

The University in Europe and the World: Twentieth Century Expansion*

JOHN W. MEYER/EVAN SCHOFFER

In this essay, we review empirical data on the twentieth century growth of higher education around the world. Several observations are striking and clear. First, there was extraordinary expansion. Higher education became organized on a much larger scale. Second, this expansion was concentrated in the period after about 1960. Third, the expansion was world-wide, characterizing every sort of country. Growth rates in all types of countries tended to be rather similar. The expansion in Europe, characterized by long traditions of controlled and constrained growth, has been especially noteworthy. The European expansion is striking because it is associated with a dramatic supra-national “Bologna Process” forcefully driving organizational change that in other world regions occurs with less disciplined planning, pressure, and purpose.

* Equal authors. This essay is a revision of a paper published in the journal *Die Hochschule*, Institute for Higher Educational Research, Halle-Wittenberg (Meyer and Schofer 2005). Another revision will appear in an edition, edited by Miguel Pereyra, of the *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, in 2006. The paper reflects analyses developed in Schofer/Meyer (2005), Drori et al. (2003) and Meyer/Ramirez (2000). The essay was prepared while John Meyer served as Christian Wolff Visiting Professor at the University of Halle. Work on the paper was supported by a Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship (to Evan Schofer), and by grants (to Francisco Ramirez and John Meyer) from the Spencer Foundation and from the Bechtel Center of the Stanford Institute for International Studies. Valuable comments were provided by David Frank, Gero Lenhardt, and Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas, and by Francisco Ramirez, Gili Drori, and other members of Stanford’s Comparative Workshop. Comments by participants in seminars at Stanford, and the Universities of Bielefeld, Halle-Wittenberg, and Minnesota were also most useful.

The overall pattern of observations poses an explanatory puzzle. Most explanations of higher educational expansion, such as those emphasizing socio-economic demands or needs, focus on national-level factors. They obviously will not serve well to account for endemic worldwide growth. This essay, which reflects sociological institutionalist theories, focuses on global changes and shifting cultural models to provide an account of the dramatic world-wide expansion of higher education (Meyer et al. 1997, Drori et al. 2003).

Background

Higher education is a worldwide phenomenon. But research on higher education tends to focus on case studies of particular institutions or national systems. When it moves in a more comparative direction, as in the well-known work of Burton Clark (e.g., 1983), it tends to focus on arrangements in a fairly circumscribed world – mainly the wealthy, industrialized nations. These qualities are also characteristic of research on the specialized topic of higher educational expansion. Country case studies are the focus of attention. The impressive effort of Paul Windolf goes beyond that (1997), but the cases he compares – Germany, France, the United States, Italy, and Japan – are among the most developed countries.

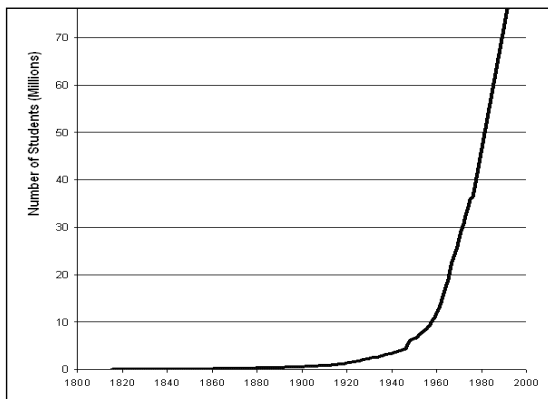
Case study research is known for its ability to trace causal effects and their pathways in considerable detail. But it suffers from its virtues, in that this literature has a pronounced tendency to attribute causal significance to particular and distinctive features of the case under examination. After all, a student who spent two years on a case and reported that there is little significant about it, and that its history parallels that of all the other cases, would be unlikely to receive a degree, let alone substantial academic attention. Thus the research literature on higher educational expansion tends to emphasize characteristics of particular countries or types of countries as lying behind rapid growth in the contemporary period. In the United States, for instance, it is common to discuss post-war expansion as resulting from political changes embedded in the “G.I. Bill” – legislation that facilitated higher educational access for returning veterans after World War II. In Britain, and Continental countries, interpretations can stress the post-war breakdown of the constraints supported by the old class systems, the demands of a “new economy,” or the weakening of the capacity of the state to maintain controls (Ben-David/Zloczower 1962). In some such interpretations, especially in the early post-war decades, the breakdown involved was thought to support

