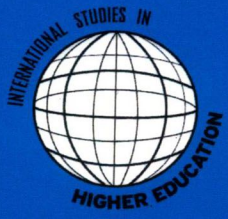

Structuring Mass Higher Education

The Role of Elite Institutions

EDITED BY
DAVID PALFREYMAN AND TED TAPPER

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Structuring Mass Higher Education

In response to the growth of mass higher education, many universities are rethinking their future roles within their national systems of higher education as well as in a global context. Expansion has invariably changed the experience of higher education for all the involved parties: from presidents, rectors, and vice-chancellors to first-term undergraduates, organized interest groups, government bureaucracies, policy-makers, and – of course – taxpayers and parents.

Providing an international comparative perspective, *Structuring Mass Higher Education* examines the impact of these changes upon national systems of higher education. In particular, this text explores how "elite" universities have sought to retain their national status and, in some cases, secure a "world-class ranking."

Extensively researched case studies covering a wide range of countries explore questions such as:

- What are the drivers of change in systems of mass higher education?
- Within mass systems of higher education, what are the links that bind the various institutions and groupings of institutions together?
- Is there global convergence in the structuring of systems of higher education?
- Do national and regional systems have the capacity to interpret global pressures for change in a manner that preserves national cultural traditions?

Structuring Mass Higher Education provides a timely and valuable discussion that will help higher education policy makers, researchers, and students to understand these critical issues in greater depth.

David Palfreyman is Director of the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (OxCHEPS), New College, University of Oxford.

Ted Tapper is a Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (OxCHEPS), New College, University of Oxford, and the Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy at Southampton University (CHEMPAS).

International Studies in Higher Education
Series Editors:
David Palfreyman, OxCHEPS
Ted Tapper, OxCHEPS
Scott Thomas, Claremont Graduate University

The central purpose of this series of a projected dozen volumes is to see how different national and regional systems of higher education are responding to widely shared pressures for change. The most significant of these are: rapid expansion; reducing public funding; the increasing influence of market and global forces; and the widespread political desire to integrate higher education more closely into the wider needs of society and, more especially, the demands of the economy. The series will commence with an international overview of structural change in systems of higher education. It will then proceed to examine on a global front the change process in terms of topics that are both traditional (for example, institutional management and system governance) and emerging (for example, the growing influence of international organizations and the blending of academic and professional roles). At its conclusion the series will have presented, through an international perspective, both a composite overview of contemporary systems of higher education, along with the competing interpretations of the process of change.

Published titles:

Structuring Mass Higher Education
The Role of Elite Institutions
Edited by David Palfreyman and Ted Tapper

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Series Editors' Introduction

International Studies in Higher Education

This Series is constructed around the premise that higher education systems are experiencing common pressures for fundamental change, reinforced by differing national and regional circumstances that also impact upon established institutional structures and procedures. There are four major dynamics for change that are of international significance:

1. Mass higher education is a universal phenomenon.
2. National systems find themselves located in an increasingly global marketplace that has particular significance for their more prestigious institutions.
3. Higher education institutions have acquired (or been obliged to acquire) a wider range of obligations, often under pressure from governments prepared to use state power to secure their policy goals.
4. The balance between the public and private financing of higher education has shifted – markedly in some cases – in favour of the latter.

Although higher education systems in all regions and nation states face their own particular pressures for change, these are especially severe in some cases: the collapse of the established economic and political structures of the former Soviet Union along with Central and Eastern Europe, the political revolution in South Africa, the pressures for economic development in India and China, and demographic pressure in Latin America.

Each volume in the Series will examine how systems of higher education are responding to this new and demanding political and socio-economic environment. Although it is easy to overstate the uniqueness of the present situation, it is not an exaggeration to say that higher education is undergoing a fundamental shift in its character, and one that is truly international in scope. We are witnessing a major transition in the relationship of higher education, state and society. What makes the present circumstances particularly interesting is to see how different systems – a product of social, cultural, economic and political contexts that have interacted and evolved over time – respond in their own peculiar ways to the changing environment. There is no assumption that the pressures for change have set in motion the trend towards a converging model of higher education, but we do believe that in the present circumstances no understanding of 'the idea of the university' remains sacrosanct.

