normal distribution of mental abilities. The new perspective, driven by behavioural genetics, neuroscience, learning science and molecular biology has surfaced the immense complexity of the mind's architecture and functions in the population. We suggest that present-day higher education's biggest problem is the persistent overlooking of universal individual differences in the learner population. Technology should be defined as the human capacity to solve existential problems so that technology is first and foremost a cognitive trait, rather than a tool or machine. Which educational problems might call upon technology to provide solutions? It appears that an erroneous mechanical perception of man dominates today's educational policies that aspire to achieve uniform standards as if people were machines. Ignoring human diversity and failing to address this fact is the main cause for educational ineffectiveness and inequality that prevail almost everywhere. The OECD's PISA comparative achievements tests provide us with significant data concerning the distribution of knowledge and cognitive skills. Hence, it is extremely important to have tools that act as auxiliary mechanisms to deal with education and with the problems that emerge from a changing environment but also to achieve the goal of knowledge dissemination and the acquisition of skills by individuals.

[*] **Corresponding Author:** Khalid Arar, khalidarr@gmail.com
[1]ORCID: 0000-0003-4094-966X; ***[2]ORCID:*** 0000-0002-3882-9565; ***[3]ORCID:*** 0000-0001-5899-5504

(Review Article) **Cite as:** Arar, K., Saiti, A., & Prokopiadou, G. (2021). Higher education and equitable life-long learning for diversified students in the digital era. *Higher Education Governance & Policy, 2*(1), 19-30.

Received: March 15, 2021; ***Revised:*** June 5, 2021; ***Accepted:*** June 5, 2021; ***Published:*** June 30, 2021

Within this framework, this commentary stemmed from a thorough discussion of the three authors, bringing together their vast experience in different academic posts as well as their multi-disciplinary scholastic contributions on issues of equity, diversity, and learning technologies. Therefore, we aimed to suggest how major technologies might improve the equity and efficacy of HEIs by recognizing and addressing the issue of individual differences and diversity in future HEIs. We first present the current global higher education policy trends and challenges, then we outline the future of higher education, and finally we end with further suggestions for an alternative approach to HEI governance. Furthermore, the paper considers adaptive education through "learning analytics" and the usage of artificial intelligence in knowledge spaces and provides alternative curriculum choices to meet personal learning needs, while fulfilling UNESCO's initiative of rethinking higher education in an increasingly complex world so as to shape the future of higher education (Chen, 2020).

This commentary suggests how two major technologies might provide equity and efficacy through the recognition and resolution of the problem of individual differences and diversity in future higher education institutions. The article concludes with the cybernetic implications of the resulting pedagogy, detailing possible consequences for higher education systems that aim to address student diversity and produce appropriate adaptive learning.

Current Global Higher Education Policy and Governance

In recent years, several diverse efforts for reforms have been made around the world in order to make HEIs more productive and responsive to the needs and challenges of new markets in the field of higher education, mainly due to a) developments at the political and economic level, and b) the fact that higher education is a driving force for constructive changes in society and the economic sectors. According to Shore and Wright (2016, p. 47), these reforms are contributing more to the development of neoliberal ideas as they aim to transform HEIs into knowledge production machines with the ultimate goal of improving skills, increasing business activity, and improving the contribution of higher education to competitiveness which reshaped higher education governance as well. According to several multinational organizations such as the OECD, the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education institutions, in terms of increased productivity, has been the basis for reforms towards the so-called ‘global knowledge economy’. For this reason, higher education has provided a competitive advantage for many countries and explains the obsession with competitiveness in terms of knowledge and skilled human resources as well as the creation of what Shore and Wright (2017, p. 47) refer to as "intellectual property".

The contribution of higher education to economic development is well known. Certainly, it is not a bad thing to improve the professional skills of individuals in areas such as cooperation and leadership in order for countries to increase their productive capacity. However, it would be a bad thing to set boundaries for universities to operate within a framework of academic market liberalization in order to generate market knowledge. This would make the market the primary purpose for HEIs to provide knowledge. However, while the correlation of higher education with the market is an important element for the development of an economy, the role of higher education is not exclusively economic. Its main significance is its social dimension and its contribution to social ecology. Indeed, the role of higher education and its basic principles and functions must be to promote equitable income distribution, equality, and social justice. It is a dynamic level of education (as are all educational levels) that adapts to environmental changes, but this adjustment needs to be made prudently so as not to alter the social function of university institutions. Policies, governance dynamics, and programs on higher education aim to reflect global motility, migration, and internationalization by widening participation, diversity, equity and inclusion (Arar et al., 2020) while seeking a balance between expansion and quality assurance (Arar et al., 2019; Chen, 2020; Huisman, 2009; Nespor, 2018).

In the context of globalization and regionalization, public universities are being reconfigured from public institutions towards 'entrepreneurial' and 'knowledge organizations'. The major trends we detected include:

1. State withdrawal from investments in universities, while state funding per student is declining and cost-sharing is shrinking. Indeed, the cost of access to higher education (in countries where higher education has tuition fees) has risen sharply in recent years (2021 Educause Horizon Report)
2. Post-COVID concerns about quality processes are bringing changes to the way the educational processes of higher education are assessed. Both at the national and global level, university institutions are being classified in terms of their research activity and educational processes. Ranking tables of university institutions concern their efficient operation but at the same time they also carry elements of controlled intervention which, to a large extent, violates the inherent autonomy and freedom of higher education. The quality framework of HEIs should not be determined solely by observing the educational process, in the narrow sense of control and intervention (Chen, 2020; 2021 Educause Horizon Report)
3. University governance has experienced a shift in orientation towards a more administrative and business-like model while faculties are being managed more as 'human capital' and as resources; essentially, universities are gradually being run as 'business corporations' (Levin & Greenwood, 2016; Nespor, 2018). This effort to change the governance philosophy of university institutions is due to the evolution of the new reality and the new strategic motivations for systemic governance (Middlehurst 2013). This trend is hinted at in Benjamin Ginsberg's book, The Fall for the Faculty (2011), where he notes that administrators are becoming determinants of core university functions.
4. Due to the global economic crisis and the subsequent financial reductions in the state budgets of many countries around the world spanning several years, universities have been forced to seek funding from sources other than the state. Alternative sources of funding include business and industrial partnerships, both in terms of research and the commercialization of intellectual property. Moreover, student migration has contributed to an increase in tuition fees. In addition, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020), a total of 3.5% of the total world population (272 million people) moved to another country in 2019. This number has increased steadily from 174 million in 1995. Students migrated mainly from low income to high income countries (to pursue education, employment, and economic security), indicating that economic concerns are a major factor in the decision to migrate but not the only one, while the number of international students reached 3.3 million (OECD, 2017). The majority moved from the east (China, India, Hong Kong, Singapore), constituting 58% of all international students, and headed mainly to Anglophonic countries such as the USA, Australia, UK, Canada, and New Zealand, which received 65% of these students (Arar et al., 2020).
5. The increase in university tuition fees has led a large number of students in higher education to apply for a student loan (interest-free bank loan) whereby the bank pays the student the loan amount from the moment they apply and the student starts repaying the bank in instalments once they are in graduate employment. However, this manner of financing university studies raises questions such as whether higher education is ultimately able to maintain its public character and, more importantly, whether it can safeguard the public character of educational good.
6. The COVID 19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in the way the relationships between higher education institutions and students are shaped. Technology now plays a leading role in the learning process and at the same time requires a range of different abilities and skills on the part of both academic teachers and students. The development of technology has always played an important role in the educational process. However, the COVID 19 pandemic has added another dimension to its importance and given it a role that seems to be the only way to manage the learning process in the midst of a pandemic. This one-way path seems to have continuity in the course and evolution of the learning process in higher education (Zackal, 2021). The degree of this one-way path may change, but technology and remote education may continue to play a leading role. Certainly, the application of technological tools in higher education, like all things, has advantages and disadvantages. An important benefit of remote education is that those who have not been able to access university institutions due to high costs can now do so, since the main cost has been the fees. On the other hand, technology has changed the way we communicate and interact, and so gives a new tone to the content of lessons.

Based on the above, regarding the governance of the higher education, the managerial model and the limitations on state budgets do not alter the fact that HEIs agenda to effectively meet the needs of the public while helping to implement the economic and social policies of governments. However, the term 'effectiveness' should not be confused with economies of scale. Economies of scale are an economic term under which an economic unit, by increasing production, operates at the lowest possible cost in order to make a profit. In the case of an educational institution such as an HEI, we cannot enter into the rationality of the functioning of an industrial economic unit, but we can still rationalize about its effectiveness since the effective performance of an organization (public or private) does not depend on cost but on the efficient management of its available resources in order to achieve the desired results. In the case of university institutions, effectiveness is measured by their dissemination of knowledge, their provision of skills and competencies to learners, the accessibility they provide to higher education, as well as their respect for diversity and social values (Arar et al., 2020; Chen, 2020; De Witte & Lopez-Torres, 2017). In a sector such as higher education which is particularly sensitive and extremely important for social development (since it is the basis for human prosperity), no corners can be cut. The good of education can be both an investment (in the sense that investing in education brings significant financial benefits for the future) and a consumable commodity (in the sense that it can satisfy needs and be enjoyed) and so it does indeed have an economic connotation (Chen, 2020). Nevertheless, above all, it remains a public good which, by definition, is something that everyone should have access to and that everyone (without exception) should be able to enjoy.

Technological developments have certainly affected the functioning of higher education institutions and the development of the learning process. However, technology has not come to play the role of a substitute, if we want to speak in economic terms, but of a complementary element. Within this framework, technology provides a helping hand to support the learning process in higher education institutions, consolidate knowledge and collaborative processes and bridge any barriers to the accessibility of learning. In this way, the effectiveness of higher education is achieved but not at the expense of educational goals being achieved.

The Future of Higher Education

Traditionally, HEIs partition knowledge into different disciplinary faculties: science, liberal arts, medicine, engineering etc. Teaching and learning follow a linear structure through three stages: undergraduate, graduate and Ph.D. Socially, HEIs are highly selective institutions allowing access by an average thirty percent of the population (Drucker, 1993; Furlong & Whitty, 2017). Selection begins at the undergraduate level and continues more fiercely to the third level with remarkable difference between the selection rate of Ivy League[1] institutions and community colleges. Hence, higher education institutions should not create an intellectual elite but should contribute dynamically to the cultivation of the conditions for an open society with life-long education for all (Chen, 2020). It is important, therefore, that higher education institutions facilitate a transition to collaborative educational communities in society. Thus, different goals should be set for each of the three HE stages in line with students' abilities.

(1) The knowledge society's nature has entirely changed from the Enlightenment focus on local national state, national culture and identity into an extended world perspective implying global problem solving, multiculturalism, English as a lingua franca, social networking, and wide cooperation rather than clash and conflict. The OECD (2018a) offers an international futuristic vision, suggesting an ecosystem approach that would change the static predetermined

[1] The term Ivy League was originally used in the field of sports and referred to an elite group consisting of the best 8 university institutions operating in the northeastern United States. Now, however, this term is essentially considered as a benchmark of excellence among US universities to which all universities and colleges can be compared in terms of quantitative indicators. University institutions included in this reference group, such as Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University and Yale University, receive significant financial support to fund research. This funding is due to the fact that they belong to this group of institutions, which have a highly competitive nature, while the performance of other US universities relative to this reference group provides a valuable indicator that can attract funding for scientific research.

curriculum to a flexible, dynamic curriculum to cope with the various socio-economic problems in a complex uncertain new world. New skills to be developed would include: literacy, critical thinking, creativity, self-efficacy and regulation as well as self-regulation and autonomy.

(2) The PISA international comparative study provides perhaps the best big data base to inform policies and practices, reflecting the realities of education, since it collects learning data from 79 countries and millions of learners (OECD, 2018b). A critical evaluation of PISA 2018 by Andreas Schleicher (2019) provides essential guidance for any future design of a learning system as PISA results establish immense differences between and within countries, opposing the idealistic vision reflected in many policy papers.

This section discusses the future of higher education. A readiness for future challenges not only constitutes a strong competitive element but is also a means of ensuring the sustainability of university institutions. However, as accurate as future forecasts may be, an element of uncertainty will always remain. The same applies to constraints in the societal environment (e.g., economic, political) since they are directly related to future uncertainty and limit the degree of freedom that universities have to adjust to a new reality (Chen, 2020). The next section discusses the uncertainty of the future and the transformation of higher education into a learning organization in order to raise awareness of uncertainty, to address it in a timely manner and to consolidate a sustainable HE strategy for the well-being of all.

Higher Education and the Emerging Reality

Given this global debate on how knowledge, education and learning need to be reimagined in a complex and uncertain world, universities can play a crucial role in shaping the future through institutional transformation. This section identifies future challenges for the HEIs and sets the basis for a paradigm shift that also addresses issues of diversity and inclusion, as presented in Figure 1:

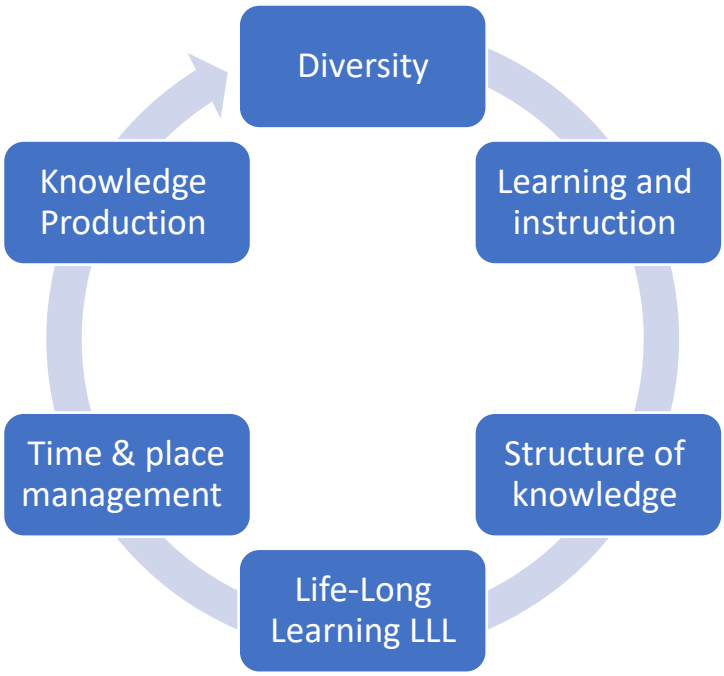

Figure 1. Coping with diversity and individual differences in learner populations

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are educational organizations. However, these educational organizations do not only provide teaching but aim to expand knowledge and particularly to expand the development of research. The knowledge produced by a university is a product of continuous utilization as it reveals new ways for creative thinking. As learning organizations, universities contribute

substantially to the evolution of society. Learning organizations respect the value and personality of the individual while relying on relationships and authentic leadership, which is the basis for organizational coalition. The integrated transformation of HEIs into learning organizations is certainly not an easy process and cannot be not done overnight, as it requires the transformation of an organization's culture into one of lifelong learning and team spirit.

Lifelong education and learning as well as the continuous utilization of knowledge certainly expands the age group of those involved in education but at the same time lays a solid foundation for comprehensive and integrated inclusive education and the development of social capital. This would cover both learning for an academic degree, and elective learning, addressing both high school and other age groups and including learning in the community, learning for retirees (e.g., cultural and leisure studies), professional development for industry (at work and in HEIs), second chance learners, special education, social projects (health, ecology, technology) and individual enrichment. Thus, college admission would no longer serve as the dreamy end point but rather as just one more chapter in a long life of learning.

Opening up access to higher education and activating the systematic development of individuals will help overcome obstacles to social development by giving better-equipped individuals the confidence to engage with social forces that seek innovative solutions to fundamental social problems. Indeed, the practicality of acquiring knowledge needs to be strengthened so that HEIs are a commonly recognized source of wisdom and machine learning but also of knowledge for the business world (Gori, 2017). For this to happen, various obstacles (bureaucratic, etc.) need to be overcome while HEIs should be governed in a way that supports the efforts in finding effective solutions to the problems faced by society. That said, the essential agent that can contribute sound universal scientific knowledge remains the HEI.

Technology Integration and Higher Education

The rapid development of technology has brought to the surface innovative elements that can be used in all sectors of the economy (including education). The revolution of artificial intelligence (AI), along with other technologically innovative services (such as the voice assistant) created intelligent personal assistants (Gori, 2017; Roll & Wylie, 2016). These are services that can facilitate the learning process and the effectiveness of pedagogical/academic practices. The use of technologically innovative services in the higher educational process accelerates the learning and the practice of important skills and also enables a higher level of communication and interaction (Chen, 2020; Collins & Halverson, 2010; DuFour, 2014; Herrington & Herrington, 2007; Prestridge, 2012; Prestridge & Main, 2018). Developments in technology and the learning process address different learning needs. Personalization and the different learning styles offered by innovative technology services (such as AI) enable learners to choose the learning process and style that is most appropriate for their own personality and thus most able to meet their needs and expectations. In this way, pedagogical practices and the learning environment become more constructive, taking into account diversity in learning and a more learning-centred approach to the educational process (Hope, 1997; Sugar Crawley & Fine, 2004).

With the assistance of technology and AI, any obstacle related to opportunities in the learning process can be overcome to establish new educational environments that are openly accessible. Indeed, in recent years, the focus of AI and its application in education has been related to online and distance education (Dillenbourg, 2013; Goksel & Bozkurt, 2019; Roll & Wylie, 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). While these forms of educational environment increase the efficiency of learning, the use of AI should not alter the educational character and the basic function of higher education (and indeed all levels of education), which is to develop an inquisitiveness and strong social values in individuals. Greater personalization in education and new forms of interaction between learners and their environment offer new practical ways for end-users to absorb knowledge, thereby minimizing failure in exams / at work and facilitating the sharing of knowledge on an equal basis (Roll & Wylie, 2016; Zhang et al., 2017). Here, technology serves as a support tool for the consolidation of knowledge and the development of collaborative processes, which leads to the cultivation of an authentic learning environment (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). The question is not who is involved in the learning process or when it will take place, but the big issue is the continuity of the learning process and the ongoing advancement of human well-being

through learning and critical thinking (Christensen & Knezek, 2018; Roach, Tilley & Mitchell, 2018; Sheehan & Nillas, 2010).

Higher education plays an important role in development and is the basis for increasing productivity and social change. It is the means for enhancing knowledge and skills but is not limited only to this; it is rather an instrument of change. In recent years, several studies (such as Collins & Halverson, 2010; Goksel & Bozkurt, 2019; Prestridge & Main, 2018; Sheehan & Nillas, 2010) have been conducted that explore and analyze the role of technology in education. Moreover, the research discusses the role of AI (such as the role of machine learning) and how these technological developments may affect, but most importantly, assist the educational sector to meet new emerging challenges (Chen, 2020; Prestridge, Tondeur, & Ottenbreit –Leftwich, 2019; Roll & Wylie, 2016). And we say this because the new reality of the educational environment concerns the adoption of technological elements and tools that will help higher education in its transition to a new era. Understanding knowledge alone is not enough to face the new reality.