potentially destructive over-education, credential inflation, and rampant status competition (e.g., Collins 1979, Dore 1975, Fuller/Rubinson 1992 for a late reflection).

That sort of unease about higher educational expansion has greatly receded both in the policy world and in academic theory. One can now observe little concern about the dangers and costs of over-education (but see Lenhardt (2002) for examples of older and more conservative German reactions). This change in interpretation is a worldwide and global cultural phenomenon, and in this essay we see it as playing a direct causal role in higher educational expansion everywhere. In recent years, it is especially highly organized in Europe, with the “Bologna Process,” but it is really a global process, and the results are global in scope.

The Worldwide Character of Higher Educational Expansion

Banks (2001) assembled data on higher educational enrollments for countries around the world from the late 19th century to the early 1980s. UNESCO provides similar data in recent years (e.g., UNESCO 2004). The definitions employed are fairly conventional, covering post-secondary education with enough of an academic character to be seen as comparable to traditional university-level work: the great majority of the enrollments are in fact in institutions called universities, or explicitly treated as university equivalent. We combined these two sources to construct a dataset that covers the whole world for the entire twentieth century (Schofer/Meyer 2005). There are undoubtedly missing data, but they are not likely to contribute much error, since the missing cases are typically colonies or poor countries early in the century, and these cases account for little or no enrollment. The overall global trend is depicted in Figure 1, which shows the extraordinary growth of higher education enrollments in a specific time period following World War II.

Figure 1: World Tertiary Students, 1815-2000

In 1900, only about half a million students were enrolled in the world, making up a small fraction of a single per cent of the relevant age cohort. By 2000, about a hundred million students are involved, representing something like twenty per cent of the relevant age cohort worldwide (UNESCO 2004, Schofer/Meyer 2005). And the great bulk of the growth occurred in the last four decades of the twentieth century. One can imagine an expansion of this magnitude as part of a world system of Western domination, like high-technology development or oil consumption (Wallerstein 1974). The idea is that the world tends to be a single economy organized around a sharply-defined and often exploitive class system. In this case, the expansion would occur principally in the developed world, with low rates of growth in developing countries. The world is an extraordinarily unequal social system, and it would certainly make sense to observe the fruits of extreme inequality in differential rates of educational expansion. Many interpretations of modern social change have this character, and in the case of higher education, there are interpretive efforts along this line (e.g., Clark 1992). But this line of thought has some difficulty coming to terms with worldwide expansion, in all sorts of countries both central and peripheral. So there are reasons to be skeptical:

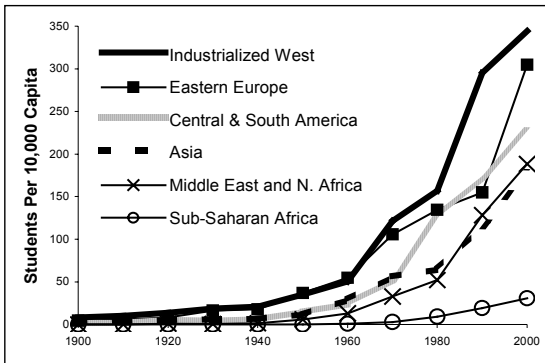
a) As an empirical matter, research on the expansion of mass education has shown that in the last half of the twentieth century high and comparable rates of expansion occur in all sorts of countries, relatively independent of developmental levels.