Although this is a Series with an international focus it is not expected that each individual volume should cover every national system of higher education. This would be an impossible task. Whilst aiming for a broad range of case studies, with each volume addressing a particular theme, the focus will be upon the most important and interesting examples of responses to the pressures for change. Most of the individual volumes will bring together a range of comparative quantitative and qualitative information, but the primary aim of each volume will be to present differing interpretations of critical developments in key aspects of the experience of higher education. The dominant overarching objective is to explore the conflict of ideas and the political struggles that inevitably surround any significant policy development in higher education.

It can be expected that volume editors and their authors will adopt their own interpretations to explain the emerging patterns of development. There will be conflicting theoretical positions drawn from the multi-disciplinary, and increasingly interdisciplinary, field of higher education research. Thus we can expect in most volumes to find an intermarriage of approaches drawn from sociology, economics, history, political science, cultural studies, and the administrative sciences. However, whilst there will be different approaches to understanding the process of change in higher education, each volume editor(s) will impose a framework upon the volume inasmuch as chapter authors will be required to address common issues and concerns. Moreover, the volume editor(s) will write introductory and concluding chapters that set out the major themes to be addressed and which draw the arguments together comparatively. Furthermore, the Series Editors will also update this foreword as each volume appears, both to show how the new volume fits into the overall framework of the Series as well as to inform readers about related future texts. This, therefore, is not a Series that will bring together under one label a number of what are essentially 'stand alone' texts. A clear framework provided by both the Series and individual volume editors is designed to aid continuity and comparison.

David Palfreyman
Director of OxCHEPS, New College, University of Oxford

Ted Tapper
OxCHEPS, New College, University of Oxford and CHEMPAS, University of Southampton

Scott Thomas
Professor of Educational Studies, Claremont Graduate University, California

Contributors

Foreword

Sheldon Rothblatt is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, and sometime Director of the Center for Studies in Higher Education on that campus. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, and King's College, University of Cambridge. His academic publications are in the comparative history of universities, with translations into Italian, Spanish, Swedish and Japanese. In 2002 he gave the Bishop Waynflete Lectures at Magdalen College, University of Oxford, which, expanded and revised, were published in 2007 under the title *Education's Abiding Moral Dilemma: Merit and Worth in the Cross-Atlantic Democracies, 1800–2006* (Symposium Books, UK).

General Editors

David Palfreyman, is Bursar and Fellow, New College, Oxford, and also Director of OxCHEPS (The Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies), details of which can be seen on its website at http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk. David is a General Editor for the seventeen-volume Open University Press–McGraw Hill series: *Managing Universities and Colleges* (within which he and David Warner contribute a volume on *managing crisis*).

Ted Tapper is Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies and at CHEMPAS, University of Southampton. Most of his research on higher education has been concerned with issues of governance with a particular focus on the changing relationship between the state and the universities in the British context. In recent years he has added a stronger comparative dimension to his research and this book reflects that development.

Scott L. Thomas is Professor in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University. His work focuses on stratification in higher education with an especial interest in issues relating to college access and the secondary school achievement gap. Thomas also has a line of methodological work that focuses on multilevel models and social network analysis. His work in this area includes a book, *An Introduction to Multilevel Modeling* (with Ron Heck, published by Psychology Press), and related articles in a variety of refereed journals.

Authors

James Fairweather is Professor of Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education, and Director of the Center for Higher and Adult Education at Michigan State University. Fairweather is internationally known for his work in faculty roles and rewards as well as reform in engineering and science education. His book, *Faculty Work and Public Trust*, is a seminal work on faculty rewards. Among his honors is the Career Research Award from the American Educational Research Association (Division J). Currently Fairweather is co-principal investor for the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning funded by the National Science Foundation. Prior to coming to Michigan State University Fairweather taught in the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Penn State University.