Certainly, there is a fear that technology may replace higher education. Indeed, pessimistic visions suggest that technology would replace HEIs' faculty, curriculum, and classrooms as individuals learn to interact directly with the stock of knowledge, without mediating agencies. However, this hypothesis does not stand up to the test of reality since it is also true that technology and its tools have a complementary and supporting role in the learning process. Despite the success of Open Universities, MOOCs and CORSERA, 90% of students in Open University and CORSERA reported that they preferred to learn on an organization’s premises, indicating there is still a need for curricula, lecturers, and educational institutions. The learning environment still retains its importance and plays an essential role in the development and dissemination of knowledge (Christensen et al., 2013 as cited in Roll & Wylie, 2016, p. 592). HEIs need to maintain their role as learning organizations by embracing technological developments and new opportunities.

While the reservoir of public knowledge grows exponentially, people’s ability to absorb that knowledge remains static due to the inherent limitation of individual memory capacity. However, knowledge technologies can now extend human capacity to make choices in both chaotically organized and public stock knowledge. An individual cannot make smart choices, nor can a professional committee construct a reasonable curriculum without the support of a knowledge technology such as AI or Learning Analytics. These technologies are not yet mature enough to be used in education, but they are the only tools that can cope with the complex amount of public knowledge currently available.

Nowadays jobs require the application of knowledge, collaborative thinking, and the individualization of learning skills. Therefore, knowledge needs to be accompanied by personalized support for its application; people need to have tools at their disposal so that they can apply the available knowledge to their job (Goksel & Bozkurt, 2019; Prestridge et al., 2019; Roll & Wyllie, 2016). Therefore, teaching practices in higher education can be characterized by complexity in terms of learning objectives, curricula, and interaction. Individual support for the process of applying knowledge and learning is related to the personal particularities and personality traits of those involved in higher education.

The Personality Profile shows that students' emotions are intertwined with learning, and universities should apply the concept of "adaptive education while aiming to meet learners' diversity" (Chen, 2020). As science progressively reveals how different people learn and how to produce conditions that optimize learning, HEI pedagogies should be reconsidered so that they can better adapt to students' diverse needs. New technologies can collect precise data on what is and is not helping students, enabling instruction and scientific theories to be continuously revised and improved. Studies can be adapted to individual differences by increasing choice, personalizing curricula, offering flexibility in the time and place of learning, and providing differential graduations. Adaptive education should replace the present rigid mechanical organization of learning. Open access universities (which account for up to 30 % of the student population) should adopt a more flexible modular organization of knowledge beyond the present B.A, M.A, PhD pathway. They should create smaller modules that can be accumulated towards an

academic degree and offer professional learning that individuals can access throughout their working life to enable continuous learning.

Attitudes towards technology are influenced by learners' ability to use it for study and learning but also through their experience of acquiring knowledge in an environment that fosters discipline and commitment. The criteria for evaluating the learning process have now been oriented towards a more constructive approach. In other words, they are not limited only to an evaluation of performance but extend to an evaluation of the support tools used for acquiring and applying knowledge (Herrington & Herrington, 1998; Herrington, 2006).

Within a workplace, working relationships develop between the organization and employees. In addition, through the market environment, customer relationships develop between organizations and customers. If we try to draw parallels between the working and the customer relationships in the higher education environment, "customers" in the strict sense of the word perhaps do exist, but there are also relationships that are developed between universities and students. These relationships, such as the working and customer relationships, are based on the balance between the preferences and satisfied expectations of both stakeholders. This means that both parties (universities and students) have expectations and needs that they want to have met. This silent agreement is a kind of psychological contract as it is in all relationships related to a workplace (Mullins, 2010; Zackal, 2021). Certainly, the introduction of technology, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, opened new avenues in higher education and launched new ways of learning and developing. What has not been changed, however, is that students remain a source of added value for the university institutions. This means that university institutions cannot be limited to attracting and selecting students and having them simply complete a learning process. The psychological contract between students and universities needs to be fully active whereby it is made clear what both stakeholders expect and receive (Mullins, 2010). And for this to happen it is necessary to constantly monitor and evaluate the learning process in a responsible spirit and away from stereotypes and prejudices. Moreover, technological developments can provide valuable information which, with proper management, can help improve experiences and personal development. In this way, a harmonious coexistence will be cultivated between new practices in the learning processes and the expectations of both the students and the university institution itself.

All of the above outline the changes taking place in the learning process in higher education. While it is well known that not all changes are successful, the secret to a successful change lies in the readiness of those involved and in their commitment to the goal (Reeves, 2009; Zackal, 2021).

Learning and instruction needs to consider a growing understanding of the learning process and teaching strategies (neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and education). It is important to recognize the distinction between declarative (symbolic) knowledge - the dominant knowledge delivered in universities transmitted in lectures and texts - and non-declarative knowledge that is non-verbal (emotional knowledge, motoric knowledge, visual knowledge), which has been largely overlooked until recently. It stems largely from learning through experience in tacit knowledge, learned through experimentation (e.g., chemistry, engineering, physics). This knowledge is rarely given adequate coverage in educational institutions and should be recognized and employed in entrance exams, in the selection of candidates and in academic programs. HEIs, due to their special importance in social development, are accountable to society and for this reason the learning process and pedagogical/academic practices should aim to maximize the contribution of HEIs to the development of creative thinking, the spirit of solidarity and student collaboration. Evaluation methods should change accordingly: from assessing mastery of the taught knowledge to assessments that evaluate whether students are prepared for future learning (Chen, 2020). Furthermore, students need to be familiar with the new way that HEIs are being assessed in terms of their study programs, tools and environment, so that those students can make better choices in higher education and thus maximize their development through their studies.

The transformation of higher education into an integrated learning organization, with a more constructive and realistic orientation of pedagogical/academic practices, requires a change in philosophy

and culture for the use of technological developments in education. What needs to be understood is that technology is simply a tool that helps higher education evolve and advances the learning process (Chen, 2020; DuFour, 2014; Prestridge, 2012; Prestridge & Main, 2018; Tseng & Kuo, 2014). It is not the learning process itself but a specific mechanism that facilitates timely support of that process. The development of a mechanism that can manage the modern learning process is complex, as it needs to: a) protect learners from any deviation from the use of technological innovations in order not to violate the educational goals and educational values, and b) ensure that it supports personalized learning so as to meet the needs of learners in terms of knowledge and the way they interact with their environment.

Concluding Remarks

The correlation of innovative technology and pedagogical/academic practices contributes to the creation of an expert system that allows the transfer of knowledge through an intelligent learning system that manages barriers to learning in an effective way (Collins, 2018). In this context, such a learning environment would be socially active and encourage collectivity in the participation and commitment of stakeholders for the continuous flow of knowledge and information. Such a system would help institutions of higher education achieve their specific educational goals by facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and the learning process. There needs to be no devaluation of technology but only convergent cooperation. Like all systems, HEIs need to adapt to the new shaping of reality and the ever-changing environment. This requires educational programs to ensure that they promote productive members of society so as to optimize their contribution to long-term social and economic development. The effort for growth and progress is a struggle waged through education, knowledge, and the further improvement of living standards. Technology must be developed in line with cognitive objectives so that knowledge can be managed using technology as a tool to facilitate user-friendly access and data gathering for an ongoing evaluation of the process.

Based on the above, if the foundation of learning is uneven, there will be no balance in the system and therefore no prosperity. Inclusion in the learning process is the precondition for achieving a balance in human well-being. Therefore, higher educational institutions today are called upon to welcome technology and to consider technology as a source and tool of learning rather than a problem. Higher education should be responsive to the challenge of this reality by pursuing the implementation of practices that support and applaud diversity among learners.

As was mentioned above, the idea of technological development as a tool for the promotion of co-participation in education and the provision of equal opportunities for all learners, requires a change in the philosophy and culture of HEIs and hence demands a new starting point in leadership. Indeed, university governance is at the heart of the learning process since the majority of the applied leadership processes and practices lead mainly to temporary changes focused on specific areas. University governance develops or adopts and maintains good learning practices, which are then integrated into the curriculum and school culture for lasting benefits. According to Fullan (2005), modern society is so complex that no leader alone can control everything. It is easy to conclude, then, that university governance needs to be shared but the sharing of responsibility requires the involvement of all members: those in the lower as well as the upper organizational levels (Harris, 2010; Humphrey, 2002; Rice, 2006; Sinderal, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey & Liebert, 2006).

Education (and hence higher education) is a human right. The concept of human rights is something philosophical and it is not specific whereas education is a public and basic good. Despite the Knowledge Revolution, the long-awaited change is not a simple case of choosing one of two alternatives. Despite the current experience of online academic studies in the wake of the pandemic and the Open University's attempts to lead international learning through radio, television and the Internet, there is still an urgent need for on-campus learning. The research conducted by HEIs, especially in science, agriculture and engineering, and academic mentoring, cannot be carried out remotely. Furthermore, most people are unable to learn autonomously and need mediation, with most preferring to learn in groups. Universities should move to eco-system planning, granting communities access to knowledge, delivering services, and sharing platforms for the public good. This paradigm shift can be catalysed and led by IAU,

especially in encouraging universities to carefully plan their eco-systems, making knowledge available to the community and sharing global platforms for the public good.

If we are seeking continuous and systemic improvements, the universal right to participate in education should not be upheld only on paper but should also be upheld in practice. Within this framework, this can only happen through collective action, with inclusive and sustainable leadership at its core. Without this, the civilized world cannot progress.

Acknowledgement

The first author would like to thank Prof. David Chen for his inputs and insights in developing this paper into its current form.

References

Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., Salmi, J., & Froumin, I. (Eds.). (2018). *Accelerated universities, ideas and money combine to build academic excellence.* Boston: Brill I Sense.

Arar, K., Haj-Yehia, K., Ross, D. B., & Kondakci, Y. (2019) Higher education challenges for migrants and refugee students in a global world. In K. Arar, K. Haj-Yehia, D. B. Ross, & Y. Kondakci (Eds.), *Higher education challenges for migrants and refugee students in a global world* (pp. 1-23). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Arar, K., Kondakci, Y., & Streitwieser, B. (2020). Higher education for forcibly displaced, migrants, refugees and Asylum Seekers. *Higher Education Policy, 33*, 195-202.

Brooks, R., & Waters, J. (2011). *Student mobility, migration and the internalization of higher education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chen, D. (2020). The future of learning institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 20*(16), 146-154.

Christensen, R. & Knezek, G. (2018). Measuring teacher attitudes, competencies and pedagogical practices in support of student learning and classroom technology integration. In J. Voogt, G. Knezek, R. Christensen, & K.-W. Lai (Eds.), *Second Handbook of Information Technology in Primary and Secondary Education* (pp. 357-374). Cham: Springer.

Christensen, G., Steinmetz, A., Alcorn, B., Bennett, A., Woods, D., & Emanuel, E. J. (2013). *The MOOC phenomenon: Who takes massive open online courses and why?* Access: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2350964

Collins, A., & Halverson, R. (2010). The second educational revolution: Rethinking education in the age of technology. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 26*(1), 18-27.

Collins, H. M. (2018). Expert systems, artificial intelligence and the behavioural coordinates of skill. In B. P. Bloomfield (Ed.), *The question of artificial intelligence* (pp. 258-281). London: Routledge.

De Witte, K., & López-Torres, L. (2017). Efficiency in education: A review of literature and a way forward. *Journal of the Operational Research Society, 68,* 339-363.

Dillenbourg, P. (2013). Design for classroom orchestration. *Computers & Education, 69*, 485-492.

Drucker, P. F. (1993). *Post-captalist society.* NY: Harper Collins.

DuFour, R. (2014). Harnessing the power of PLCs. *Educational Leadership, 71*(8), 30-35.

Educause Horizon Report (2021). *Teaching and Learning Edition*. Boulder, CO: EDUCAUSE 2021

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

Goksel, N., & Bozkurt, A. (2019). Artificial intelligence in education: Current insights and future perspectives. In S. Sisman-Ugur & G. Kurubacak (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Learning in the Age of Transhumanism* (pp. 224-236). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Gori, M. (2017). *Machine learning: A constraint-based approach*. Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann.

Harris, A. (2010). Distributed leadership: Evidence and implications. In T. Bush, L. Bell, & D. Middlewood (Eds.), *The principles of educational leadership & management* (pp. 55-69, 2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Herrington, J. (2006). *Authentic E-Learning in higher education: Design principles for authentic learning environments and tasks*. In the proceedings of *World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education (ELEARN) 2006* (pp. 13-17), Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

Herrington, A. J., & Herrington, J. (2006). What is an authentic learning environment? In T. Herrington & J. Herrington (Eds.), *Authentic learning environments in higher education* (pp. 1-13). Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing.

Herrington, J., & Herrington, A. (1998). Authentic assessment and multimedia: How university students respond to a model of authentic assessment. *Higher Education Research & Development, 17*(3), 305-322.

Herrington, A., & Herrington, J. (2007). *What is an authentic learning environment?* Access: https://ro.uow.edu.au/edupapers/897

Hope, W. C. (1997). Resolving teachers' concerns about microcomputer technology. *Computers in the Schools, 13*(3-4), 147-160.

Huisman, J. (2009). *International perspectives on the governance of higher education, alternative frameworks for coordination*. London: Routledge.

Humphrey, R. H. (2002). The many faces of emotional leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 13*(5), 493-504.

IOM [International Organization for Migration]. (2020). *World Migration Report 2020.* Geneva: IOM.

Levin, L., & Greenwood, D. J. (2016). *Creating a new public university and reviving democracy: Action research in higher education*. Oxford: Berghahn.

McGettigan, A. (2013). *The university gamble: Money, markets and the future of higher education.* London: Pluto.

Middlehurst, R. (2103). Changing internal governance: Are leadership roles and management structures in United Kingdom universities fit for the future? *Higher Education Quarterly, 67*(3), 275-294.

Mullins, L. J. (2010). *Management and Organisational Behavior* (9th ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Nespor, J. (2018). Markets and violence: Qualitative research and the neoliberal future. *Qualitative Inquiry, 24*(8), 519-531.

OECD. (2017). *International Migration Outlook 2017*. Paris: OECD.

OECD. (2018a). *The future of education and skills: Education 2030*. Paris: OECD.

OECD. (2018b). *Pisa: Program for International Student Assessment*. Paris: OECD.

Prestridge, S. (2012). The beliefs behind the teacher that influences their ICT practices. *Computers & Education, 58*(1), 449-458.

Prestridge, S., & Main, K. (2018). Teachers as drivers of their professional learning through design teams, communities and networks. In In J. Voogt, G. Knezek, R. Christensen, & K.-W. Lai (Eds.), *Second Handbook of Information Technology in Primary and Secondary Education* (pp. 433-447). Cham: Springer.

Prestridge, S., Tondeur, J., & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. T. (2019). Insights from ICT-expert teachers about the design of educational practice: The learning opportunities of social media. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education, 28*(2), 157-172.

Rice, N. (2006). Opportunities lost, possibilities found: Shared leadership and inclusion in an urban high school. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, *17*, 88-100.

Roach, K., Tilley, E., & Mitchell, J. (2018). How authentic does authentic learning have to be? *Higher Education Pedagogies, 3*(1), 495-509.

Roll, I., & Wylie, E. (2016). Evolution and revolution in artificial intelligence in education. *International Journal Artificial Intelligence in Education, 26*, 482-599.

Schleicher, A. (2019). *PISA 2018: Insights and interpretations*. Access: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf

Shore, C., & Wright, S. (2017). Privatizing the public university: Key trends, countertrends and alternatives, In S. Wright & C. Shore (Eds.), *Death of the public university: Uncertain futures for higher education in the knowledge economy* (pp. 1-27). New York, NY: Berghahn.

Shore, C., & Wright, S. (2016). Neoliberalisation and the "death of the public university". In T. Heatherington & F. M. Zerilli (Eds.), *Anthropologists in/of the Neoliberal academy* (pp.46-50, *ANUAC, 5*(1)) GIUGNO.

Sheehan, M., & Nillas, L. (2010). Technology integration in secondary mathematics classrooms: Effect on students' understanding. *Journal of Technology Integration in the Classroom, 2*(3), 67-83.

Sindelar, P., Shearer, D., Yendol-Hoppey, D., & Liebert, T. (2006). The sustainability of inclusive school reform. *Exceptional Children, 72*(3), 317-331.

Sugar, W., Crawley, F., & Fine, B. (2004). Examining teachers' decisions to adopt new technology. *Educational Technology and Society, 7*(4), 201-213.

Tseng, F. C., & Kuo, F. Y. (2014). A study of social participation and knowledge sharing in the teachers' online professional community of practice. *Computers & Education, 72*, 37-47.

Zackal, J. (2021). *Remote work is more of a possibility beyond the pandemic*. Access: https://www.higheredjobs.com/articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=2600&utm_source=02_24_2021&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=InsiderUpdate

Higher Education Governance & Policy
ISSN: 2717-8676
Volume: 2
Issue: 1

Rankings and Regional Development: The Cause or the Symptom of Universities' Insufficient Regional Contributions?

Maria Salomaa[1,2*], Ridvan Cinar[3,4], & David Charles[5]
[1]RDI Services, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Tampere, Finland
[2]Lincoln International Business School, University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK
[3]Mohn Centre for Innovation and Regional Development, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway
[4]Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal
[5]Northumbria Centre for Innovation, Regional Transformation and Entrepreneurship / Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Abstract

Universities are increasingly expected to contribute to regional development and the wellbeing of communities in the places in which they are located through a wide range of third mission activities. However, this is an arduous task as these regional activities are usually pitched against other missions, namely teaching and research, and global orientation strategy. While the literature has recently implied that rankings might be the cause of universities' insufficient regional contributions, the manner in which they inhibit regional engagement is yet to be uncovered. This paper therefore explores how rankings permeate universities and guide the behaviours of academics and top managers and thereby influence their regional engagement activities. Using a multiple case study design entailing semi-structured interviews carried out in Dutch, English and Finnish universities, we demonstrate that rankings inhibit universities' regional contributions in two ways: i) by exacerbating universities' difficulty of justifying regional engagement activities to the funders through an emphasis on quantitative third mission indicators, and ii) by encouraging universities to shift their focus from regional relevance to global excellence through stronger institutional profiling. We argue that rankings are not the cause of universities' insufficient regional contributions per se, but rather a symptom of it; the cause is increasingly global competition between higher education institutions.