b) As a theoretical matter, neoinstitutional theory in sociology emphasizes dramatically how much the institutions of modernity (as opposed to the actual income and resource levels nominally associated

with these modern institutions) diffuse around the world independent of socioeconomic developments (see the summaries in Meyer et al. 1997, or for education, Meyer/Ramirez 2000). Mass education is clearly one of these institutions. Higher education seems to be another.

c) As a practical matter, higher education is one of those institutions whose costs may be scaled to the economic level of the country in which it occurred. As with other educational institutions, costs are mainly in salaries, and salaries can be low in poor countries. Further, there is no standard worldwide definition of educational standards (e.g., libraries, faculty competence, research facilities), so an organization can be considered a university in a poor country that would be far beneath the scale of acceptability in a rich one.

Figure 2: Tertiary Enrollment per 10,000 Capita, Regional Averages, 1900-2000



The data on the issue are definitive. In Figure Two, we classify countries by world region, as a simple way to show the results. The West (including the Anglo-American democracies) and Eastern Europe are set against the less developed regions of the world. We show the mean ratios of educational enrollment to overall population for each region through as much of the twentieth century as we can. Two methodological issues may be noted.

a) The ratios are calculated with the whole national population as denominator because in early decades of the century precise age-group estimates are often missing. This turns out to create little error: analyses for the last half of the century using UNESCO data permit the employment of the appropriate denominator (customarily, the population aged 20-24), and show exactly the same patterns we report here.

b) Data availability changes mean that increasing numbers of countries are included in the analyses as time goes on. Schofer/Meyer (2005) show, by using constant sets of countries, that such more precise analyses show the same patterns as those reported here.

We can summarize the results simply. Roughly similar rates of growth are to be found in every group of countries that we can distinguish. Everywhere there is expansion. And everywhere this expansion is concentrated in the period since 1960. Even in Sub-Saharan Africa, which enters post-colonial society with almost no tertiary education, we find the same growth pattern that we note elsewhere. The African curve is far below the others (which are surprisingly similar), and that may lead a reader to misinterpret the data. In fact, the growth rate in Africa is quite high in this period, and is very similar to that found in every other region. Some African countries now easily have enrollment ratios that exceed European countries of a few decades ago. The data show a few interesting subtleties, such as a slower rate of growth we note in Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. This interesting observation is analyzed in detail by several scholars with much better data than we present here. Their interpretations, consistent with our own, are noted below. For now, we need to call attention to the main observation. For every type of country, relatively independent of national resources, let alone national “needs,” high growth in higher educational enrollments can be found in the period since the 1950s. Detailed analyses show that this pattern characterizes not just types of countries, but almost all individual countries. As a result, gross tertiary enrollment ratios in European countries can exceed 80 %.

Thus higher education expansion in the modern period is principally a global pattern, rather than a distinctive set of national patterns. However, some national variation is evident despite the massive global trend. Quantitative analyses presented in Schofer and Meyer (2005) explore the issue using pooled panel regression analyses over the period from 1900 to 2000 for a sample of roughly 100 countries. Statistical analyses show that higher educational expansion is a bit more rapid in richer countries, which could reflect both greater demand and more ready supply in such countries. And expansion is greater in countries with more expanded mass educational systems, which could reflect the greater supply of candidates, or more likely the processes of status competition celebrated in a long and distinguished literature (Boudon 1973, Bourdieu/Passeron 1977, Dore 1975, Collins 1979, 2000). On the other hand, perhaps this effect too indicates the same global process of educational expansion that the expansion of higher education does. Earlier research, indeed, shows that the worldwide takeoff of mass education took shape

in precisely the same post-1950 time period that triggered the expansion of higher education (Meyer et al. 1992).

Explaining the Global Pattern of Expansion

The global character of higher educational expansion contradicts some of the most traditional or conventional explanations of variations in educational systems. A pervasive functionalism runs through most of the literature, in particular stressing the impact of economic change in creating needs for expanded education to meet present or future labor force requirements. Present requirements obviously can show up in labor force demand, with scarcities, production bottlenecks, and the like. Future labor force requirements can show up through formal and informal processes of manpower planning.