Peter Scott is Vice-Chancellor of Kingston University London. Previously he was Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Education at the University of Leeds and before that Editor of *The Times Higher Education Supplement.* He was a member of the board of the Higher Education Funding Council for England from 2000 until 2006. He is chair of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning. His books include *The Meanings of Mass Higher Education* and, with Helga Nowotny and Michael Gibbons, *Re-Thinking Science.*

Agnete Vabø is a Senior Researcher at NIFU STEP Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, Oslo, Norway. Over a number of years she has undertaken research into the development of the academic profession particularly in the Nordic countries. Two of her most recent works in English are: Høstaker, Roar & Vabø (2008), Knowledge Society, Higher Education and the Society of Control. *Learning and Teaching*, 1(1): 122–154; Vabø (2007). The Principal–Agent Relationship and Its Impact on the Autonomy of the Academic Profession, in Locke and Teichler (Eds.), *The Changing Condition for Academic Work and Career in Select Countries.*

Per Olaf Aamodt is a Senior Researcher at NIFU STEP Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, Oslo Norway. His major research in higher education research is the student experience, access to higher education, learning outcomes and reasons why students fail to complete their studies. Two of his most recent works in English are: Aamodt and Kyvik (2005). Access to higher education in the Nordic countries in Tapper and Palfreyman (Eds.), *Understanding Mass Higher Education: Comparative Perspectives on Access*; and Aamodt (2005) Access to Higher Education within a Welfare State System: Developments and Dilemmas Teixeira in Johnson, Joao Rosa and Vossensteyn (Eds.), *A Fairer Deal? Cost-Sharing and Accessibility in Western Higher Education.*

Alma Maldonado-Maldonado is an assistant professor in the University of Arizona's Center for the Study of Higher Education. She earned her doctorate at Boston College. Her research focuses on comparative higher education, international organizations, and higher education policy with particular reference to Latin America. She is co-editor of two books, *Private Higher Education: An International Bibliography* and *Educación Superior Latinoamericana y Organismos Internacionales. Un Análisis Crítico.* Her current main research project is an examination of collaboration between universities on the Mexico–USA border. With Roberta Bassett she is editing a book for this series on the role of international organizations in shaping higher education policy worldwide.

N. Jayaram is Director of the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, India. He is on the Steering Committee of the International Network on the Role of Universities in Developing Areas (INRUDA). He is the Managing Editor of *Sociological Bulletin* (Journal of the Indian Sociological Society). He has published extensively on the sociology of higher education in India, and his books include *Higher Education and Status Retention, Sociology of Education in India, Social Conflict* (co-edited with Satish Saberwal), *The Indian Diaspora* (ed.), *Keywords: Identity* (with Aziz Al-Azmeh, Wang Bin, David A. Hollinger, Mahmood Mamdani and Emmanuel Renault), and *On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives* (ed.).

Barbara M. Kehm is Professor of Higher Education Research at the University of Kassel (Germany) and Managing Director of the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER) also at Kassel. She has published numerous scholarly works on contemporary developments in higher education with a focus on issues of internationalization and the governance of higher education systems and institutions. She is also active in a number of international organizations devoted to monitoring and understanding policy change in higher education.

Peer Pasternack is Associate Professor of Higher Education Research and Research Coordinator at the Institute of Higher Education Research, Halle-Wittenberg (HoF Wittenberg). He has written widely on developments in European higher education and has particular expertise on the changing character of higher education in the former East Germany (German Democratic Republic – DDR)

Andre Kraak is Director of Research on Human Resources Development at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Cape Town, South Africa. Dr Kraak has been involved in several education and training policy development initiatives since the late 1980s. His interests and expertise span further and higher education, skills development, and science and technology policy studies.