Keywords: Rankings, universities, regional development, third mission

Introduction

University rankings have recently become highly influential in guiding behaviour of higher education institutions, academic staff and prospective students. Indeed, some governments have taken them as a benchmark, according to which extra funding has been mobilized for universities (Hazelkorn, 2015) and more countries now formulate policies and strategies aimed at placing as many higher education institutions as possible in the upper ranks of such global league tables (Rose & McKinley, 2018; Matveeva & Ferligoj, 2020; Yudkevich et al., 2015). Likewise, studies focusing on rankings and their impact on universities have increased considerably over the past two decades. The literature in this realm has so far explored a) how rankings create and reinforce competition among universities (e.g. Brankovic et al., 2018; Krucken, 2021), b) the way internationalization bolsters league tables and is driven by them (e.g. Delgado-Marguez et al., 2011; Horta, 2009), c) the nature of their methodology with particular focus on sets of indicators (e.g. Spence, 2019; Uslu, 2020), d) comparison between different league tables ranking universities (Cakir et al., 2015; Moed, 2017), and e) a geopolitical perspective towards

* **Corresponding Author:** Maria Salomaa, maria.e.salomaa@gmail.com
[1,2]***ORCID:*** 0000-0002-4415-0161; [3,4]***ORCID:*** 0000-0002-5640-224X; [5]***ORCID:*** 0000-0002-0885-4209

(Research Article) **Cite as:** Salomaa, M., Cinar, R., & Charles, D. (2021). Rankings and regional development: The cause or the symptom of universities' insufficient regional contributions? *Higher Education Governance & Policy*, *2*(1), 31-44.

Received: May 8, 2021; ***Revised:*** June 25, 2021; ***Accepted:*** June 28, 2021; ***Published:*** June 30, 2021

university rankings (Jons & Hoyler, 2013; Koch, 2014). While these studies have enriched understanding of the way such league tables exert influence on individual academics, higher education institutions and policymakers, these insights have so far largely been confined to the first and second mission of universities, namely teaching and research. How rankings impact universities' contributions to regional development and the broader third mission activities have surprisingly attracted little attention given the growing external pressure for greater regional engagement.

Since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008, the role of universities in regional development has been accentuated, particularly in Europe and within innovation, regional development, and higher education policy spheres. Universities, especially those located in more peripheral regions, have been asked to increase the depth of their regional contributions to assist tackling complex societal challenges. Moreover, policymakers and external regional stakeholders now expect higher education institutions to move beyond purely commercially oriented engagement activities to also contribute into social, environmental, and cultural development (European Commission, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c) in order to have a broader impact within their cities and regions. Nevertheless, this is quite complicated and arduous for universities to justify to funders as on most occasions, the impact of non-economic contributions is hard to measure and cannot be necessarily quantified due to its tacit nature. One of the major rankers, Times Higher Education, has recently released an Impact Ranking, which is based on universities' engagement with United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. However, such rankings may not fully capture the wide variety of impactful third mission activities universities engage in, particularly those involving the social sciences and humanities.

Recently emerging studies have indicated-either explicitly or implicitly- that rankings may have a negative impact on universities' regional contributions. Cinar (2020) demonstrated that they can pose systemic challenges to the institutionalization of bioeconomy activities. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2020) revealed that the higher a university is ranked, the less explicit it becomes about its commitment to regional engagement and third mission. What is less known, however, is the nature of such a negative impact on academics and universities. In this paper, we are therefore interested in exploring the manner in which rankings inhibit universities' engagement in a comprehensive set of third mission activities that are geared towards broader regional benefits.

First, we provide a brief overview of recent developments that have led to increasing expectations from universities to play a more proactive role in regional development. We then elaborate on the nature and technicalities of university rankings, in which we explore their relevance for regional contributions. Following this, we present case studies of three universities located in Finland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom to highlight the way rankings manifest a negative impact on regional engagement activity. Our findings demonstrate that rankings inhibit universities' regional contributions in two ways: a) by exacerbating universities' difficulty in justifying regional engagement activities to the funders through an emphasis on quantitative third mission indicators and b) by encouraging universities to shift their focus from regional relevance to global excellence through stronger institutional profiling. We conclude by arguing that rankings are not the cause of universities choosing to under-emphasise regional contributions per se, but rather a symptom of it; the cause is increasingly global competition between higher education institutions.

Changing Role of Universities in Regional Development and the Nature of Rankings

The notion that universities can contribute to regional innovation and local economic development has become widespread since the 1980s. The following three decades witnessed universities across the world being expected to collaborate with local firms, engage in technology transfer and invest in start-ups, activities that are generally associated with the entrepreneurial university (Audretsch, 2014; Clark, 2004). However, since the early 2010s, expectations of universities have evolved. Partly triggered by the financial economic crisis of 2008 and increasing territorial disparities, policymakers (regional and innovation) have been expecting universities to assume more roles in regional development. These new roles range from greater involvement in the formulation of regional innovation strategies to contribution to social innovation and tackling societal challenges: university activities that are often characterized by the concept of the engaged university (Uyarra, 2010; Weerts, 2014).

On the other hand, national higher education policies are often focused on international research excellence (e.g., Goddard & Vallance, 2013). These different expectations can widen the mismatch between academic (research) profiles and regional assets (Goddard & Vallance, 2013), also within regionally-oriented higher education institutions (e.g. Salomaa & Charles, 2021). Although there is some evidence on the positive impact of university-industry engagement on research quality (e.g., Degl'Innocenti et al., 2019), finding a balance between "*borderless academic excellence as defined by international peer review and reflected in institutional league tables and generating and applying knowledge to meet specific regional specialisation opportunities"* (Goddard & Vallance, 2013, p. 96) requires extensive strategic capacity to find synergies between different missions.

Despite the growing body of literature discussing the 'third mission', university engagement is typically focused either on knowledge transfer outcomes (science-based activities) or more generic contributions to regional development. Bringing these two different types of engagement activities together 'into a single coherent third mission' is complicated (Sánchez-Barrioluengo & Benneworth, 2019), especially in the absence of the third mission from global ranking schemes. This can lead to de-prioritization of non-entrepreneurial, social and cultural activities ('soft outputs') related to the third mission (Lee et al., 2020), which can limit the university's overall contribution to regional development.

Ranking tables for universities have been developed over a period of many years and there are multiple versions now available, some at national level, but the most significant being international, such as the Times Higher Education (THE), QS World University Rankings and Shanghai Jiao Tong (ARWU). U-multirank was developed as an alternative approach which allows the user to select the indicators and weighting (Van Vught & Ziegele, 2011). The purpose of the rankings is supposedly to provide a guide to the quality of universities for prospective partners and students, and hence the design of the ranking methodologies provides an implicit set of assumptions about what quality might mean (Taylor & Braddock, 2007), although there is no consistent view of what quality might be or how to measure it (Hazelkorn, 2015). Different rankings use different combinations and weightings though, producing different rank orders (Soh, 2017).

Generally, the core elements of most ranking systems are focused on research quality, to some extent teaching, and to a lesser extent internationalisation. Many of the weighted variables used are metrics taken from published data, such as on publications or staff/student ratios, but some ranking systems also place emphasis on the views of other academics and stakeholders through surveys. The underlying assumption though is that research excellence is the best indicator of quality (Taylor & Braddock, 2007) hence an emphasis on citations, awards, and suchlike. Teaching excellence is less amenable for international comparison, although may be an important factor at national level through student surveys (as in the UK) and hence resources (staff/student ratio) tend to be used as a proxy for this. THE also use doctorates as part of the teaching indicator although this is also a sign of research activity. Internationalisation is often seen as an important element in that the attractiveness for international staff and students is claimed to be a sign of quality, although this is moderated by the effect of national systems which are more or less open to international staff and students. The QS World University Rankings places particular emphasis on reputation with both a survey of academics and of employers' accounting for half of the weighted score. THE also uses reputation, but to a smaller degree. This indicator is problematic given the subjective nature of the measures, the lag effects of reputation, and the bounded rationality of the survey respondents.

Regional engagement tends not to be an important element in ranking systems, with just one variable accounting for 2.5% of the THE ranking. Some attempt has been made to include a few variables in the U-multirank system and the Times Higher has introduced a separate ranking on impact which is based on variables related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Overall though the main rankings are primarily based on research, staff ratios and reputation. We therefore lay out our first proposition:
Proposition 1. There is no clear consensus among ranking tables that regional engagement is a sign of quality of institution, or how that could be measured, and this message is generally accepted by universities .

The significance of what is included in the rankings depends on the responses made by universities to their scores and relative positions. If universities assume that the rankings influence their attractiveness to international students or research partners, then they will invest effort in maximising those ranking scores. More significantly many governments have sought to use rankings as an indicator of the international competitiveness of their university sector with investment and targets to encourage universities to move up the league tables (Hazelkorn, 2015). This has become clear in terms of the ways in which many universities explicitly refer to rankings in their strategic plans. They may for example refer to moving into a higher category on the main listing or being in the top x universities for their particular country. Such objectives may be asserted almost ignoring the behaviour of other universities – so there may be 20 or more universities seeking to be in the top ten, when clearly the existing top ten have advantages of incumbency. The consequence is that universities decide their key performance indicators depending on what might help lift them up league tables, in some ways seeking to 'game' the various indicators contributing to overall rankings (Hazelkorn, 2015). High or rising ranking positions reinforces the advantages of high performing universities, attracting more resources to maintain those positions (Marginson, 2014). It is therefore possible to propose the following:
Proposition 2. Universities use rankings as important signifiers and seek to manage their performance through targeting improvement on key indicators.

In those limited cases where regional engagement data is used in rankings, or is collected and may be amenable to be used in future or modified rankings, what kinds of data are collected? Taking U-multirank as an example there are both knowledge transfer and regional engagement indicators. Knowledge transfer is measured through co-publications with industrial partners and patents awarded, whilst regional engagement is measured through graduates working in the region and regional joint publications. Whilst these are indicators of engagement, they are highly selective and represent a narrow slice of the broad range of forms of interaction. The THE uses income from industry as its only measure of knowledge transfer.

In 2021, the UK published its first iteration of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), which collects indicators against 8 themes and gives a modified ranking for each theme (in the top 20% of universities of that type for example). Here again many of the themes are assessed using simple quantitative indicators such as the level of income from a particular source as proportion of total university income. There is also a particular problem with assessing engagement as the measure used will be applied to the university and might be an indication of the value or benefit received by the university – number of projects, income, number of spin off firms. What is much more difficult is to represent the benefit to the region from such activities. Not only are there insuperable problems in assessing the level of aggregate benefits that might be attributable to university activities (although direct economic multipliers are often calculated based on employment and purchasing only), but values could be manipulated depending on the choice of 'region' and account would need to be taken of the level of opportunity realised by different locations. So, whilst some universities are based in regions with a positive absorptive capacity, which can utilise university knowledge and easily convert it into economic activity, others are based in much less propitious locations where it is harder to have an impact, yet that smaller impact might be more significant. Departing from such a background, we can arrive at our last proposition:
Proposition 3. Any inclusion of regional engagement in rankings is likely to focus on business links and on easily measurable university benefits rather than the benefits to the region.

These three propositions, taken together, suggest that university objectives to support engagement may come into conflict with the desire to manage league table positions, and that the focus on narrow business or income targets potentially skews the emphasis of engagement strategies towards the measurable rather than a wider concern for social benefit.

Methods and Materials

In this study, we are concerned with the way rankings may inhibit universities' regional engagement. We followed an exploratory multiple case study design to delve deeper into this particular phenomenon. Multiple case studies allow employing the 'replication strategy' in order to strengthen the analytical generalization (Yin, 2003) and the robustness of the key findings by replicating them across comparable case settings (Eisenhardt, 1989). We needed to select universities that are both regionally oriented-established with a mission to serve to the regional social and economic needs- and strive to be globally recognized at the same time, thereby paying more attention to the rankings. In order to cover a broad geographical and institutional diversity, we selected two universities and a university consortium involving different higher educations that formulate and implement a common strategy: University of Twente in the Netherlands, University of Lincoln in UK, and University Consortium of Pori in Finland. These higher education institutions claim to be both regionally relevant and globally oriented, which renders them appropriate cases to delve into. We then determined key people that can provide us with the insights into how rankings may inhibit further regional contribution: academic staff specializing on higher education research, executive board members, current and former rectors, employees working along the lines of strategy development, regional authorities, and administrative staff. Altogether, 87 semi-structured research interviews were conducted which involved questions on how these particular universities interpret third mission, how they justify their regional relevance and ranking-related strategies, and how rankings affect individual academics as well as the whole organization and overall, how rankings shape their regional engagement behaviour. The research interviews were conducted between 2017 and 2019 as part of two individual PhD studies within framework of the RUNIN project.[1] The distribution of interviews across cases can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of interviews across cases

Institution	Researchers	Top management	Admin staff	Others	Total
University of Twente	10	3	3	2	**18**
University of Lincoln	15	5	8	5	**33**
University Consortium of Pori				3	**3 (36 overall for UC-Pori)**
Tampere University of Technology	5	6	2	0	**13**
University of Tampere	3	4	0	0	**7**
Aalto University	2	1	0	0	**3**
University of Turku	4	2	4	0	**10**
Total	39	21	17	10	**87**

All of the interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo and were re-examined for evidence relating to rankings and their impact on the universities and their engagement in regional issues through a content analysis approach. Findings from interviews were triangulated against secondary data sources such as the strategic plans of universities and website content. We now turn our attention to the characteristics of the selected universities and the regions in which they are located.

Case Study Overview

University of Twente

Twente region is located in the eastern Netherlands, bordering Germany. Twente has a population of approximately 626.500 with its major city being Enschede. Until the 1960s, the region was strong in the textile industry, but subsequently experienced a gradual decline. The region is generally defined as peripheral compared to the rest of the Netherlands (Benneworth & Pinheiro, 2017). The University of Twente (UT) was established in 1961, with a specific expectation of contributing to the revival of regional economic activity. In order to meet these expectations, UT has engaged with the region closely and invested in entrepreneurship, which generated more than 1000 start-ups/spin offs since 1980 (Cinar, 2019). Furthermore, it has played a key role in the emergence of the ICT sector and transforming the region into a high-tech hub both nationally and internationally. It is thus characterized as an

[1] 'RUNIN – The Role of Universities in Innovation and Regional Development' H2020-MSCA-ITN-2017.

entrepreneurial, technical, and research-intensive university. However, more recently, it is expected to diversify the scope of third mission activities by moving beyond (not abandoning though) economic oriented regional engagement activities. It has 11740 students, 1898 academic staff (including PhD students as employees) as of 2019 (UT, 2019). As of 2021, it ranks between 200-250 (Times Higher Education), and 197th (Quacquarelli Symonds). The expectation to perform better in such league tables has likewise increased, particularly since 2010.

University of Lincoln

Lincolnshire is a large, rural county in the East Midlands of England with ca. 751 000 habitants. The University of Lincoln (UoL) was first established in 1996. It was formerly a branch campus of the University of Humberside, which was developed after a long local lobbying process to attract a university to Lincolnshire. Subsequently, the whole university relocated to Lincoln (UoL, 2010). Currently, it has over 14 000 students and 1600 staff members on three campuses. Aside from the main campus in the centre of Lincoln there are two small campuses serving the local agriculture sector and food industry: Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LIAT) in Riseholme near Lincoln and National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) in Holbeach in southern Lincolnshire.

UoL has always been a 'regionally-oriented' higher education institution and it has a strategic aim to serve the local job market. This has been delivered through for example a purpose-built Engineering School, which was a joint-initiative with Siemens Ltd to secure access to a highly-skilled workforce. UoL has also developed a range of interface structures to support local SMEs and to retain graduates within the area[2] (e.g., Sparkhouse incubator). One of its strategies is to attract large-scale businesses to the region by providing state-of-the-art facilities (e.g., Lincolnshire Innovation Park, NCFM). Most of these collaborative initiatives are based on strategic partnerships with regional actors (e.g., Lincolnshire County Council, Lincoln City Council) and businesses (e.g., Siemens Ltd).

University Consortium of Pori

The Satakunta region is one of the oldest historical provinces in Finland located on the southwest coast, combining 17 municipalities with a population of 220 398 habitants (OFS, 2017). The major regional centres are the cities of Pori and Rauma. The main industrial sectors of the Satakunta region are energy production, engineering, offshore process industry, ports and logistics and food industry.[3]

The University Consortium of Pori (UC-Pori) is one of the six university consortia located in peripheral areas of Finland offering local higher education activities. In the Satakunta region, both UC-Pori and Satakunta University of Applied Sciences are among the key institutions to increase the knowledge capital as well as the number of start-ups (Satakunta Regional Programme 2014-2017). The university consortia are network organisations of remote university unit's belonging to Finnish universities located in more central areas. Since early 2000, the consortia's purpose has been to enhance the societal role of higher education by responding to local needs (FINHEEC, 2013.) They became part of the Finnish University Act in 2009 (558/2009), and additional regulations on their state funding allocation were confirmed in 2012. The University Consortium of Pori's roots are in the former Tampere University of Technology, which has offered engineering education in Satakunta since the 1980s. It was also the coordinator of the UC-Pori until its recent merger with the University of Tampere in 2019.[4] At the time of the interviews, the other partner universities with remote units at the Pori campus were the former University of Tampere (UTA), University of Turku (UTU) and Aalto University (Aalto)[5]. Currently UC-Pori has 2500 degree students and 170 staff members. It provides education and/or research

[2] According to 2014/2015 graduate destination survey, 42.7% of graduates stayed in East Midlands and 13.4% in the East of England. The East Midlands breakdown shows that Lincoln is the most popular destination (40.5%), followed by North Kesteven (10.0%) and Nottingham (8.0%).

[3] Regional Council of Satakunta website, http://www.satakuntaliitto.fi/english, accessed 12th November 2018.

[4] Tampere University of Technology and University of Tampere merged on the 1st of January 2019 forming a new Tampere University (TUNI). TUNI is also the biggest shareholder of Tampere University of Applied Sciences. However, these two HEIs, TUT and UTA, were investigated separately in this study because the merger process was not completed at the time of the research interviews.

[5] Since 2020, Aalto University has no longer presence at the Pori campus.

activities in technology and engineering (former TUT), social sciences (former UTA) and economics and maritime studies (UTU).[6]

The UC-Pori personnel are part of faculties located in the main campuses, but they work permanently at the Pori campus. The coordinating university of the consortium recruits a director, who is responsible for promoting collaboration between the UC-Pori units, parent universities and regional stakeholders. For this purpose, the coordinating university, currently the new Tampere University, receives an earmarked funding (ca. 600 000 EUR per year) from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

Empirical Evidence

TWENTE

The University of Twente (UT) has recently formulated its strategy titled *Shaping2030: Mission, vision and strategy*. This document mentions the word "region/regional" 10 times and contains a section devoted to how the university should reach out beyond the campus to the communities. While this exemplifies the regional relevance of UT and commitment to regional development, it also shows how UT is simultaneously situating itself between regional and global, including when it comes to societal contributions as the following statements sum up: "*Be it locally or globally, physically or virtually, we strive to connect with people and their needs and wishes*" (UT, 2020, p. 17) and "*We encourage researchers, teachers, support staff and students actively participate in off-campus connections with regional, national or international partners, either digitally or physically*" (UT, 2020, p. 22). Its research strategy puts a clear emphasis on strong visibility on rankings: "*To shape the way in which the UT with its research activities adds value, and creates a distinct UT profile within various networks, lobby interactions, rankings and media outings etc. we will…*" (UT, 2020, p. 29). The statement continues with a set of suggestions on how to achieve this. Furthermore, the university has a full section in its website, devoted to rankings and achievements in five different league tables[7].