Functionalist ideas are rooted in two main empirical claims, both of which are potentially problematic. First is the idea that economic change creates real labor market demands for highly educated individuals. The research literature has not observed much of a relationship between economic factors and educational change (Meyer/Ramirez 2000, Windolf 1997). For instance, Windolf (1997) did not find that patterns of industrialization could account for trends in higher education expansion, while Schofer and Meyer (2005) find only a small (and somewhat unstable) effect. The sheer levels of enrollments – exceeding 80 percent in Europe and well into double-digits within some agricultural Sub-Saharan nations – hint that educational expansion may be sharply decoupled from real economic demand. A second idea, which has received somewhat greater support in the literature, is that higher education produces functional benefits for the economy, and thus it is reasonable for states to pursue aggressive expansion. For instance, economists have repeatedly shown that mass education expansion has a large positive effect on national economic growth (Barro/Sala-i-Martin 1995). Also, Schofer et al. (2000) find that higher education enrollments in math and science have positive effects on economic growth. Finally, classic economic studies of “rates of return” show substantial public and private benefits of higher education (Psacharopoulos 1982). While the latter “rate of return” studies involve dubious assumptions (for instance, that higher wages for degree holders reflect increased skills and efficiency rather than screening or credentialing effects), the literature hints that higher education may be a source of economic benefit. But even on this issue, research findings are mixed. While enrollments in math and science may yield benefits, studies of overall tertiary enrollment fail to observe such

an effect. In fact, in a number of studies, tertiary educational expansion shows statistically insignificant *negative* effects on subsequent national economic growth (Chabbott/Ramirez 2000, Benavot 1992).

For the Third World, functionalist ideas fail on the face of it. The occupational structures and economies of such countries by no means went through the kinds of growth that might have generated large-scale educational expansion. Typical Third World countries now have higher educational enrollment rates far above those of Germany, France, or Great Britain three or four decades ago – clearly exceeding any plausible labor market demand. For example, Kazakhstan now has as many higher education students as the whole world had in 1900 (Banks 2001, UNESCO 2004). The rapid expansion of tertiary education in modern African countries, despite consistent records of economic failure, makes it clear that economic development – and its functional requirements – is not a sufficient explanatory variable in accounting for educational expansion. Sociological institutionalist ideas are of much greater utility here (see e.g., Meyer et al. 1997, Meyer/Ramirez 2000). These lines of thought decompose the problem into two components. First, they offer explanations of the *worldwide* character of the global expansion. Second they offer explanations of the *expansionist* character of the global change.

1) *Explaining the global character of change:* Institutional theory emphasizes the worldwide commitment of countries to aggressive doctrines of both socio-economic progress and individual human development, and to the expanding ideologies that education is a key to this progress. A rapidly expanding world society built up the powers and responsibilities of a great many nation-states, throughout the Third World. The idea that all countries, including the Third World ones, could develop (and develop rapidly) took firm hold. Thus, while countries differed enormously in economic development, their highly legitimated long-term goals came to be extremely similar. Copying expanded educational models made sense in terms of their common developmental goals, even if not in terms of their actual socio-economic realities. In other words, while functional theory cannot plausibly explain worldwide expansion, functional theory seen as a common world developmental ideology does the explanatory task rather well. Common goals, and common models of how to pursue those goals, create worldwide isomorphic educational change.