Kai-Ming Cheng is Professor in Education and Senior Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor at the University of Hong Kong. He received his doctoral degree from the Institute of Education, University of London. From 1996 to 2006, he was Visiting Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and taught there every spring. His research started with an analysis of educational trends in rural China, which he has extended to India. In recent years, he has concentrated on studying changes in the workplace and how they impact on education reform. In Hong Kong he is a member of the Education Commission and is also active in the comprehensive education reform movement there.

Yan Wang is currently (2007–2008) a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow of the Fulbright Program sponsored by the State Department of the USA. She was Executive Director, Department for International Cooperation, Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences from 2002 to 2007. In this role she was extensively engaged in educational research and policy consultancy in the areas of basic education, vocational and technical education and training, and higher education. She holds a Master of Educational Economics and Administration, and a first degree in English Literature. She is now pursuing a doctoral program at the University of Hong Kong.

Su-Yan Pan is Research Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong. Her research is concentrated on the development of higher education in China. She has worked as an Associate Professor at the School of Education at the Huazhong University of Science and Technology, and the Institute of Higher Education, Shanghai Jiaotong University. She received her PhD from the University of Hong Kong.

Frans Kaiser is a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) of the University of Twente in the Netherlands. As the co-ordinator of the International Higher Education Monitor he has a broad interest and insight into higher education policies and statistical trends in many Western higher education systems. His latest projects are on system steering mechanisms and the development of a European classification for higher education institutions.

Hans Vossensteyn has worked at the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) of the University of Twente in the Netherlands since 1991. He is a Senior Researcher and Research Co-ordinator, and since 2007 he has also been a Professor at the MBA-Higher Education and Science Management Center at the Fachhochschule Osnabrück in Germany. Hans has covered many higher education research topics: internationalization; higher education indicators, both quantitative and qualitative; and international comparative analyses with a strong focus on financial matters – allocation models, tuition fees, student financial

support and access and equity. In 2005 he completed with distinction his PhD on students' price-responsiveness. He is a member of several advisory and editorial boards and is involved in training and consultancy.

Ireneusz Białecki trained as a sociologist and has a particular interest in inequality of access to education. Currently he is a Professor at the University of Warsaw and Head of the Centre for Science Policy and Higher Education. He is Editor of the journal *Nauka I Szkolnictwo Wyższe* [Science and Higher Education], which is published at the Centre. He is also a member of the Editorial Board of the *European Journal of Vocational Training.* In 1994–1996 he served as National Study Manager for IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey, OECD), while in 2000–2003 he was a member of the Polish team for PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). His publications in English include: Bialecki and Heyns (1993). Inequality in Education in Post-war Poland in Hans-Peter Blossfield and Yossi Shavit (Eds.), *Persistent Inequality: Changing Educational Stratification in Thirteen Countries.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, and Bialecki and Heyns (1991) Reluctant Vanguard and Makeshift Coalition. *American Political Sciences Review*, June.

Malgorzata Dąbrowa-Szefler is a Professor at the University of Warsaw. She is co-author of the recently published *Country Background Report* (2007) of the OECD review of Polish tertiary education. She is a specialist on the financing of higher education and her publications include: Dąbrowa-Szefler (2003) *System nauki i szkolnictwa wyższego: elementy funkcjonowania i zarządzania* [System of Science and Higher Education: aspects of functioning and management], Centre for Science Policy and Higher Education, Warsaw; Dąbrowa-Szefler (2001) *Kadry dla nauki w Polsce. Stan i perspektywy rozwoju* [Manpower for research and science in Poland: Present State and Perspectives], Centre for Science Policy and Higher Education, Warsaw.

Cécile Deer is a research fellow attached to a multidisciplinary research centre (SKOPE – the Centre of Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance) in the Department of Economics at Oxford University, and is also a lecturer at Balliol College, Oxford. She has written extensively on contemporary higher education issues including the evolution and political economy of the reform of higher education systems in the national, European and international contexts addressing, more specifically, questions of access. She is the author of *Higher Education in England and France since the 1980s* (Symposium Books, 2002).