Most of the academic staff were very much aware of both external pressures: delivering regional impact and better performance at global rankings. However, they perceive that these two are generally pitched against each other due to their current nature:
"*On the one hand, we are expected to engage more with the region. On the other hand, we are also expected to go up in the rankings. Currently, our position is not one of the best among Dutch universities. There are not really many third mission activities that you would engage and that these activities would still contribute to your position in the rankings. Perhaps industry collaboration to some extent, but other than this, not really." (Academic staff, 6)*

The underlying reason as pointed by the interviewed academic staff seems to be the way impact is accentuated within academic and policy discourse. More specifically, many interviewees pointed out to the way regional impact is measured and even further conceptualized by external stakeholders as the following statement indicate:
"*When universities argue their impact on society, you see statements like 'for every euro invested, the university returned it back with two or three euro contribution'. Or that we collaborated with X number of firms, generated X number of start-ups…These start-ups provide jobs to X number of people…. This is because national and regional stakeholders want the impact to be visible and quantifiable. I think this determines the type of regional engagement activities the university chooses*" (*Top Management, 8*).

Furthermore, there was a discontent about the way global league tables impacted universities' regional engagement and the broader third mission:
"*In academia, we had a debate that the third mission is narrowly understood and there are many other activities universities can engage. Instead of solving it, I think rankings exacerbated this problem by putting so much emphasis on things that are quantitatively measured." (Academic staff, 11)*.

[6] UC-Pori website, http://www.ucpori.fi, accessed 12th November 2018.
[7] https://www.utwente.nl/en/organisation/facts-and-figures/rankings/#most-entrepreneurial-university

The negative impact of rankings on regional contribution is felt quite strongly in universities that are not only regionally focused but also research-intensive and global-oriented simultaneously such as UT. This is manifested by gradual shift of organizational focus from regional relevance to global excellence. More specifically, the league tables put emphasis on highly cited research outputs, which is usually the result of delving into universal research topics that have global relevance and are conducted via international collaboration. This occasionally results in academic staff working on topics that are of international value instead of specifically regionally relevant research and prioritising such research activities over regional engagement. Nevertheless, interviewees, particularly those who have been in the university for a long time, have expressed that this particular shift existed before rankings, albeit much less severely: *"We had this dilemma [world-class vs regionally oriented] even before the league tables emerged. They intensified it and speeded it up the process [towards the world-class] I think what needs to be addressed first is the increasing competition between universities". (Administrative staff, 3).*

LINCOLN

The University of Lincoln has identified its major priorities through its Strategic Plan 2016-21 (UoL, 2016) which identifies five main principles. These refer to regional engagement only obliquely as part of promoting enterprise and innovation, employer engagement, and the contribution of graduates to society. Whilst there is no explicit mention of league tables, there are a number of measures of success which identify indicators that do contribute to league tables: student satisfaction, increasing income, graduate employment, a 'step-change improvement in any research assessment framework', increasing high quality national and international research collaborations, improved citations, consultancy income and spin outs, and improving staff-student ratios. Meanwhile the university management watch closely the UK rankings and are quick to celebrate any improvement.

Most of the interviewed academics from the University of Lincoln were familiar with the expectations of the national research excellence framework (REF) and the UK HE landscapes, and how they may hinder successful implementation of regional engagement activities. Many of the researchers thought that regional engagement is valued within the university only *"as long as it fits within the university's research profile. --So, we, for example, have to constantly show how our research is going to fit into the REF in the UK".* (UoL, Researcher 2). This may decrease academic personnel's motivation to get involved with regional engagement activities, because of *"pressures from teaching and paper writing and REF"* (UoL, Researcher 12), unless the researchers have individual interest towards such activities beyond indicators of 'academic excellence'. Even in the latter case, some academics did not feel that the university management supports such efforts, even though the UoL has a strategic aim to build research on regional needs:

"I am trying to do all these what I think is a very important work that actually will make, will generate social and economic impact. I feel that -- instead of supporting me they (line managers) try to prevent me of being successful (in engagement).-- if they do not give me the time (from teaching) bought out for this (engagement activity through external funds), it is an obstacle." (UoL, Researcher 14).

"--The Golden Triangle and all that and, that has been difficult for regional universities. -- if you strip the research out of regional universities then you damage the local economies so they are (higher education policies) now much more balance back to the idea that they should be thinking about regional identity and so on. I think seeking to support research excellence which is aligned with regional needs clearly makes sense." (UoL, Management 1).

One of the key drivers to engage with regional development was generating external funding from these sources, which is not, however, uncomplicated: *"I think the big challenges in terms of regional engagement are how university funding --works. So, it is inevitable that activity is driven in any organization by what is funded. -- the lion's share of university funding comes from --through teaching or research grants and therefore sort of by definition that is where most of your focus has to go. You need to deliver the things you're funded for."* (UoL, Management 1). However, regionally funded initiatives do not automatically support international networking or profile-building, which were considered to be important for rankings:

"It is important for extending our international networks and visibility, which to a university like Lincoln, I think you when look at globally rankings, we're very poor because we are new and where we do not have that international exposure. So, I think those are the strategic reasons. I would love to say it is because universities really should be delivering high quality research and impact. But I think, you know, I think it is much more about playing the game and then you hope that through playing the game in the way you set up, the research and the impact and the real value will follow." (UoL, Researcher 4).

"On the other side, the university assisting in regional development funding, is partially driven, or wholly driven, by what would happen in the research excellence framework, the REF. Will it produce a four-star paper? Well, if - first step back to what I have just said - if you do something for industry and (they) might not publicise it so, there is no four-star paper."(UoL, Researcher 8).

Also, conducting research that is limited to a certain regional context might not be attractive for academics, as rooting university's activities too much in the local needs can have a negative impact on both academic career development and research excellence:
"I have done a lot of Lincolnshire based research and I feel myself becoming Mrs Lincolnshire sometimes. And a lot of academics are looking global although, you know, they want to be the world expert in this. And so, they do not see the appeal necessarily of working on a project with local SMEs because it feels too parochial perhaps." (UoL, Researcher 12).

Furthermore, the regional funding authorities from Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership confirmed, that finding synergies between research and expected outputs is complicated in the regional development projects, e.g., funded through Structural Funds: *"And I think where the sticking points will be for that particular project, giving an example, is the research elements which do not have a direct coherent link to outcomes that are expected--."*(GLLEP, 1).

UC-PORI

UC-Pori's strategy for 2021-2025 highlights three key areas to strengthen multidisciplinary and impactful collaboration, education, and research activities in the region and beyond. It focuses on profiling of the university consortium within the Satakunta region, increasing its visibility, impact and cooperation with regional stakeholders (UC-Pori, 2020). However, the strategy is a one-page document only stating the values, mission, and vision of the consortium, but not how these are achieved or measured. In practice, as also mentioned as part of the profiling activities, UC-Pori's activities are heavily guided by the strategies of the parent universities, whereas the role of the university consortium is not mentioned in any of the parent university's strategic plans. Although the societal role and interaction with different stakeholder groups were emphasised in parent universities' strategies, the quality and impact of university operations were perceived mainly through research and education. Furthermore, their aim towards global research excellence was explicitly stated.

Both the parent universities and the local management raised the issue of performance-based indicators defining the amount of state funding allocated to universities in Finland, which do not directly encourage regional engagement activities. These indicators are widely based on traditional education and research outputs, indeed steering the focus towards international research excellence, e.g., through research funding and highly-ranked journal articles. All parent universities had a strategic focus to increase the volume of research funding, also in remote campuses, and to push them towards the EU framework programme funds. Considering challenges related to regional engagement activities, which in the case of UC-Pori are mainly funded through Structural Funds of EU Cohesion Policy, one of the main issues is that locally funded R&D does not count as 'research funding', which can *"obviously be frustrating for academics"* (UTU, Admin 5). As an exception, UTU had an aim to develop institutional impact indicators for engagement activities to make these (regional) initiatives more visible, which was, overall, considered to be very challenging:
"How can we measure (the impact of) engagement activities? It is not easy, and if it would be up to me, then I would only look at STEM but there are so many different ways to interact and engage ---journal articles are not a great indicator because they can be published years after the activity ---and businesses do not necessarily share openly if they have adapted results from joint R&D activities. Maybe it would

be easier to track down social innovations as they are often developed together with public actors".(TUT, Management 3).

On the other hand, the top management of the parent universities prioritised international prestige, and were cautious that *"—too much enthusiasms towards local activities (within university consortia) might damage the scientific quality."* (UTA, Management 3). This view was widely shared by the top management of the parent universities:
"All research, despite the source funding-- will be measured globally through publications. –There is no 'regional' research-- but the results must be applicable elsewhere too."(UC-Pori, Management 2).
"The ambition should be tied to internationally recognised research – I get that it is also important to develop regions – but I do not think it is in the core of academia." (UTA, Management 4).

In general, UC-Pori's regional development initiatives, typically SF projects, were not based on cutting-edge technology, but their aim was to transfer existing results. These kinds of 'capacity building' projects, again, may not strive for research excellence.
"The goals (of SF projects) are quite modest from the university's point of view. If we just focus on serving the SMEs, it is just transferring existing knowledge and there is no time to develop anything new." (TUT, Management 3).

Although the Finnish university consortia have a specific mission to serve their regions as written in the University Act, in practice, the interviewees confirmed these remote units in peripheral areas follow their parent universities' strategies and are thus forced to balance between their regional engagement mission and delivering high-quality research outputs for gaining international reputation. The many organisational changes within parent universities of the UC-Pori had not reinforced the regional engagement within the UC-Pori units, but rather highlighted the policy push towards (global) research excellence.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, we explored how rankings may inhibit universities' broader regional contributions and societal engagement. We found out that while rankings do not directly prevent universities from regional engagement, they have an impact on how regional engagement and the overall third mission is perceived, operationalized, and evaluated. Our findings demonstrate that there was a general implicit acceptance by university management and by academic staff that the rankings provided measures of quality, in that the universities sought to use and respond to those rankings.

The nature of the rankings used by universities differed so that whilst Twente were focused on the main global rankings and this drove research strategy, Lincoln was more focused on the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), as this drove research income, but also on UK-based newspaper league tables which emphasised teaching performance, which were felt to influence undergraduate applications. Success measures such as Modern University of the Year in the Times/Sunday Times Guide, and Gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework are prominent on the website and social media. By emphasising these rankings with a primary focus on teaching and research, there was an implicit acceptance that regional engagement was less important, even though it was acknowledged as an important objective of the university. Regardless of the prioritisation of engagement, the funding for teaching and research was much more significant to the university and was directly affected by the performance on the main rankings. Consequently, universities included the aim to improve on their rankings in their strategies and sought to use indicators relating to rankings as targets. So, researchers reported a focus on international excellence in research over regional engagement.

Where regional engagement was evaluated, there was a tendency for this to be done in terms of simple measures focused on business links and income. Even though regional engagement was acknowledged to be a good thing, the benefits were often couched in terms of quantifiable economic benefits, and the advantages to the university in research and teaching. Funding was a key measure used by the universities, even if funding was a poor indicator of the benefit to the community. Those researchers that were keen to work with the local community often faced these tensions, and in some cases felt that

a regional focus was career-limiting, that they could see faster promotion and better opportunities by playing the game and doing what the university needed to raise its reputation via the rankings.

The suggestion that rankings of universities have an impact on their contribution to regional development and the third mission appears to have some merit, and in these three cases there was a view expressed by academic researchers that there is certainly conflict between the objectives of regional engagement and success in rankings. The relationship is complex though and may often be perceived more as a conflict by researchers than by senior managers, inasmuch as researchers receive what they see as conflicting signals. It is certainly the case though that universities tend to see the prime indicators behind rankings as signs of quality and hence seek to manage their performance in rankings as a way of attracting students and funding, especially when governments use rankings or similar indicators as drivers of funding.

The three universities examined here were all institutions with considerable regional commitments and were not institutions with very high positions in the global rankings. Thus, whilst they potentially had something to gain from enhancing their position in the rankings, they had made commitments to regional partners and to their own staff on their regional engagement. The staff interviewed in all three cases felt that there was a perceived tension in that university management was asking for increased international research performance and that regional projects were seen as less desirable in that respect. In all three cases it was national expectations that mattered more than the international rankings, but these were still expressed in terms of global research excellence.

It is clear that university strategies are not unnaturally being driven by funding priorities and as national governments seek to reward excellence, then research performance is an uncontroversial measure of excellence which rankings also tend to emphasise. Teaching income is usually driven by student numbers, especially fee-paying international students in the cases of the UK and Netherlands (significantly higher fees than their national/EU counterparts), and these students are also assumed to be following the rankings, and indeed success follows success as internationalisation is one of the metrics used by the rankings. Regional engagement is rarely built into rankings and even when done so is so narrowly drawn as to focus on the benefits to the university in terms of income from industry or spin off firms established to commercialise university knowledge, thereby reinforcing a research excellence-led view.

The rankings, however, are not the main cause of this problem, although they do contribute by making selected metrics visible. The real problem is the emergence of a culture of global competition in higher education, actively promoted by governments, which puts research excellence at the heart of their support for universities, even whilst simultaneously calling for greater regional contribution. The solution is not to add a few new metrics to the rankings to include regional engagement in the assessment of quality, as the metrics used would typically capture a particular form of research-led engagement whilst failing to capture much socially oriented and pro bono activity. Instead, a far more inclusive and sophisticated understanding of regional engagement is needed with institutions being rewarded for the impacts they have on local society, both through third stream funding and through mainstream research funds.

Lastly, we want to emphasize that this is a multiple case study of regional-oriented universities situated within European context. Further studies should thus uncover whether and how rankings influence regional engagement of higher education institutions located in other parts of the world as well as universities that characterize themselves as global and world-class.

Funding

This study has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 722295.

References

Audretsch, D. B. (2014). From the entrepreneurial university to the university for the entrepreneurial society. *The Journal of Technology Transfer, 39,* 313-321.

Brankovic, J., Ringel, L., & Werron, T. (2018). How rankings produce competition: The case of global university rankings. *Zeitschrift für Soziogie, 47,* 270-288.

Cakir, M. P., Acarturk, C., Alasehir, O., & Cilingir, C. (2015). A comparative analysis of global and national university ranking systems. *Scientometrics, 103*, 813-848.

Cinar, R. (2020). Structuration of natural resource-based innovations in universities: How do they get institutionalized? *Sustainability, 12*, 1834.

Cinar, R. (2019). Delving into social entrepreneurship in universities: is it legitimate yet? *Regional Studies, Regional Science, 6*, 217-232.

Clark, B. R. (2004). Delineating the character of the entrepreneurial university. *Higher Education Policy, 17,* 355-370.

D'egl'Innocenti, M., Matousek, R., & Tzeremes, N. G. (2019). The interconnections of academic research and universities "third mission": Evidence from the UK. *Research Policy, 48*(9), 103793.

Delgado-Marquez, B. L., Hurtado-Torres, N. E., & Bondar, Y. (2011). Internationalization of higher education: Theoretical and empirical investigation of its influence on university institution rankings. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 8,* 265-284.

European Commission. (2018a). *A European ecosystem for social innovation*. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union.

European Commission. (2018b). *A sustainable bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment.* Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union.

European Commission. (2018c). *A new European agenda for culture* (COM, 2018, 267; Final). Brussels: European Commission.

Fonseca, L., Nieth, L., Salomaa, M., & Benneworth, P. (2021). Universities and place leadership – A question of agency and alignment. In M. Sotarauta & A. Beer (Eds.), *Handbook on City and Regional Leadership* (pp. 226-247). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Goddard, J., & Vallance, P. (2013). *The university and the city*. London: Routledge.

Hazelkorn, E. (2015). *Rankings and the reshaping of higher education: The battle for world-class excellence*. London: Palgrave Macmillian.

Horta, H. (2009). Global and national prominent universities: internationalization, competitiveness, and the role of the State. *Higher Education, 58,* 387-405.

Jons, H., & Hoyler, M. (2013). Global geographies of higher education: The perspective of world university rankings. *Geoforum, 46*, 45-59.

Koch, N. (2014). The shifting geopolitics of higher education: Inter/nationalizing elite universities in Kazakstan, Saudi Arabia and beyond. *Geoforum, 56*, 46-54.

Krucken, G. (2021). Multiple competitions in higher education: A conceptual approach. *Innovation: Organization & Management, 23,* 163-181.

Lee, J. J., Vance, H., Stensaker, B., & Ghosh, S. (2020). Global rankings at a local cost? The strategic pursuit of status and the third mission. *Comparative Education, 56*, 236-256.

Marginson, S. (2014). University rankings and social science. *European Journal of Education, 49*, 45-59.

Matveeva, N., & Ferligoj, A. (2020). Scientific collaboration in Russian universities before and after the excellence initiative Project 5-100. *Scientometrics, 124*, 2383-2407.

Moed, F. H. (2017). A critical comparative analysis of five world university rankings. *Scientometrics, 110*, 967-990.

Regional Council of Satakunta. (2018). *Satakuntaliitto*. Accessed [November 12, 2018]: http://www.satakuntaliitto.fi/english

Rose, H., & McKinley, J. (2018). Japan's English-medium instruction initiatives and the globalization of higher education. *Higher Education, 75*, 111-129.

Sánchez-Barrioluengo, M., & Benneworth, P. (2019). Is the entrepreneurial university also regionally engaged? Analysing the influence of university's structural configuration on third mission performance. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change, 141*, 206-218.

Salomaa, M., & Charles, D. (2021). The university third mission and the European Structural Funds in peripheral regions: Insights from Finland. *Science and Public Policy*. https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scab003

Soh, K. (2017). The seven deadly sins of world university ranking: A summary from several papers. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 39*, 104-115.

Spence, C. (2019). 'Judgment' versus 'metrics' in higher education management. *Higher Education, 77*, 761-775.

Tampere Higher Education Community. (2020). *Tampere University's Strategy 2030*. Accessed [April 30, 2021]: https://www.tuni.fi/fi/tutustu-meihin/korkeakouluyhteison-strategia

Taylor, P. and Braddock, R. (2007) International university ranking systems and the idea of university excellence, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 29, 245-260.

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, FINHEEC. (2013). *Korkeakoulut yhteiskunnan kehittäjinä. Korkeakoulujen yhteiskunnallisen ja alueellisen vaikuttavuuden arviointiryhmän loppuraportti [Evaluation of higher education institutions' social and regional impact]* (5:2013). Access: https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2014/09/KKA_0513.pdf

Universities Act 558/2009 (Finland). (2009). *UNIVERSITIES ACT 558/2009 (Amendments up to 644/2016 included)*. Accessed [August 30, 2017]: https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2009/en20090558.pdf

University of Lincoln. (2016). *Thinking Ahead 2016 -2021: University of Lincoln Strategic Plan*. Lincoln: UoL.