In explaining common worldwide change patterns in the field of education, institutional theory has a special advantage. Even to the most sophisticated empirical and theoretical analysts, the causal linkage between educational change and socio-economic progress is quite opaque

(see Chabbott/Ramirez 2000 for a review). There is a worldwide ideological agreement that education is indeed a main source of social progress, but the character of the link is very unclear. This is a situation that generates the rapid diffusion of fashionable models of what an educational system should look like. Models can change rapidly, sometimes emphasizing the creation of technical skills and innovations through science and engineering, and at other times stressing the creation of socio-cultural integration through common cultural and social scientific understandings. American education has, thus, often been a kind of model for the world – but in the 1980s a substantial literature emphasized the virtues of Japanese education (e.g., Rohlen 1983), and before World War I German education was something of an ideal. Overall, we can conclude that national systems of higher education are subject to global models, and tend to change in line with changes in these models. The effect obviously intensifies after World War II. Principles of nationalism, and celebrations of unique national trajectories, did not look attractive after two World Wars and a Great Depression that were widely attributed to precisely such models. The delegitimation of nationalism and nationalist educational systems was, of course, especially striking in the European case. Post-war developmental efforts in Europe stressed the need to open up closed national systems of all sorts. This tendency is built into the European Union, and dramatically celebrated in the recent Bologna Process efforts to explicitly internationalize higher education (Teichler 2002).

2) *Explaining the expansionist character of global models:* We arrive at an understanding of the diffusion of global educational models in the modern period. We need now to address why the dominant and fashionable models of education tended so dramatically to emphasize expansions that would have seemed unreasonable and even dangerous in any earlier period. Obviously, the model of the properly developing society went through sharp changes. We can understand what happened if we consider the forces that limited higher educational expansion, in most countries and notably in European ones, in earlier historical periods. This is not difficult to do, since the literature on higher educational systems historically stressed the “natural” character of constraints on expansion. By and large, this literature treats educational systems as generating personnel (and knowledge) for a real and rather closed national social system which itself changes rather slowly over time. A slowly changing distribution of occupations (and some other roles) is imagined. Each position in this distribution is thought to have knowledge and training requirements, so that an educational system should ideally generate a distribution of persons matching the distribution of occupations (as well

as mechanisms for placing the trained persons into the correct positions). An educational system that produces too few trained people will limit social development and even the effective maintenance of a fixed social order (Lenhardt 2002, Ramirez 2002). On the other hand, an educational system that produces more training than is needed can create severe problems: over-education is the core idea. Over-education can simply be inefficient, as time and money are spent on unneeded years of training – this would be a concern from a classical liberal posture (Teichler 2002, for examples of concerns along these lines). But worse, over-education can be destructive. Unemployed schooled people are thought to be anomic, and to experience dissatisfying unfulfillable yearnings. Masses of them may, it is thought, create much social trouble – revolutions of rising expectations that cannot be fulfilled by the existing social order (Huntington 1968). Ideas of this sort remain in the background during the modern period (see Lenhardt 2002, for examples), though without much effectiveness. Notions of “overeducation” may maintain especial sentimental value in Europe, in reaction to the sweeping changes produced by rapid educational change, and in particular by the dramatic legitimization of this supra-national change symbolized in the Bologna Process of recent years.

The old European state system thickly institutionalized more traditional educational models in both discourse and organizational practice. So the destruction of these models in the current period could confront in Europe a more aggressive conservatism than anything possible in weaker and newer national political systems in the rest of the world (Ramirez/Meyer 2002 for a discussion of the forces supporting exceptionalist ideas). This makes the dramatic success of the Bologna Process, which began with the most limited controversy and took on an impressive life of its own with the most astonishingly limited resistance, especially interesting. In any case, in an older (and especially European) model of education as necessarily adapted to a closed and slowly changing national society, constraints on educational expansion seemed very reasonable. And indeed, the traditional literature in the field treated constraints as normal. In particular, the state should play this role (especially in Europe – Ramirez 2002), and it was commonly understood that strong state systems control the sorts of unregulated and inflationary competition that might generate runaway educational expansion (Ben-David/Zloczower 1962, Collins 1979 and many others). In these lines of argument, educational expansion was likely to characterize modern societies in which state controls were insufficient, and broke down. This was the common interpretation of the early and unruly expansion of higher education in the United States.