Simon Marginson is a Professor in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne, Australia. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences Australia, and the Society for Research into

Higher Education, UK. He is active as a media commentator in Australia; a scholar in North America and Mexico, Western Europe, and East and Southeast Asia; and in writing policy papers for the OECD. Simon works in comparative and international education in the context of globalization. He is interested in problems of human freedom and academic creativity, and the trajectories of research universities, His latest book is *Prospects of Higher Education: Globalization, Market Competition, Public Goods and the Future of the University* (Sense Publishers, 2007).

Fumi Kitagawa holds a PhD in Urban and Regional Studies. In Japan her work at the Department of Higher Education, National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) focused on the internationalization of higher education; the financing of higher education; university–industry links; and the contribution of universities to their regions. From January 2008, Fumi has been based at CIRCLE, Lund University in Sweden where she is an assistant professor.

Roger L. Geiger was embedded with the Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, from 1974 to 1987. He is currently Distinguished Professor of Higher Education, Pennsylvania State University. His study of universities and economic development, with co-author Creso Sá, *Tapping the Riches of Science: Universities and the Promise of Economic Growth*, was published by Harvard University Press in 2008. He is also an editor of *The Future of the American Public Research University* (2007). His study, *Knowledge and Money: Research Universities and the Paradox of the Marketplace* was published by Stanford University Press (2004). His other writings relevant to the Ivy League are cited in this contribution to this volume.

Foreword

If those interested in the fortunes of universities today have any doubts as to a national obsession with super-universities, let them plunge into the details provided by the expert contributions to this volume. Nation after nation, government after government, research university after research university, are committed to what is now called "the world-class university." Just mentioning the phenomenon summons up a dizzyingly competitive race for global standing measured by a number of different ranking methods. (I am almost reminded of an eighteenth-century parlor game called "the ranking of the arts." Which art form contributed most to civilization? Music, sorrowfully, as "merely" entertainment was last.) It does little good to complain that the rankings may distort educational priorities. As Ted Tapper and David Palfreyman (editors of this volume) along with other close observers of the rankings game say, they are here to stay; and it behooves those who care about the well-being of the university as a special cultural artifact to pay serious attention to what is happening.

The drive to create a colony of universities particularly distinguished by research excellence (teaching excellence is a more vexed question, much harder to measure), merit recruitment and by signal contributions to economic and social advancement is not just the natural desire of educational institutions to set themselves apart in order to achieve fame, although this is a tendency. The academic profession itself, as most professions, has always been reputation-minded. Historically, professional people were not likely to be the richest members of society, nor members of the leading social hierarchies (with exceptions), so their claim to attention was through educational competence and superiority. (In the case of England, as Robert Anderson explains, even "effortless superiority" (2006).) The late Harold Perkin (1969) noted that the academic profession had become even more important in our day. It was the "key profession" because it educated all the others. But what is particularly special about the present situation is that governments – admittedly not all – have taken a keen and decisive interest in encouraging – the word may be too mild – the further advance of elite research universities. Given the long if recent history of government efforts to promote more egalitarian educational opportunities and, with such actions, to mitigate the effects of social and historical privilege, the changing role of government is significant. Books have been written on the subject.

That role has shifted in many western countries from social democratic or welfare state objectives, variously pursued, to a friendlier view of the place of

free markets in re-shaping the curricular emphases of the research university and, as a by-product, its internal structure and decision-making habits. That does not mean, it must be said, that the welfare state is in danger of becoming irrelevant. On the contrary, public expectations remain high. Environmental issues, job-retraining, aging populations, poverty, health, as well as the circulation of diseases either new or seemingly moribund remain important. New forms of financial and entrepreurial activity have renewed desires for regulation. The world is still a dangerous place, and citizens demand protection. Nevertheless, what has emerged after some fifty years of expansion in secondary and tertiary education (in some instances earlier), an expansion that has moved higher education from elite through mass to universal entry (using the terms made famous by the late Martin Trow, 2006), are the combined pressures of national and global markets and government. These are impossible to resist, although their advance is disputed by those with doubts. *Inter alia*, they charge that the drive for wealth and influence at bottom simply reflect values more congenial to market purchases than to inherited values of a higher order. The argument may be old-fashioned but hardly trivial.