University Consortium of Pori. (2020). *Strategy 2021-2026.* Accessed [August 30, 2021]: https://ucpori.fi/fi-fi/meista/strategia/32/

University of Twente. (2020). *Shaping 2030. Mission, vision, strategy*. Accessed [May 2, 2021]: https://www.utwente.nl/en/organisation/about/shaping2030/

University of Twente. (2020). *Research strategy 2020-2030 University of Twente. The University of Technology that puts people first.* Accessed [May 2, 2021]: https://issuu.com/utwente/docs/ut_researchstrategy2030_def

University of Turku. (2021). *Strategy 2030.* Accessed [April 30, 2021]: https://www.utu.fi/fi/yliopisto/turun-yliopiston-strategia-2030

Uslu, B. (2020). A path for ranking success: What does the expanded indicator-set of international university rankings suggest? *Higher Education, 80*, 949-972.

Uyarra, E. (2010). Conceptualizing the regional roles of universities, implications and contradictions. *European Planning Studies, 18*, 1227-1246.

Van Vught, F., & Ziegele, F. (Eds). (2011). *U-Multirank.The design and testing the feasibility of a multi-dimensional global university ranking* (Final Report). Access: http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/multirank_en.pdf

Weerts, D. J. (2014). State funding and the engaged university: Understanding community engagement and state appropriations in higher education. *The Review of Higher Education, 38*, 133-169.

Yudkevich, M., Altbach, P. G., & Rumbley, L. E. (2015). Global university rankings: The 'Olympic Games' of higher education? *Prospects, 45*, 411-419.

Higher Education Governance & Policy
ISSN: 2717-8676
Volume: 2
Issue: 1

Research University Initiatives in South Korea: Accomplishments and Challenges

Soo Jeung Lee*
Department of Education, Sejong University, Seoul, South Korea

Abstract

This study investigates the accomplishments of national initiatives for building research universities in South Korea. Focusing on the top six research universities, it analyses whether they have achieved world-class university status in terms of three dimensions: sufficient research funding, talented human resources, and shared governance and academic freedom. Through government initiatives such as the Brain Korea 21 project, the Korean government actively invests in university research because of its importance to the country's economic development. As a result, the research productivity of Korean universities has grown immensely. This study's findings suggest, however, that despite this rapid growth and strong financial support, Korean research universities are still lacking in terms of the quality of their doctoral education and have not yet achieved shared academic governance and a culture of academic freedom. The study concludes that Korean research universities still have challenges to overcome before they can be considered truly world-class universities

Keywords: Research university, research funding, talented human resources, shared governance, academic freedom, South Korea

Introduction

Worldwide, the notion of "world-class universities" has affected many countries' higher education policies and led to research universities embracing strategies to gain high positions in international university rankings (Deem, Mok, & Lucas, 2008; Hazelkorn, 2015; Shin & Kehm, 2013). Asian higher education is no exception, especially in South Korea (hereafter, Korea). Korea has shown remarkable achievements in education (Lee, Kim, & Adams, 2010), and the idea of "post-secondary education for all" is closer to reality in Korea than in any other country (Grubb, Sweet, Gallagher, & Tuomi, 2006, p. 16). In addition, the Korean government has, for decades, invested heavily in research and development (R&D) through university-based research funding projects (Shin & Jang, 2013). One of the most famous government initiatives to strengthen university research is the Brain Korea 21 (BK21) project. The motivation of the BK21 project is to improve the global competitiveness of Korean universities and to restructure university systems (Shin, 2009). Such policy initiatives have been successful in leading to the emergence of strong research universities in the Korean higher education system. Through these policy initiatives, the research performance of Korean research universities has grown significantly at a time when increased research competitiveness is being emphasized in international comparative research and global rankings (NRF, 2019; Teichler, Arimoto, & Cummings, 2013). However, Korean research universities still may face challenges to becoming competitive world-class universities (Kim & Cho, 2014), and whether they have succeeded is open to question (Shin & Lee, 2015). One of the main issues for Korean research universities is their reliance on external policy involvement and strong government-led policies. Furthermore, just because a university is at the top of the international university rankings does not necessarily mean that it is the best in all aspects (Altbach, 2004). A truly world-class university must be able to demonstrate not only academic achievement but affective

* **Corresponding Author:** Soo Jeung Lee, soojlee@sejong.ac.kr
ORCID: 00000-0003-0647-8788

(Review Article) **Cite as:** Lee, S. J. (2021). Research university initiatives in South Korea: Accomplishments and challenges. *Higher Education Governance & Policy, 2*(1), 45-55.

Received: May 16, 2021; ***Revised:*** June 15, 2021; ***Accepted:*** June 15, 2021; ***Published:*** June 30, 2021

achievement (e.g., intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy), talented human resources, academic freedom, shared governance, and a well-established academic culture (Kim & Cho, 2014).

This review article aims to examine the accomplishments and challenges of Korean research universities in terms of important characteristics of world-class universities. The study focuses on how Korean research universities have developed under government-driven and growth-oriented policies and the specific challenges they face on the road to becoming world-class universities.

National Initiatives for Building Research Universities in South Korea

The Korean government designed systems for R&D to efficiently support national economic development (Kim, 1997). Given the country's scarce natural resources, R&D and human resources are the main drivers of economic development in Korea (Adams, 2010; Kim & Cho, 2014). The government has strengthened education in science and engineering, and as part of this effort, the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) was launched in 1971 and the Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH) was established in 1986. The Korea Science Foundation initiated projects to promote excellent research groups such as the Science Research Center (SRC), the Engineering Research Center (ERC), and the Regional Cooperation Research Center (RRC) during the 1990s. The demand for talent to carry out creative research activities has continued to increase, and universities continue to fulfill important functions for national economic development (Lee et al., 2010). The number of students in higher education rapidly increased during the 1980s and 1990s, from 402,979 students in 1980 to 1,040,166 in 1990 to 1,665,398 in 2000 (MOE & KESS, 2019). The number of universities also expanded following the Kim Young-Sam administration's 5.31 Education Reform in 1995, from 131 in 1990 to 161 in 2000. Figure 1 shows the increase in student numbers at Korean universities between 1980 and 2019.

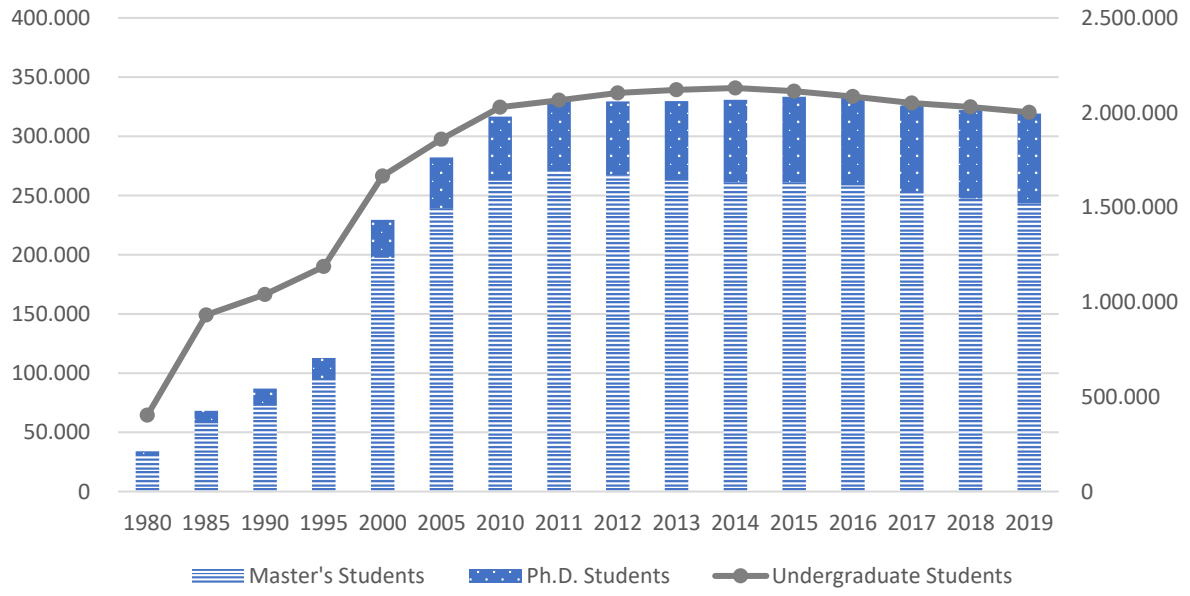

Figure 1. Increase in numbers of undergraduate and graduate students in Korea, 1980–2019
Data source: MOE & KESS, 2019

Government initiatives emphasize basic research and the training of human resources at universities (Ministry of Science & ICT, 2017). For instance, the BK21 project, launched in 1999 and currently in its fourth stage, aims to cultivate high-quality professional manpower, secure research performance, and foster graduate schools with international competitiveness. The first phase of the BK21 project spent KRW 1.3 trillion to support 438 project groups at 72 universities from 1999 to 2005. The second phase spent KRW 1.8 trillion in supporting 568 project groups at 74 universities from 2006 to 2012. In its third phase, the BK21 project merged with the World-Class University Project (2008–2012), which aimed to recruit internationally renowned faculty members, build innovative educational and research

environments, and further enhance the international competitiveness of Korea's universities (Byun, Jon, & Kim, 2012). From 2013 to 2020, the third phase of the BK21 project spent KRW 1.9 trillion and supported 522 project groups at 65 universities. The BK21 project is now in its fourth phase, during which it plans to invest KRW 2.9 trillion to support 562 project groups at 68 universities from 2020 to 2027 (MOE, 2019; 2020). To date, the BK21 project is the longest running and most successful project to enhance the global competitiveness of Korean universities (Shin, 2009). It has led to improving the research productivity of Korean universities, and as a result, the number of Science Citation Index (SCI)-level journal articles published by faculty members participating in the BK21 project increased significantly from 4,392 in 1999 to 24,968 in 2017 (MOE, 2019). The numbers of master's and doctoral students almost doubled between 1995 and 2000: from 93,993 to 197,436 master's students, and from 18,735 to 32,001 doctoral students (MOE & KESS, 2019). The BK21 project has changed the landscape of Korean universities by increasing the competitiveness of university research, enhancing graduate schools, and pushing top universities to shift toward a research orientation (Shin, 2009; Shin & Lee, 2015).

Outcomes of Research University Initiatives in South Korea

Through governmental policy involvement and funding, the research capability of Korean research systems has grown enormously. This increased research capability is reflected in international comparative studies and global rankings. For example, a 2013 study on the Changing Academic Profession (CAP) project reported that the research productivity of Korean academics per professor was the highest among the 19 countries that participated (Teichler et al., 2013). In 2019, Korea ranked 12th in the world in Science Citation Index (SCI) publications and 13th in number of citations (KISTEP & KAIST, 2020). The number of SCI journal papers published by Korean researchers in that year was 69,618, up 8.47% from the previous year (i.e., 64,179 in 2018; NRF, 2019). Twenty top Korean universities accounted for 42.4% of all of the 2019 journal publications from Korean institutions, with Seoul National University producing the largest number of SCI journal publications (4,372 based on first author or corresponding author, 8,289 based on co-author; KISTEP & KAIST, 2020). Figure 2 shows the increase in publications from Korean researchers between 2005 and 2019.

The number of research institutes affiliated with universities increased by 12.5% from 4,528 in 2014 to 5,092 in 2018, and the number of full-time researchers in university-affiliated research institutes increased by 36.8% from 2,794 in 2014 to 3,822 in 2018 (NRF, 2019).

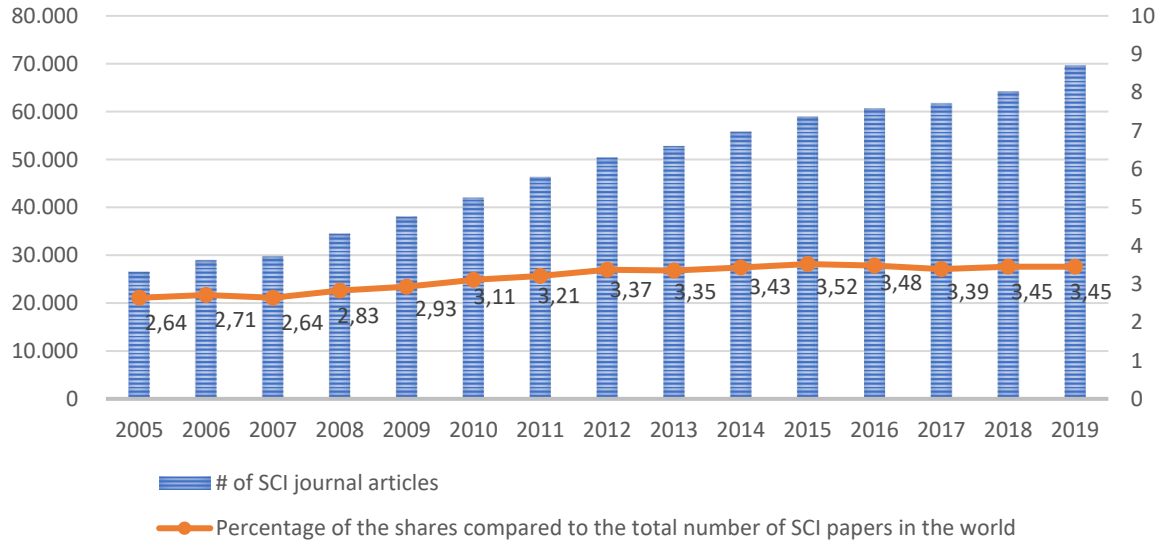

Figure 2. Increase in international publications by Korean researchers, 2005–2019
Data source: KISTEP & KAIST, 2020

According to the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, the number of Korean universities ranking in the top 200 grew from four (Seoul National University, SNU; Korea Advanced

Institute of Science and Technology, KAIST; Pohang University of Science and Technology, POSTECH; and Yonsei University) in 2011 to six (the previous four plus Korea University and Sungkyunkwan University, SKKU) in 2020. Table 1 presents status data on these six research universities.

Table 1. Top Six Research Universities in South Korea, 2020

University	Number of full-time faculty members	Number of students		Number of SCI journal publications 2019	Third-party funded research funding per professor (KRW 1,000)	THE ranking 2020
		Undergraduate	Graduate			
SNU	2,256	16,608	11,205	4,372	217,217.2	64
SKKU	1,487	19,310	7,790	2,429	194,653.2	89
KAIST	634	3,766	6,738	1,748	623,739.6	110
POSTECH	291	1,422	2,159	854	504,493.5	146
Korea	1,477	20,822	8,758	2,279	199,041.1	179
Yonsei	1,724	17,825	11,100	3,038	225,314.9	197

Note: Number of SCI journal publications is based on first author or corresponding author.
Data sources: KISTEP & KAIST, 2020; www.academyinfo.go.kr; www.snu.ac.kr; www.skku.edu; www.kaist.ac.kr; www.postech.ac.kr; www.korea.ac.kr; www.yonsei.ac.kr

Research Universities in Korea: Globally Competitive?

The BK21 project was successful in supporting university research and the emergence of research universities (Shin & Lee, 2015). But, as Shin and Lee (2015, p. 192) pointed out, "there is still controversy over whether the newly emerged research universities in Korea are truly competitive, and whether they are sustainable in the long run because the rapid growth of research performance has been mainly obtained through external policy intervention."

This paper addresses the question of whether today's Korean research universities are truly world-class universities by assessing them in terms of a set of specific characteristics. While the concept of the world-class university has become embedded in higher education policies and strategies, its definition remains ambiguous (Deem et al., 2008; Huisman, 2008; Yang, Yang, & Wang, 2021; Yang & Welch, 2012). This is partly because the definition varies depending on focus and perspective (Huang, 2015). However, they do share some common characteristics (Altbach, 2009; Salmi, 2009), of which the most basic is that they are research universities (Altbach & Balan, 2007). Lee (2013) suggested that a world-class university must be research-intensive, resource-intensive, and technologically smart, and have institutional autonomy and high-level internationalization. Shin and Kehm (2013), focusing on the East Asian context, emphasized world-class universities' global competitiveness, value orientation for humanity, and primary goal of teaching and research. Altbach (2009) described world-class universities as having the most funding from public resources, fulfilling multiple functions, being resource-intensive, and having the best students and professors. Salmi (2009) proposed that the three critical factors are flexible governance, sufficient research funding, and talented human resources. Drawing on these previous studies, this study reviews research universities in Korea in terms of three main factors: sufficient research funding, talented human resources, and shared governance and academic freedom.

Sufficient Research Funding

The Korean government actively supports the economy and research development with large investments in R&D. According to the 2018 Main Science and Technology Indicators, gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) as a percentage of GDP is 4.52% in Korea. This figure is relatively very high (see Figure 3); for example, the corresponding numbers are 2.42% for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and 2.07% for the European Union (27 countries). In Korea, while most of these resources for research are used by private companies (80.29%) and public research institutes (10.07%), a substantial portion goes to universities (8.22%). The newly emerged research-focused universities receive most of the competition-based research grants given to universities by the Korean government. For instance, for 2012, Shin and Lee (2015) examined public research funding to 212 universities and found that the research universities received 37.2%. Similarly, in the United States, about 150 research-focused universities obtain about 80% of competitive research grants from public resources (e.g., Altbach, 2009). Shin and Lee (2015) concluded that, considering the amount

of research funding as share of GDP and the concentration of resources, selective research-focused universities have a well-developed financial foundation in Korea.

Nevertheless, coordination between the different types of research—pure, applied, and developmental research—may or may not be ideal from an international comparative perspective as shown in Figure 4. Korea, like China and Singapore, invests a great deal in applied and developmental research, and relatively little in pure research. The heavy emphasis on applied and developmental research and on short-term results can translate to a weak foundation for research universities and the discouragement of pure and/or long-term research.

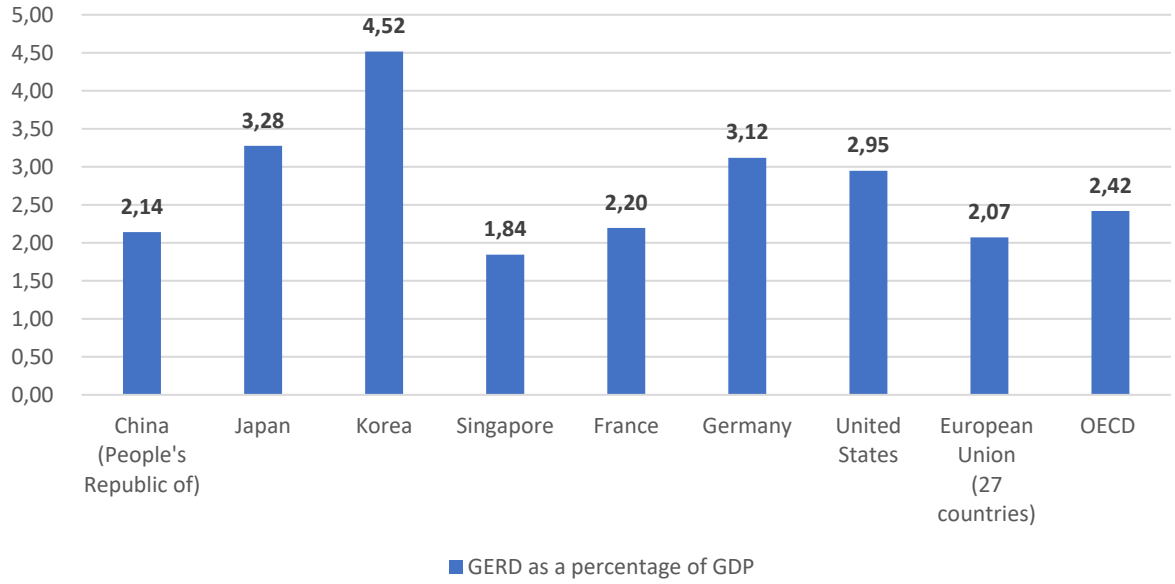

Figure 3. Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) as a percentage of GDP, 2018
Data source: https://stats.oecd.org

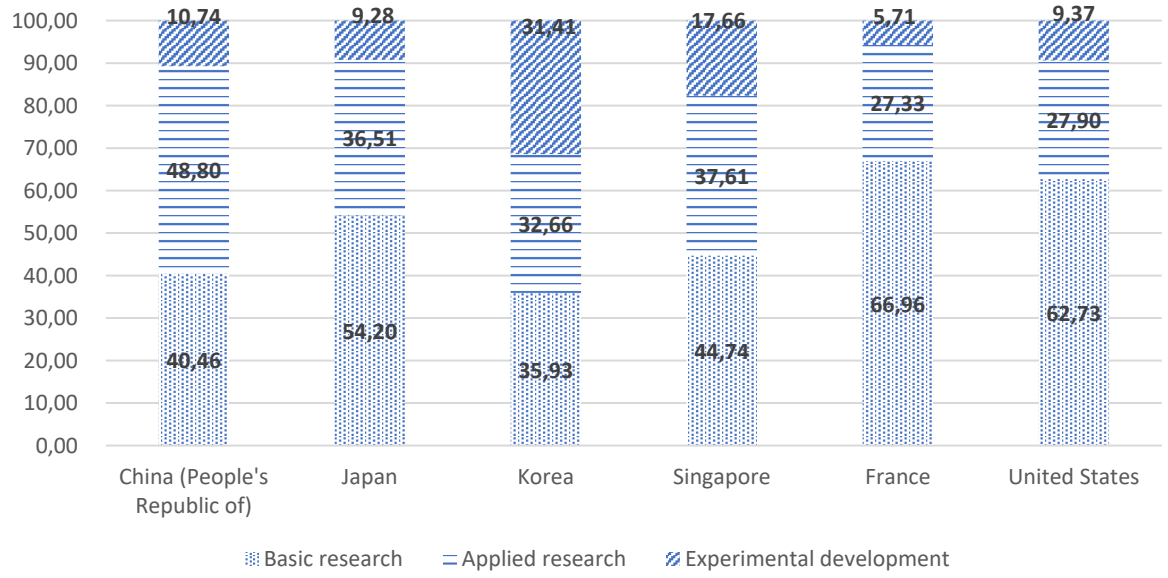

Figure 4. Percentage of gross domestic expenditure on R&D by type of R&D in higher education sectors of six OECD countries, 2018
Data source: https://stats.oecd.org

Talented Human Resources

The admission process to enter top universities in Korea is highly competitive; only very high achievers in the National Assessment for College Admission are admitted to undergraduate programs at the top-ranked universities. Research universities, therefore, have highly talented students in their undergraduate programs. The so-called SKY universities (**S**eoul National, **K**orea, and **Y**onsei) have long been the three most prestigious in the country. KAIST and POSTECH are top science and technology universities, and SKKU is emerging as a prestigious university with the support of the Samsung group. However, their graduate programs are not as competitive as their undergraduate programs because many Korean students prefer to do their graduate work, particularly doctoral studies, abroad (Shin & Lee, 2015). From this point of view, Korea's research universities are successful for their undergraduate programs, somewhat less successful for their master's programs, and somewhat unsuccessful for their doctoral programs.

Foreign students are also important resources in universities. As shown in Figure 5, the number of foreign students in Korean undergraduate programs went up and down between 2005 and 2014, and has since been increasing slightly, reaching 66,479 in 2020. On the other hand, the number of foreign students in graduate programs has steadily increased from 5,742 (4,023 in master's programs, 1,719 in doctoral programs) in 2005 to 38,152 (24,996 in master's programs, 13,156 in doctoral programs) in 2020. Research universities actively recruit excellent international students, and the proportion of foreign students at them is relatively high, with the exception of the undergraduate programs at SNU and POSTECH, as shown in Table 2.

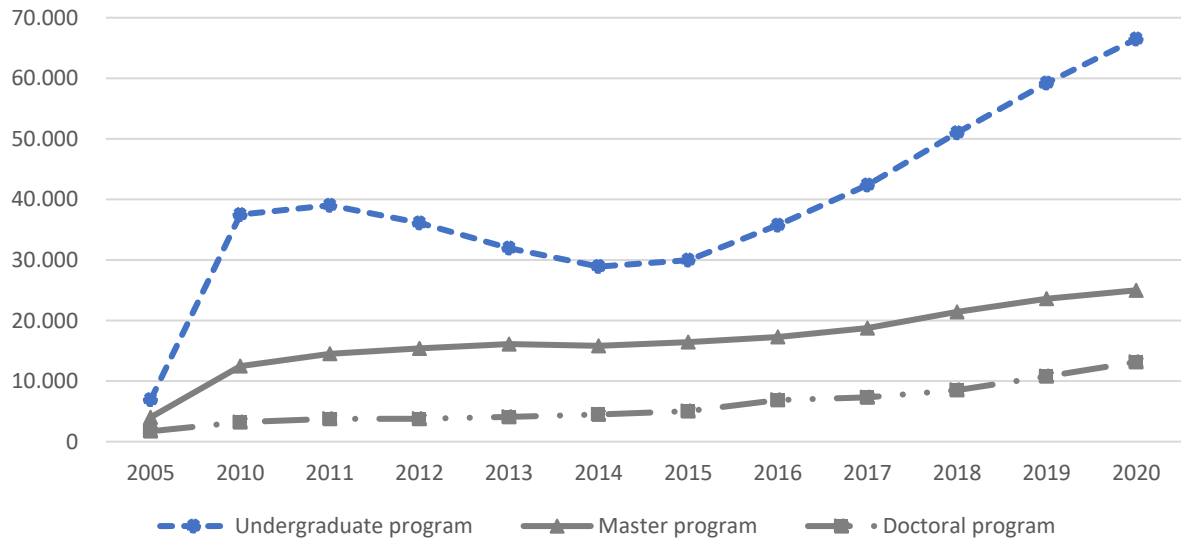

Figure 5. Changes in the numbers of foreign students in Korea, 2005–2020
Data source: MOE & KEDI, 2020

The number of full-time faculty members at all Korean four-year universities has increased from 25,337 in 1990 to 66,054 in 2020, and 87.9% of full-time faculty members have doctoral degrees (MOE & KEDI, 2020). Of full-time faculty members at all universities, 35.2% have doctoral degrees from foreign countries, while at the research universities, most of the professors have earned a Ph.D. abroad, especially in the United States. This is one of the interesting characteristics of Korean research universities. In addition, research universities have begun to aggressively hire international professors in recent years, but the share of foreign professors is still low. For example, at SNU, the leading university in Korea, foreign professors comprised only about 4.83% of all full-time faculty members in 2020, a much lower proportion compared to the competing research universities in Singapore and Hong Kong.

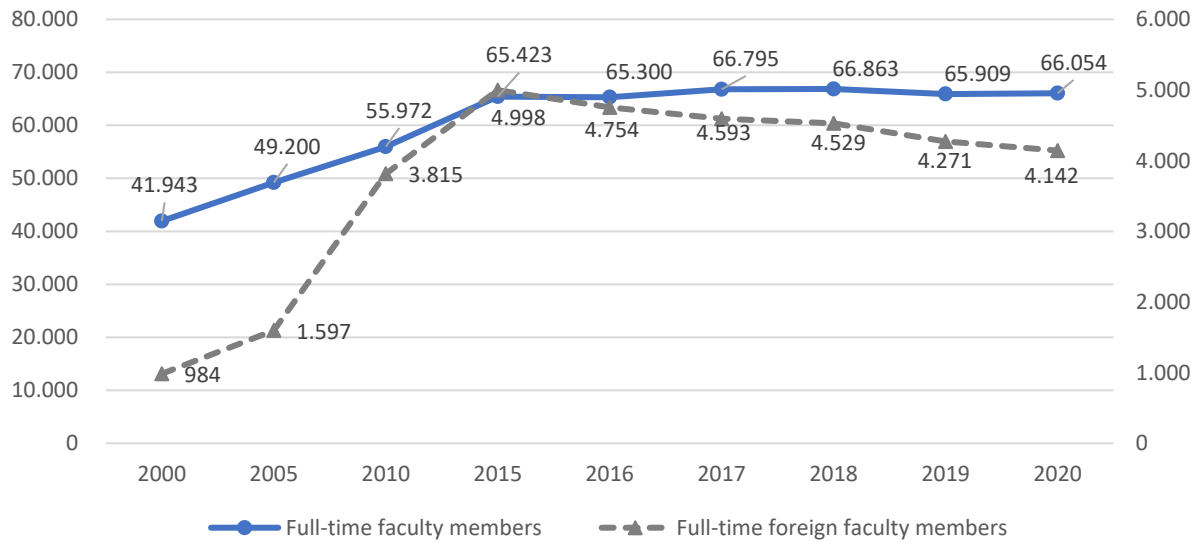

Figure 6. Change in the number of full-time faculty members in Korea, 2000–2020
Data source: MOE & KEDI, 2020

Table 2. Internationalization in Research Universities in South Korea, 2020

University	Number of full-time faculty members	Number of full-time foreign faculty members	Number of students		Number of foreign students	
			Undergraduate	Graduate	Undergraduate (Training courses)	Graduate
SNU	2,256	109 (4.83%)	16,608	11,205	226 (725)	1,087
SKKU	1,487	105 (7.06%)	19,310	7,790	2,677 (899)	1,516
KAIST	634	53 (8.36%)	3,766	6,738	309 (39)	546
POSTECH	291	8 (2.75%)	1,422	2,159	0 (16)	96
Korea	1,477	111 (7.51%)	20,822	8,758	2,154 (981)	597
Yonsei	1,724	129 (7.48%)	17,825	11,100	1,282 (1,402)	934

Note: Training courses cover language training courses, exchange programs, etc.
Data sources: www.academyinfo.go.kr; www.snu.ac.kr; www.skku.edu; www.kaist.ac.kr; www.postech.ac.kr; www.korea.ac.kr; www.yonsei.ac.kr

Shared Governance and Academic Freedom

The Korean government has tried to make universities more autonomous and accountable based on neo-liberal policies since the mid-1990s. National universities are legally government organizations, so they are bound by government rules and regulations in their personnel policy, organization structure, and financial management. For instance, they must release self-evaluation reports and disclose university budget information. In the 1990s, government regulations came to be considered a stumbling block to university innovation, and the Korean government-initiated reforms to the governance structure to provide flexibility in university management, leading to policies giving universities more autonomy. SNU obtained independent corporation status in 2012. Among the six top research universities, the two national universities (SNU, KAIST) are now independent corporations, and the other four are private. Thus, all six top research universities in South Korea have relatively flexible governance structures compared to other universities (Shin & Lee, 2015).

Shared governance and academic freedom are considered core components of a research university because academic excellence is not obtainable without academic freedom and faculty autonomy (Salmi,

2009). Faculty members of world-class universities are empowered to make decisions, such as when recruiting new faculty members and developing curricula. Because both learning and research are complex and unpredictable processes, they require a high degree of freedom from intellectual constraints to be performed effectively by higher education institutions (Schmidtlein & Berdahl, 2011). However, Korean research universities have a seniority-based academic culture, institutionalized during the country's long history of respect for Confucian traditions (Shin & Jang, 2013; Shin & Lee, 2015). Junior academics are not independent of their seniors in their academic activities. The strong seniority culture has been reinforced by a closed disciplinary culture, where professors major in the same field from their undergraduate to their doctoral degree. Academic disciplines are channels for knowledge production and dissemination as well as for the training of younger scholars. When the discipline is the unit of academic training, faculty hiring and promotion, and academic activities, this situation reinforces a rigid hierarchy.

Academic inbreeding is also associated with the strong seniority culture. The faculty inbreeding rates of the research universities are relatively high, especially at the three SKY universities, where over 50% of the faculty received their degrees from the same institution at which they now teach (Shin, Jung, & Lee, 2016). These high rates add to junior academics' lack of independence in their academic activities, as their senior professors may well have been their professors when they were undergraduates.

Nevertheless, there is a slow change occurring in academic governance and academic culture; for instance, a 2005 policy initiative was aimed at capping the percentage of professors who graduated from the same university (Shin et al., 2016). Nevertheless, Korean universities are far behind western universities in terms of shared academic governance and a culture of academic freedom, and how to change this situation is a critical challenge for the advancement of Korean research universities (Shin & Lee, 2015).

Conclusion

This study examined the accomplishments of Korean research universities through government-driven initiatives such as the BK21 project in terms of three main characteristics of world-class universities: a strong foundation of research funding, talented human resources, and shared governance and academic freedom.

Korean research universities have developed under government-driven and growth-oriented policies based on the perspective that science should benefit national economic development. The research performance of Korean universities has therefore grown enormously in terms of the quantitative aspects, but it is aligned with industry needs and focused on applied and developmental research much more than is the case in other advanced countries. Although this approach of focusing on applied and developmental research based on the needs of industry might be efficient to quickly build research performance and support economic development, it also might explain why the foundation for academic research in Korea is relatively weak. The quality of research universities is more closely related to sufficient research funding, talented human resources, and shared governance and academic freedom than to quantitative figures on research productivity.

Korean research universities have relatively sufficient research funds compared to other types of Korean universities, but most invest more in applied and developmental research and less in pure and basic research. The excessive emphasis on applied and developmental research and short-term results can lead to weak foundations for research universities and limit the ability of academics to conduct pure and/or long-term research.

Korean research universities have highly talented students in their undergraduate programs, but they are less competitive in their doctoral programs because many talented students prefer to go abroad, especially to the United States, to obtain their doctoral degrees. This preference results from the history of the formation of research systems in Korea. The Korean government established research strategies to import new technologies from advanced countries and send top talented researchers abroad to study advanced knowledge and technology (Kim, 1997). Therefore, foreign degree holders have been

acclaimed in Korean academic society, and this tendency to prefer foreign degrees over domestic degrees has affected Korean academic culture.

Korean research universities have actively recruited excellent international students and aggressively started hiring international professors in recent years, but the share of foreign professors and students is still lower than at other competing research universities in Singapore and Hong Kong. Therefore, Korean research universities need to strengthen their international competitiveness.

Korean research universities have long played key roles in contributing to economic development through growth-oriented policies, but now they are faced with the need to establish the quality of their doctoral programs and to transition to shared governance and a culture of academic freedom to become genuinely competitive, world-class universities (e.g., Braxton, Luckey, & Helland, 2002; Smeby & Try, 2005). The quality of academic work depends on academic freedom as well as funding, governance, and human resources because scholars are a self-motivated species; they prefer to choose their own research topics and develop their own ideas for their research careers (Shin & Lee, 2015).

Korean research universities have enjoyed remarkable success in terms of research performance. As the enrolment rate for higher education is exceptionally high and research productivity has increased dramatically over recent decades, these universities have the potential to improve the quality of their systems. Based on their quantitative performance, Korean research universities are well-positioned to turn their efforts to improving their doctoral education systems and bringing in a more open academic culture that supports scholars' initiative.

References

Adams, D. (2010). A comparative perspective on the development of Korean education. In C. Lee, S. Kim, & D. Adams (Eds.), *Sixty years of Korean education* (pp. 107-149). Seoul: Seoul National University Press.

Altbach, P. G. (2004). The costs and benefits of world-class universities. *Academe, 90*(1), 20-23.

Altbach, P. G. (2009). Peripheries and centers: Research universities in developing countries. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 10*(1), 15-27.

Altbach, P. G., & Balan, J. (2007). *World class worldwide: Transforming research universities in Asia and Latin America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Braxton, J. M., Luckey, W., & Helland, P. (2002). *Institutionalizing a broader view of scholarship through Boyer's four dimensions* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 29(2)). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Byun, K., Jon, J., & Kim, D. (2012). Quest for building world-class universities in South Korea: Outcomes and consequences. *Higher Education, 65*, 645-659.

Deem, R., Mok, K. H., & Lucas, L. (2008). Transforming higher education in whose image? Exploring the concept of the "world-class" university in Europe and Asia. *Higher Education Policy, 21*, 83-97.

Grubb, W. N., Sweet, R., Gallagher, M., & Tuomi, O. (2006). *Thematic review of post-secondary education: A country report of Korea*. Paris: OECD.

Hazelkorn, E. (2015). *Rankings and the reshaping of higher education: The battle for world-class excellence*. London: Palgrave Macmillian.

Huang, F. (2015). Building the world-class research universities: A case study of China. *Higher Education, 70*, 203-215.

Huisman, J. (2008). World-class universities. *Higher Education Policy, 21*, 1-4.

Kim, L. (1997). *Imitation to innovation: The dynamics of Korea's technological learning*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kim, Y., & Cho, Y. H. (2014). The second leap toward "world class" education in Korea. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 23*(4), 783-794.

Korean Educational Development Institute. (1980–1990). *Statistical yearbook of education*. Seoul: by the Author.

Korea Institute of Science and Technology Evaluation and Planning (KISTEP) & Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST). (2020). *A study on the analysis of SCI publication (2005–2019)* (in Korean). Eumseong: Korea Institute of Science and Technology Evaluation and Planning.

Lee, C. J., Kim, S., & Adams, D. (Eds.). (2010). *Sixty years of Korean education*. Seoul: Seoul National University Press.

Lee, J. (2013). Creating world-class universities: Implications for developing countries. *Prospects*, *43*(2), 233-249.

Ministry of Education (MOE). (2019, December 4). *Fourth phase Brain Korea 21 project basic plan: BK21 FOUR* (Fostering Outstanding Universities for Research). Access [Press Released]: https://www.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/view.do?boardID=294&boardSeq=79190&lev=0&searchType=null&statusYN=W&page=1&s=moe&m=020402&opType=NMOE

Ministry of Education (MOE). (2020, August 6). *Announcement of the preliminary selection results for the fourth phase of the Brain Korea 21 project* (in Korean). Access [Press Release]: https://blog.naver.com/moeblog/222052812153

Ministry of Education (MOE) & Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI). (2020). *Education statistics analysis: Higher education statistics* (in Korean). Jincheon: MOE & KEDI.

Ministry of Education (MOE) & Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI). (2019). *2019 educational statistics analysis* (in Korean). Jincheon: MOE & KEDI.

Ministry of Science & ICT. (2017). *Fifty years of science and technology* (in Korean). Sejong: Ministry of Science & ICT/STEPI.

National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF). (2019). *2019 university research activity survey analysis report* (in Korean). Daejeon: National Research Foundation of Korea.