The welfare state proved to be a reasonably effective instrument for distributing certain health and economic, as well as educational benefits. It proved to be less effective in encouraging the creative energies of nations committed to a particular historical definition of progress, or even in generating the resources needed for welfare state promises. European governments, having committed themselves, at least in principle, to egalitarian policies regarding the provision of post-secondary education, discovered that there too the costs were over-running their ability to maintain some degree of equity over what increasingly came to be seen as a national system of higher education requiring system policies.

In the newly developed and globally interconnected competitive environment, it seemed rational to concentrate public resources on select institutions as a form of grand seed money, so to speak. Various indicators of research productivity, "efficiency gains," value-added learning, quality assurance and audits were devised using intermediate agencies to force those universities to diversify their income streams through "privatization." In some cases research universities did not have to be forced, having already developed "multiversity" capabilities. Many academic observers concluded that such actions from the center were new forms of interference with institutional independence and academic freedom, although it was no longer clear that even the nation-state had primacy over the global university. Reluctantly, in some countries, but not in all, governments eased restrictions on charging tuition fees. From California's sometime "free" tuition universities to most universities elsewhere, the costs of attending a residential university, and especially one with a brand name, rose to unprecedented

heights, easily out-racing inflation and raising anxieties about student loans, lending practices and payback schemes. After adverse media exposure, in 2008, the Croesus colleges and universities of the United States agreed to use more of their endowments for tuition discounting.

The model, or shall we say, the example of a world-class university is American, especially the handful of inordinately wealthy private research institutions. Through judicious portfolio investments, and the contributions of successful alumni – Stanford University tapped the huge resources of Silicon Valley, whose industries it helped establish – the "wealth gap" grew to a point where the famous state-established research universities began to talk about "a crisis of the publics." They wondered whether in the emerging future they could retain their own reputations as world-class institutions.

As the following essays so thoroughly demonstrate, the race for global pre-eminence has spread to newcomers such as China. India, another potential global player, is however still beset by educational rigidities. Established industrial economies like Japan have taken a further look at their configuration of universities, singling out the former Imperial University of Tokyo, the private university of Waseda and several others as candidates for the exclusive club. Latin American universities are still procrastinating whether they should compete for membership. In a different corner of the world, the University of Auckland, until a few decades ago more or less another of the university colleges in the solar system of the examining University of London (now losing its planets), has declared its desire to join the trend. Nearby Australia is well along in the process. Israeli universities have long since privatized.

It makes no sense for any nation not to urge its leading universities towards further excellence, towards discovery and its applications as the wellsprings of modern health, towards superb teaching and towards the education of potentially outstanding students as possibly leaders and shapers of tomorrow's governments and institutions. But money, high status and privilege also bring responsibilities. The great Dr. Johnson once said that superiors condescend to inferiors. In turn, inferiors defer to superiors. Such behavior is unacceptable in a democracy and certainly not acceptable in education. The world-class research university is underpinned by a great array of other types of tertiary educational institutions upon which its legitimacy, indeed its very success, depends. They serve an immense variety of public needs and provide the opportunities for upward mobility that any generous-minded and decent nation requires. Those institutions also possess talent – talent very often originating within the famous universities. They are engaged in the noble task of uncovering student ability where it might otherwise be neglected. Universities that have scaled the heights in a new environment of fierce rivalries retain an obligation to give creative thought as to how an entire national system can

thrive without being partitioned into haves and have-nots, and riven by ruinous jealousies.

Here is another assignment worthy of the world-class university.

Sheldon Rothblatt
Emeritus Professor of History
University of California, Berkeley

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