Salmi, J. (2009). *The challenge of establishing world-class universities*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Schmidtlein, F. A., & Berdahl, R. O. (2011). Autonomy and accountability: Who controls academe. In P. G. Altbach, P. J. Gumport, & R. O. Berdahl (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges* (pp. 71-90). Baltimore: JHU Press.

Shin, J. C. (2009). Building world-class research university: The Brain Korea 21 project. *Higher Education, 58*, 669-688.

Shin, J. C., & Jang, Y. S. (2013). World-class university in Korea: Proactive government, responsive university, and procrastinating academics. In J. C. Shin & B. M. Kehm (Eds.), *Institutionalization of world-class university in global competition*. Berlin: Springer.

Shin, J. C., Jung, J., & Lee, S. J. (2016). Academic inbreeding of Korean professors: Academic training, networks and their performance. In J. F. Galaz-Fontes, A. Arimoto, U. Teichler, & J. Brennan (Eds.), *Biographies and careers throughout academic life*. AG Switzerland: Springer.

Shin, J. C., & Kehm, B. M. (2013). The world-class university across higher education systems: Similarities, differences, and challenges. In J. C. Shin & B. M. Kehm (Eds.), *Institutionalization of world-class university in global competition*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Shin, J. C., & Lee, S. J. (2015). Evolution of research universities as a national research system in Korea: Accomplishments and challenges. *Higher Education, 70*, 187-202.

Smeby, J. C., & Try, S. (2005). Departmental contexts and faculty research activity in Norway. *Research in Higher Education, 46*(6), 593-619.

Teichler, U., Arimoto, A., & Cummings, W. K. (2013). *The changing academic profession*. Berlin: Springer.

Yang, L., Yang, J., & Wang, C. (2021). The research-intensive university in a glonacal higher education system: The creation of the world-class university in China. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2021.1884512

Yang, R., & Welch, A. (2012). A world-class university in China? The case of Tsinghua. *Higher Education, 63*, 645-666.

Higher Education Governance & Policy
ISSN: 2717-8676
Volume: 2
Issue: 1

University Autonomy and Academic Freedom: Contrasting Latin American and US Perspectives

Andres Bernasconi*
School of Education, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, Santiago, Chile

Abstract

I compare the historical origins and current conceptions of university autonomy and academic freedom in Latin America and the US. I argue that the core distinction between the US and Latin America is the *locus* of autonomy. In the US, university autonomy is a bottom-up consequence of the academic freedom of the professors. Autonomy is the academic freedom of the university as a community of scholars. In Latin America, conversely, academic freedom is understood top-down as a consequence of the institutional autonomy of the university. Academic freedom is vested in the university, and the freedom of the faculty derives from that of the university. I explore the historical origins of this variance and the shortcomings of the Latin American version of autonomy: its blurring of the unique knowledge-based service of universities to society and the lack of scholarship on academic freedom in the region it begets.

Keywords: United States of America, AAUP, Cordoba, university reform

Introduction

About 15 years ago, Álvaro Romo de la Rosa, then at the US Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, published a paper comparing the notions of autonomy and academic freedom current in the US and the Latin American context. He noted that:

> In spite of the numerous books and articles written on the subject, there remains considerable confusion regarding the very meaning of the terms' university autonomy' and 'academic freedom' (…). The confusion exists in great part due to the variety of meanings and interpretations given to these concepts. This polysemy is often rooted not only in the diverse historical and cultural circumstances represented in each distinct region of the world regarding these concepts and their development, but, perhaps more importantly, on the different and even opposed ideological positions of the authors or scholars who write about them. (Romo de la Rosa, 2007, p. 275).

Romo de la Rosa states the problem, correctly, as I shall argue, as one emerging from the historical differences in the emergence of the notion of academic freedom and autonomy between The US and Latin America. However, he does not elaborate on those differences, except for recounting the relevance of the Córdoba movement of university reform (1918) for the current concept of university autonomy in Latin America.

Rather, he sees the debate on autonomy in Latin America, unlike in the US, as one hinging upon the reluctance of scholars in public universities to acknowledge the private sector of higher education as an equal. There is some truth to this contention in the sense that university autonomy in Latin America is, for juridical reasons, different in public universities and private institutions (Bernasconi, 2018). But in my view, he misses the most important differences, rooted in history, between the conceptions of autonomy in Latin America and in the US.

* **Corresponding Author:** Andres Bernasconi, abernasconi@uc.cl
ORCID: 0000-0001-8008-3747

(Review Article) **Cite as:** Bernasconi, A. (2021). University autonomy and academic freedom: Contrasting Latin American and US perspectives. *Higher Education Governance & Policy*, *2*(1), 56-67.

Received: May 25, 2021; ***Revised:*** June 26, 2021; ***Accepted:*** June 28, 2021; ***Published:*** June 30, 2021

I shall argue here that the core distinction between the US and Latin America is the *locus* of autonomy, that is, where it resides. In the US, university autonomy is a consequence of the academic freedom of the professors. The locus of academic freedom is the professor, and autonomy is, then, the projection of that freedom onto the university. Autonomy is the academic freedom of the university as a community of scholars. In Latin America, conversely, academic freedom is understood as a consequence of the university's institutional autonomy. The locus of autonomy is the university, and the freedom of the faculty derives from that vested in the university.

In this paper, I take Romo de la Rosa's inquiry into the present by examining more recent writings on academic freedom and autonomy coming from the Latin American region. My intent is to show how the core difference between autonomy in the US and Latin America is where it resides or to whom it is vested.

For reasons that will become apparent later on, autonomy in the context of Latin America cannot be written about without reference to the Córdoba movement of 1918. The ideological and symbolic force of the Córdoba reforms influences the Latin American discourse about the university to this day. Given that Córdoba is generally understood as the birthplace of autonomy in Latin America, it is obligatory to start our account with that event.

However, the Córdoba movement has been mythologized to a point where the current narrative about it has lost much resemblance with what really happened at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba in 1918. Therefore, a reconstruction of what the student protests in Córdoba were about is necessary to set our inquiry onto autonomy in the right track.

Fortunately, that work has been done in a well-sourced but forgotten paper by Mark van Aken (1971). Forgotten indeed: the hundredth anniversary of the Córdoba reform brought us a good number of scholarly works on the legacy of Córdoba. I searched the Scopus database for recent articles on the Córdoba reform and the Córdoba movement, and found that not one of the more relevant papers retrieved reference van Aken (Abba & Streck, 2021; Carreño, 2020; Buchbinder, 2018; Donoso & Contreras 2017; Tcach & Iribarne 2019; Moraga Valle, 2014; Hoyos Vásquez, 2012; Navarro, 2012). The only exception is Natalia Milanesio's (2005) historical study of the generation that carried out the reform, from a gender perspective.

It is worth, then, recuperating the events of Córdoba as they happened instead of resorting to the myth that was construed in the decades that followed it. This is important not just to set the record straight but because the Córdoba reform was pointedly *not* about autonomy.

In what follows, I first summarize the findings by van Aken (1971) to lay the historical groundwork for my argument. I then move on to illustrate how recent statements and scholarly works on autonomy coming from the Latin American region draw from the notion that academic freedom is a by-product of university autonomy. This perspective is then contrasted with that of the US as expounded by US scholars of academic freedom. I close the paper by exploring these differences in perspectives on autonomy and submitting an explanatory hypothesis of the root cause of the diverging conceptual itineraries of both university communities.

Methodologically, this is a selective literature review. It is selective in the sense that it is not exhaustive. An exhaustive review of the enormous literatures bearing on my subject, which have accumulated over a century, is impossible within the limits of an article. Rather, I present selected works that bear on my central thesis on the different loci of autonomy in the two models under comparison. If my argument is wrong, the burden shall be on others to contradict me if other pertinent works point to a different direction.

As shall be apparent later on, in my view, the Latin American concept of autonomy, compared to that of the US, is a hindrance for nuanced explorations of the perennial and newer issues arising from the ideals of academic freedom.

From a comparativist point of view, it may seem odd to compare one country to an entire region. However, US higher education is influential as a model beyond the boundaries of one country. In turn, Latin American higher education, notwithstanding national variation, is nonetheless highly homogeneous concerning the matter of this article.

The Absence of Autonomy in Córdoba Movement of 1918

The main point of the van Aken (1971) piece is to demonstrate that most, if not all of the demands of the students striking in the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba in 1918 had been articulated previously at the First International Congress of American Students in Montevideo, Uruguay, a decade earlier.

The aspirations for reform of the Córdoba students, as recounted by van Aken (1971, p. 460), were as follows:

> (1) Representation of students, along with alumni and professors, on university councils (…); (2) selection of professors by competition with student participation, professors to serve limited terms subject to review (…); (3) complete elimination of required attendance (…); (4) curriculum reform to include new courses in art, physical education, and social science (…); (5) improvement of the quality of teaching by means of *docencia libre*, i.e., more than one professor teaching one course (…); (6) university extension and night courses for workers (…); (7) social welfare for students (…); and (8) university education without fees or tuition (…).

In van Aken's account, a comparison between the reform program emerging from the 1908 First International Congress of American Students (and subsequent congresses of the kind previous to 1918), and goals of the Córdoba reform shows that "the ideas of the 'Cordoba movement' constituted no more than a refinement and evolution of the program elaborated in the Montevideo Congress" (van Aken, 1971, p. 460). The only programmatic novelty was point 8 above, free tuition.

More to the point of this article, note that autonomy is not part of the Córdoba program. Nor was it present in its Montevideo predecessor. The sole item in the list that somewhat alludes to university governance is point 1 above, the representation of students, alumni, and professors on university governing councils, thereafter, known as *cogobierno* (co-governance) and vastly introduced in the governing structures of public universities in Latin America in the ensuing decades.

In fact, so much was Córdoba not about autonomy that the rioting students called upon de Argentine federal government in Buenos Aires to intervene in the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba to solve the impasse with the university authorities and faculty.

Further, the Córdoba reform could not have been a cry for academic freedom, at least not the academic freedom of the professors, as it was a movement against the professoriate. As van Aken recalls (1971), through the 1900s and 1910s, there was student's restlessness across many universities in the region directed at the faculty's outdated teaching and examination practices and the oligarchical concentration of power among rectors, deans, and conservative sector of the professoriate. Students became increasingly intent on modernizing curricula, introducing freedom to choose courses and professors, abolishing mandatory attendance, revising the system of year-end oral examinations, and instituting periodic evaluation of faculty performance instead of lifelong appointments. Access to teaching positions, they argued, ought to be provided after open contest of applicants instead of direct appointments by faculty or deans.

What caused the 1918 crisis in Córdoba was the stubborn opposition of the University's leadership to the reforms demanded by the students and the student's deployment of forceful acts of protest to break the stalemate. Córdoba was first not in demanding change in outmoded curricula, rote teaching, and unqualified professors, but in students' willingness to strike, occupy university buildings, and clash with the police to buttress their claims. It was these methods that made the fame of the Córdoba movement, together with the sense of epic of the protesters, much more than the content of their demands.

Insistence of student participation in governance was more a matter of practical expedience than of principle: only through students' role in governance would the reforms have a chance to be actually enacted. The power of the professors would have to be curtailed for the winds of change to enter the university.

Córdoba did spark a wave of reform initiatives led by students' associations and national and regional students' congresses throughout the region (Abba & Streck, 2021; Buchbinder, 2018). Eventually, the notion of university autonomy, tightly coupled with student participation in university governance, became commonplace in the reform menu (Donoso Romo, 2020; Tünnerman, 2008). In turn, governments granted autonomy to public universities since the 1920s and into the 1950s, in legislation sponsored by progressive governments or by not so progressive ones forced by university activism (Tünnerman, 2008).

I turn next to the notion of autonomy current in the Latin American discourse about the university.

University Autonomy: The Latin American Version

On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Córdoba movement, the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC, for its acronym in Spanish) convened the III Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES 2018) in Córdoba, Argentina. CRES 2018 was attended by over 3,000 regional actors of higher education: scholars, administrators, students and student organizations, professional associations, unions, government agencies, and non-government organizations (UNESCO IESALC, 2018a, p. 25).

The event's final *Declaration* (UNESCO IESALC, 2018b, p. 32) has this to say about the notion of autonomy:

> The autonomy that is being demanded is that which allows the university to exercise its critical and proactive role vis-à-vis society, without restrictions and limits imposed by the governments of the day, religious beliefs, the market or particular interests. The defense of university autonomy is an inescapable and highly relevant responsibility in Latin America and the Caribbean and is, at the same time, a defense of the university's social commitment. (p. 50).
>
> The higher education to be created should fulfill its cultural and ethical calling with full autonomy and freedom; thus, contributing to practical, political definitions which shall influence the changes needed and desired by our communities. Higher education should be the emblematic institution symbol of the national critical awareness of our Latin American and Caribbean region. (p. 35).
>
> The results of debates and discussions on university autonomy must have an impact on its legal status and should be developed within the framework of the Constitution of each of the region's countries.
> The processes of design, formulation, and application of higher education public policies must guarantee academic and financial autonomy and, consequently, the sustainability of higher education institutions. (p. 47).
>
> Autonomy is an essential condition if the institutions are to play a critical proactive role in the society. This is based on the right to have access to decision making, to representation and full democratic participation expressed in the co-governance as well as in the
> transparency and accountability of their actions. (p. 49)

The *Declaration* is worth citing in length because it represents today's conceptions of the regional higher education community about autonomy and the role it plays in the social mission of the university. Also, it is quite telling about the point we are making in this article: academic freedom is nowhere to be seen. Indeed, the *Declaration* never uses the concept of academic freedom. It once mentions freedom of teaching as a tradition, in this context: "Thus, they [the higher education institutions of Latin America and the Caribbean] shall contribute, with social responsibility and commitment to new proposals which recreate the traditions of autonomy, social transformation, anti-authoritarianism, democracy, freedom of teaching, and specifically a political influence based on knowledge and reason" (p. 49).

Rather, freedom is used as a synonym for autonomy in one of the quotes above: "with full autonomy and freedom".

In its Latin American mode, autonomy has two faces: freedom from and freedom to. Freedom from external interests and powers: "the governments of the day, religious beliefs, the market or particular interests". Freedom to exercise its critical and proactive role vis-à-vis society, to contribute to practical, political definitions which shall influence the changes needed and desired by our communities, to be the emblematic institution symbol of the national critical awareness.

The actor here is always the university as a whole, not its scholars. Autonomy is not the enabler of the freedom of research, teaching, or opinion on campus, but the distance that universities take from the government and other societal forces to be able to exercise a critique of the works of power in society. The self-assigned social role of universities is overtly political. Herein resides the emphasis on autonomy as corporate freedom: a political role removed from the daily hustle of politics reclaims certain independence from the external political actors, albeit at the cost of internal politicization. Knowledge comes in only as the basis for the political mission of the university: "a political influence based on knowledge and reason", as stated above. As Lamarra and Coppola (2014, p. 127) put it: "autonomy has ended up condensing the meaning of the political struggle against the State will to control the universities politically and ideologically" (my translation).

If we turn now to scholarship on autonomy by Latin Americans, we find a canonical formulation of university autonomy with three elements: academic, administrative (or normative), and financial. It runs something like this (Serrano Migallón, 2020, p. 193-194):

> University autonomy cannot be understood without academic freedom, administrative freedom, and financial freedom. Academic freedom entails the authority to teach and to learn, and it manifests itself in the search for truth without restriction or coaction. The administrative and normative freedom is expressed in the right of self-determination through the institutions' bylaws and regulations and in the power to designate its own authorities without external intervention. Financial freedom allows the university to develop through the organization and administration of its own patrimony. (My translation).

We see now that academic freedom is considered as one of the aspects of autonomy. In other words, the Latin American concept of autonomy does not ignore academic freedom but fails to put it at the centre of the purpose of autonomy. Academic freedom derives from autonomy, in the same manner, and equal standing as the other freedoms of the university.

In another rendering (Casanova, 2020, p. 76):

> Thus, autonomy is constituted in an element that defines the complex relationship between the university and the state. This is a prerogative essentially deposited in the universities, but which defines the margins of the action of the state as well as a series of benefits for the universities, within the state, and inevitably within society. Autonomy refers to the government of the universities and their capacity to make and execute the main decisions in substantive matters: the academic dimension, the financial dimension, and the election of its academics and leaders. (My translation)

There are juridical grounds for the initial tense relationship between state and universities in Latin America, well exemplified in the history of autonomy in Mexico. During the nineteenth and early twentieth-century statesmen could not conceive of public services, such as the university, being autonomous of government control. If universities were to provide a public service, they needed to be under the direction of the government. Under this logic, in 1933, the Mexican federal Congress, responding to pressure for autonomy from the federal *Universidad Nacional de México*, answered by withdrawing funding to the university, changing its name to *Universidad Autónoma de México*, and turning it into a private institution (Martínez Rizo, 2020, p. 40). The university recuperated its public character and received autonomy in legislation passed in 1945 (Martínez Rizo, 2020, p. 43). Much has changed in administrative law since the 1930s. Public entities with autonomy within the state are now commonplace in public administration in Latin America.

Indeed, throughout the 20th century, the autonomy of universities was introduced in the constitutions of almost every country in Latin America. In my survey of the treatment of higher education in Latin American constitutions (Bernasconi, 2007), I came to the following conclusion (p. 521):

> Autonomy is generally defined in the constitutions examined here as the sum of the rights of self-governance (including the selection of authorities and the right to dictate the institution's bylaws and regulations), free administration of the institution's resources, and liberty to create programmes of study, define their curriculum, grant valid degrees, undertake research, admit and teach students, and hire faculty and staff. In other words, autonomy has governance, academic and administrative implications. Also derived from the autonomy principle is the responsibility of the government to assure the financial sustainability of the university.

It is no surprise, then, that the academic definitions of university autonomy would follow its constitutional standing. The three elements of autonomy: administrative or normative, academic, and financial, with equal importance, enshrined in constitutions, are hard to ignore.

The grip of this conception of autonomy is so tight that often the academic side of autonomy is presented as two distinct features: the individual freedom of academics to teach and do research, on the one hand, and the institutional freedom to define programs of study, and entrance and graduation requirements, on the other (Casanova, 2020 p. 78; Ríos, 2016), as if the latter were not the consequence of the former.

Another foundation of the Latin American notion of autonomy is etymological. Autonomy comes from the Greek: autós (from itself) and nomos (law or norm). Thence the association of autonomy with self-governance and the prerogative of autonomous entities to define their own regulations (Serrano Migallón, 2020, p. 192).

The "Napoleonic" model of the university, underlying the foundation in the nineteenth century of the national universities in the region after independence (de Figueiredo-Cowen, 2002), could be another source for the concept we are examining. In Simon Schwartzman words (1993, p. 9):

> Latin American universities are said to be Napoleonic, which means to be controlled and strictly supervised by the central government according to uniform, nationwide standards (…) They were meant to be part of the effort to transform the old colonies into modern nation-states, with professional elites trained according to the best technical and legal knowledge available at the time, and educated in institutions controlled by the state and freed from the traditional religious thinking.

In fact, the Córdoba movement was a somewhat belated effort to transform a national university that was steeped in scholasticism, conservative Catholic religion, and an oligarchic spirit. The notions of a university in service of the state, and at the same time autonomous, were hard to reconcile. From this viewpoint, we can better understand the perplexity of governments in the first part of the 20th century at the idea of autonomous universities, as attested by the Universidad Nacional de México, now the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). The point successfully made by university reformers in the region after 1918 was that universities could be at the same time national and autonomous.

Schwartzman (1993) goes on to point out that an important legacy of the Napoleonic model (as opposed to the Humboldtian ideas) was the slow and late reception in Latin American universities of the practice and ethos of scientific research. The political predominance of professional schools within the universities, Law, Medicine, Engineering, which persists to this date, also has its foundation in the model of the French Imperial University.

Having outlined in the previous sections the Latin American concept of University autonomy, it is now appropriate to contrast it with the US notion anchored in academic freedom.

University Autonomy in the US

Unlike Latin America, where autonomy was the handicraft of university leaders and politicians, in the US, autonomy is a consequence of academic freedom as defined by the academic profession. The basis for this notion is the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1915 *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure*. The *Declaration* was made widely influential by the academic profession that endorsed it, as well as the organizations that have agreed to abide by it. The *Declaration* was revised in 1940 in the *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, jointly formulated by members of the academic profession and the Association of American Colleges. It remains the most consequential set of guidelines on academic freedom in the US, its contents, and its limitations.

The drafting of the 1915 *Declaration* was prompted by cases in which professors were fired by the trustees of their universities, unhappy with the ideas the professors were teaching or publicly supporting. At stake was the question of whether faculty members, who were employees of an organization, were free to speak their minds or had to abide by a code of speech deemed acceptable by their employers, such as any other employee (Finkin & Post, 2009, pp. 30-33).

The *Declaration* confronted this problem by distinguishing between appointment and employment. Faculty were appointees, not employees of the universities. The key point is that once appointed, the appointing authorities "have neither competency nor moral right to intervene" upon the exercise of professional functions by the scholar (Finkin & Post, 2009, p. 33). The *Declaration* states that "the responsibility of the university teacher is primarily to the public itself, and to the judgment of his own profession" and compares the relationship of the professors to the trustees to that between judges and the executive appointing them. The appointing executive cannot exert control over a judge's opinion, and for the same reason, the appointing executive cannot be made responsible for the judge's opinions, nor can it be presumed that she shares them. The same rationale holds for faculty opinions and teaching (Finkin & Post, 2009, p. 34).

But why should professors be entitled to this privilege? Because of the nature of the university as an institution and because of the professional expertise of the faculty. The *Declaration* asserts, in Finkin and Post's account (2009, p. 35):

> that an essential objective of the university is to 'promote inquiry and advance the sum of human knowledge.' What constitutes true knowledge is not to be determined by the private views of individuals, even those individuals who happen to own universities. Knowledge is the result of the public disciplinary practices of professional experts. Because faculty are professional experts trained in the mastery of these disciplinary practices, they are appointed to discharge the essential university function of producing knowledge. In this task they are answerable to the public at large rather than to the particular desires of employers.

Academic freedom is thus necessary for universities to accomplish their mission. It includes "complete and unlimited freedom to pursue inquiry and publish its results", and "the university teacher's independence of thought and utterance" (Finkin & Post, 2009, p. 35).

The *Declaration* views faculty as "professional experts in the production of knowledge". I draw on Finkin and Post, again (2009, p. 37): "Universities can advance the sum of human knowledge only if they can employ persons who are experts in their disciplines and only if universities liberate these experts to apply freely the disciplinary methods established by their training".

The notion of professional standards is, therefore, key. Academic freedom needs to be distinguished from freedom of speech, which is standard-less:

> The *Declaration* conceives of academic freedom not as an individual right to be free from any and all constraints but instead as the freedom to pursue the 'scholar's profession' according to the standards of that profession. Academic freedom consists in the freedom of mind, inquiry, an expression necessary for proper performance of professional obligations (…) the *Declaration* necessarily and explicitly rejects the position that 'academic freedom implies that individual teachers

> should be exempt from all restraints as to the matter or manner of their utterances, either within or without the University.' (Finkin & Post, 2009, p. 38).

This is why universities can and do establish and enforce norms of professional scholarly practice, evaluate the performance of the academics, and establish requirements for tenure. None of these can be construed as limitations to academic freedom. "Academic freedom, therefore, does not protect the autonomy of professors to pursue their own individual work free from all university restraints. Instead, academic freedom establishes the liberty necessary to advance knowledge, which is the liberty to practice the scholarly profession." "Academic freedom protects the interests of society in having a professoriate that can accomplish its mission" (Finkin & Post, 2009, p. 39). In turn, freedom of speech protects the right of any individual to speak as they wish.

Note that what universities claim from society is not freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is not a special attribute of universities or of scholars, for that matter. Rather, it is a universal right for all people regardless of the truth, merit, or intrinsic value of their opinions. In scholarship, by contrast, not all statements are of equal value. They are weighed on the basis of their conformity to the standards of professional practice of each academic community.

The privilege of self-regulation by the professoriate, as opposed to external regulation, rests on the expertise of professional scholars –absent in laypeople—and the interest to avoid non-scholarly criteria for the assessment of the professional work of scholars.

As to the substance of academic freedom, the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* declares:

1. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.
3. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

I ask for the indulgence of the US readers of this article for citing at length paragraphs that they so well know, but, again, it is Latin American readers that I have in mind. These propositions are not common knowledge in Latin American universities.

The 1940 Statement opens with a sentence that brilliantly summarizes all I have asserted so far:

> Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

I have taken the license to quote extensively from Finkin and Post's masterful book on academic freedom *For the Common Good. Principles of American Academic Freedom* (2009) for two reasons. First, because it's the most eloquent explanation of academic freedom in the US context I have come across.[1] Second, in the interest of my colleagues in Latin America for whom these ideas remain largely unknown and unexamined.

[1] Other commendable, more recent works are Reichman (2019) and Bilgrami and Cole (2015).

It is also telling that in this book, the expression "university autonomy" never occurs. The word autonomy is brought up only as an attribute of the profession, as in "professional autonomy" (Finkin & Post, 2009, pp. 151-155), to refer to the medieval university's "institutional autonomy" (Finkin & Post, 2009, pp. 151-155), or to refer to the early twentieth-century view that autonomy was vested in the trustees of the university.[2]

Indeed, the concept of autonomy is seldom used in the US discussion of academic freedom. Instead, the comparable notion is that of institutional academic freedom. As Finkin and Post explain (2009, pp. 41-42), the value of universities to society underlies the university's academic freedom, as the university's self-regulation protects all scholars within it. Society grants universities academic freedom in exchange for knowledge.

There is no constitutional recognition of university autonomy in the US. However, the First Amendment of the US Constitution, on the freedom of speech, has served as a basis for judicial examination of cases involving academic freedom. There isn't space here to delve into the problem of constitutional law and academic freedom in the US. A good, concise revision of the subject can be found in Post (2015). But in a US Supreme Court decision in 1957, justice Felix Frankfurter identified: "four essential freedoms of a university-- to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study" (Reichman, 2019, p. 10; and, on another court case, p. 100).

This succinct formulation is as close as constitutional recognition of autonomy as can be found in US constitutional law. As such, it resonates with the Latin American idea of academic autonomy of universities. Let's turn now to the contrasting visions on autonomy (and now, academic freedom) between the US and Latin America.

Conclusion from the US-Latin American Contrasts

The history of the 1918 Córdoba reform movement rehearsed above suggests how unlikely it would have been for autonomy to be conceived from the point of view of the academic freedom of the professors. Córdoba was a rebellion *against* the professoriate: their teaching and examination methods, their idea of a curriculum, their concentration of power, their lack of genuine scholarly stature. Student participation in university government was to be insurance against retrograde faculty.

University autonomy in Latin America developed as a means to protect the university as a societal actor against the intrusion, first of the State and the Church, and more recently, also of business interests and supranational agencies (Ríos, 2016, p. 92). Freedom of the university is the paramount notion, which carries significant juridical consequences, especially for public universities, erstwhile part of the state they are set to put distance with. Therefore, autonomy had to be first legislated into the bylaws of the public universities in the first half of the 20th century, and eventually recognized by the constitutions, to guarantee against State retrogression. In contrast, freedom of the university, seldom called "autonomy," is in the US an epiphenomenon or emergent effect of the freedom of the professoriate.

In short, university autonomy in Latin America was conceived and rolled out in a top-down manner: from an arrangement between state and university down to a prerogative of faculty. Quite the opposite to the bottom-up pattern we find in the US, moving up from faculty self-regulation to university policy and standards, to court decisions upholding academic freedom.

The historical proximity of the triggering events is mere happenstance: the evolution of the 1915 *Declaration*, and the aftermath of 1918 Córdoba have very little in common. Córdoba could not have happened in 1915 US every bit as much as the Declaration could not have happened in 1918 Argentina, or anywhere in the region for that matter. It easier to see why Córdoba could not have happened in the US in 1915: conflicts within faculty, students, and administrators were settled by the trustees; there was

[2] Incidentally, "university autonomy" does not appear in Reichman's (2019) book, either.

no federal Ministry of Education to resort to for arbitration, and not much State oversight of higher education anyway.

The 1915 Declaration could not have originated in the 1920s in Latin America not because public universities in Latin America do not have boards of lay trustees to solve conflicts, nor solely due to the availability of arbitration.

The key reason university autonomy in Latin America did not emerge from the academic freedom of the faculty –this is my hypothesis-- was that at the time, and up until quite recently, there was no academic profession in Latin American universities. The teachers against which the Córdoba students revolted were priests, lawyers, doctors, engineers, or agronomists teaching part-time. The base of their claim to teach was their professional experience and the knowledge of the handbooks (or the sacred books) through which the professions were taught. Library collections were poor and outdated. There was very little by way of experimental science, even in courses requiring it.

A vigorous, cogent statement of the freedoms of scholarship requires a community of scholars in need of those freedoms and with the capacity to articulate them. Such communities did not exist anywhere in Latin America at the time of Córdoba. They began to coalesce as the reform expanded through the region, at a very slow pace, more markedly since the 1960s, in a long process that has not yet come to full fruition (Galaz Fontes, Martínez Stack, Gil Antón, 2020; Marquina, 2020; Bernasconi, 2010; Didou & Remedi, 2008; García De Fanelli, 2008; Balbachevsky, 2002; 2007).

Beyond diverse historical pathways, the contrast between the US and Latin America in this matter helps illuminate some shortcomings of the Latin American notion of university autonomy.

First is that it is much more clear what autonomy stands against than what it is for. The woolly language of the CRES 2018 *Declaration* underscores this. University autonomy is geared to "exercise its critical and proactive role vis-à-vis society," "contributing to practical, political definitions which shall influence the changes needed and desired by our communities", "to be the emblematic institution symbol of the national critical awareness of our Latin American and Caribbean region." This much could be said of various other social institutions: a political party, a think tank, a philanthropic foundation, an industry union, to name a few. As the societal role of universities in the region is not firmly anchored in knowledge, the university as an institution suffers from a lack of mission specificity, and therefore, legitimacy. It emerges into the political fray as just another group of interest.

A second regrettable consequence is that there is no substantive scholarship in Latin America on the evolving contents of academic freedom, its challenges, and its limitations. Autonomy seems to operate as a black hole sucking the light from any systematic reflection on academic freedom.

Nothing in Latin America like the rich case-based decisions stemming from the quasi-judicial process of the Committee A of the AAUP's on Academic Freedom. No meticulous parsing of what the freedom to teach, or the freedom of extramural speech, entail and what it is off-limits. No answer to the question: "Can I tweet that?" (Reichman, 2019, pp. 64-104).

A search for Scopus articles on "academic freedom" and "Latin America" yields paltry six entries: two 1955 pieces by the Argentine Nobel Laureate for Medicine Bernardo Houssay, the Romo de la Rosa article with which we began, a 2002 piece on the experience of a feminist scholar across the US, Russia and Latin America, another, 1982 work on higher education, development assistance, and repressive regimes, and Maria de Figueiredo-Cowen's (2010) paper on the history of university autonomy in Brazil. The latter is a valuable source on the topic, but as the sole paper on academic freedom in Scopus since 1955 makes our case by treating academic freedom and autonomy as synonyms.

Funding

This study was supported by Chile's Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo-ANID (#160007).

References

Abba, M. J., & Streck, D. R. (2021). The 1918 Córdoba Reform and university internationalization in Latin America. *História da Educação, 25*, e102256. https://dx-doi-org.pucdechile.idm.oclc.org/10.1590/2236-3459/102256

American Association of University Professors. (1940). *Statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure*. Access: https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure

Balbachevsky, E., & Quinteiro, M. (2002). The changing academic workplace in Brazil. In P. G. Altbach (Ed.), *The decline of the guru: The academic profession in developing and middle-income countries* (pp. 77-110). Chestnut Hill: Center for International Higher Education, Boston College.

Balbachevsky, E. (2007). The changing patterns of the Brazilian academic profession in the era of globalization. In N. P. Stromquist (Ed.), *The professoriate in the age of globalization* (pp. 65-86). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Bernasconi, A. (2018). Las universidades no tienen dueño: libertad académica y autonomía en regímenes público y privado. In José Antonio Guzmán, Juan Ignacio Brito, Ignacio Illanes (Eds.), *La universidad en debate. 18 miradas en controversia* (pp. 127-140). Santiago: Universidad de Los Andes.

Bernasconi, A. (2010). La apoteosis del investigador y la institucionalización de la profesión académica en Chile. *ESE-Estudios sobre Educación, 19*, 139-163.

Bernasconi, A. (2007). Constitutional prospects for the implementation of funding and governance reforms in Latin American higher education. *Journal of Education Policy, 22*(5), 509-529.

Bilgrami, A., & Cole, J. R. (2015). *Who's afraid of academic freedom?* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Buchbinder, P. (2018). Pensar la reforma universitaria cien años después. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación Superior, 9*(25), 86-95. http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/iisue.20072872e.2019.25.343

Carreño, L. (2020). Entre la intervención política y la construcción de un ethos profesional. La red de revistas estudiantiles independientes de medicina en la década del veinte. *Revista Páginas, 12*(30). https://doi.org/10.35305/rp.v12i30.442

Casanova, H. (2020) Autonomía académica. In Felipe Martínez Rizo (Coord.), *La autonomía universitaria en la coyuntura actual*. Aguascalientes: Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes.

de Figueiredo-Cowen, M. C. M. (2002). Latin American universities, academic freedom and autonomy: A long-term myth? *Comparative Education, 38*(4), 471-484.

Didou, S., & Remedi, E. (2008). *De la pasión a la profesión. Investigación científica y desarrollo en México*. México: Casa Juan Pablos.

Donoso Romo, A. (2020). Movimientos estudiantiles en América Latina (1918-2011): Aproximación historiográfica a sus rasgos compartidos. *Revista Brasileira de História, 40*(83), 235-258.

Donoso, A., & Contreras, R. (2017). La dimensión social del movimiento estudiantil de Córdoba en 1918. *Izquierdas, 33*, 42-65.

Galaz Fontes, J., Martínez Stack, J., Gil Antón, M. (2020). The emergence of the new Mexican academic meritocracy. *Higher Education Governance & Policy, 1*(2), 138-151.

García De Fanelli, A. (2008). *Profesión académica en la Argentina: Carrera e incentivos a los docentes en las Universidades Nacionales*. Buenos Aires: CEDES.

Hoyos Vásquez, G. (2012). Democratizar la democracia: Latinoamérica y su universidad. *Bordon, 64*(3), 117-131.

Fernández Lamarra, N., & Coppola, N. (2014). La Reforma del 18 y la autonomía universitaria. In António Teodoro & José Beltrán (Coord.), *Sumando voces. Ensayos sobre Educación Superior en términos de igualdad e inclusión social* (pp. 127-136). Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila.

Finkin, M. W., & Post, R. C. (2009). *For the common good: Principles of American academic freedom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Markarian, V. (2019) Córdoba en boca de los universitarios uruguayos (algunos de sus cambiantes significados entre los años cincuenta y sesenta del siglo XX). *Avances del Cesor, 16*(20), 129-146.

Marquina, M. (2020). Between the global and the local: The study of the academic profession from a Latin American perspective. *Higher Education Governance & Policy, 1*(1), 63-75.

Martínez Rizo, F. (2020) Autonomía universitaria: antecedentes, retos y perspectivas. In Felipe Martínez Rizo (Coord.), *La autonomía universitaria en la coyuntura actual*. Aguascalientes: Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes.

Milanesio, N. (2005). Gender and generation: The university reform movement in Argentina, 1918. *Journal of Social History, 39*(2), 505-529.

Moraga Valle, F. (2014). Reforma desde el sur, revolución desde el norte. El primer Congreso Internacional de Estudiantes de 1921. *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México, 47*, 155-195. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0185-2620(14)70337-8

Navarro, M. (2012). La antinomia tradición / modernidad en los intelectuales de la Reforma Universitaria de Córdoba en 1918. Un análisis desde la geopolítica histórica argentina. *Andamios, Revista de Investigación Social, 9*(20), 35-61. http://dx.doi.org/10.29092/uacm.v9i20.370

Post, R. (2015). Academic freedom and the constitution. In A. Bilgrami & J. R. Cole (Eds.), *Who's afraid of academic freedom?* (pp. 123-152). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Reichman. H. (2019). *The future of academic freedom*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ríos, L. (2016). Autonomía universitaria: revisar sus significados para repensar la universidad argentina en contextos de democratización de la educación superior. In Eduardo Rinesi, Julia Smola, Camila Cuello y Leticia Ríos (Comp.), *Hombres de una república libre: universidad, inclusión social e integración cultural en Latinoamérica*. Los Polvorines: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento.

Romo de la Rosa. A. (2007). Institutional autonomy and academic freedom: A perspective from the American continent. *Higher Education Policy, 20*, 275-288.

Schwartzman, S. (1993). Policies for higher education in Latin America: The context. *Higher Education, 25*, 9-20.

Serrano Migallón, F. (2020) Autonomía: de quién, para quién, alcance, condiciones. In Felipe Martínez Rizo (Coord.), *La autonomía universitaria en la coyuntura actual*. Aguascalientes: Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes.

Tcach, C., & Iribarne, M. C. (2019). Nacionalismo y Reforma Universitaria en el siglo XX argentino. Una mirada desde su cuna: Córdoba, 1918. *Avances del Cesor, 16*(20), 109-128.

Tünnermann, Carlos. (2008). *Noventa años de la Reforma Universitaria de Córdoba: 1918-2008*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

UNESCO-IESALC. (2018a). *Regional Conference on Higher Education 2018* (General Report). Access: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iozgOCNWocxS1IP8MMjzMLqd0xu-n7l1/view

UNESCO-IESALC. (2018b). *Regional Conference on Higher Education 2018* (Declaration of the III Regional Conference on Higher Education). Access: https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Declaracion2018PortFinal.pdf