An interesting specialized literature shows empirical results along this line even in the most recent period. Communist systems quite deliberately faced the issues noted above in the 1970s and 1980s, and across the communist world were able to stop the world-wide runaway higher educational expansion of the period (Lenhardt/Stock 2000). The idea was to keep educational expansion under control for several reasons: first, to keep political control in the hands of the party of the working class and out of the hands of an expanding population of experts (Konrad/Szelenyi 1979); and second, to keep training closely linked to real manpower requirements. Thus, in the modern period, strong central authority can keep higher education under control, and in the case of the Communist countries, did so. But we observe in the world a good many strong national states, with ample controls over their higher educational systems, that are no longer able or willing to constrain educational expansion (e.g., France or Sweden). This suggests that Communist success in maintaining constraint reflected not only the centralized controls, but also the older model of the closed society characteristic of Communist (and especially in Europe, many other) more traditional ideologies (Ramirez 2002).

In the non-Communist world, a fundamentally changed model of society came into place in the post-War period. It was a model of a more liberal, participatory, and developing society, in which much future progress could be built on educational expansion. And especially in Europe, with the rise of the European Union, it was a model of society as an open system in a much more globalized Europe and world: expanded education made sense as a broad strategy for national activity in this world (Ramirez 2002, Teichler 2002). And it was a broadly liberal model of society in much more than simply economic terms (Djelic 1998). Expansive individual capacity for action was seen as far more important than organizing schooling to fit people into a collective social organism. Human capital thinking in economics, political development theory in political science, post-structuralist theory in anthropology, and all sorts of interactionist theories in sociology, all reflected this picture of a national society resting on expanding individual capabilities. In this new picture, celebrated for example, by the modern World Bank (2000), there could be no such thing as over-education. More educated people would create economic (and political, and social) progress. In this brave new world, expanded individual aspirations for more education were not indicative of social disorder and a “diploma disease,” but were valid and highly legitimate sources of the collective good. Limited educational aspirations (and excessive controls over aspirations) came under ugly terms like “dropout.” Similarly, collective processes generating ex-

panded places in higher education were reconceptualized as, almost by definition, social and economic progress.

In short, in the new model education became a core source for social and economic progress, rather than a functionally necessary outcome of the demands created by such progress. Thus it follows that expanded education resulted from the expanded and changed ideas about progress – found everywhere in the non-Communist world – rather than from the actual and highly variable course of real socio-economic development in the world. Expanded education reflected the universalized new goals and models, not the variable mundane realities of the world's economic and social systems.

Sources of the New Model

We can briefly reflect on the wider global social changes that undercut the older closed model of education and society, with its fears of over-education and anomie, and sustained the new vision of continuous development produced by individuals with greatly expanded schooled potential.

1) *Undercutting the old model:* World War II, and the defeat of fascism, strikingly delegitimated nationalist corporatism (see Djelic 1998, for a discussion of the Marshall Plan response). So did the Great Depression, whose trajectory was understood to result from political failure. The primordial sovereignty of the closed national state and society, with ideas of the necessary sacrifice of individual attainments for the collective good, was deeply stigmatized, along with a variety of institutionalized European models. The failures of individual rights involved in the closed system were overwhelmingly obvious. Even the racist United States and colonialist Britain symbolically supported principles of global human rights in the Atlantic Charter. Thus education came increasingly to be seen as properly organized for individual development (and collective progress resulting from this development) rather than for slots in the machinery of an organic national society.

2) *Supporting the new model:* Liberal national societies – particularly the United States – with their ideologies of the centrality of the expanded individual, dominated the post-War world. More than a military victory, their triumph had a cultural and ideological character. Liberal dominance created a whole new world political order (Meyer et al. 1997), filled with governmental and non-governmental associations, and infused with all sorts of doctrines about the virtues of indefinitely expanded education (Boli/Thomas 1999, Chabbott 2002, Schofer 1999). In

recent years, this expanded world polity has generated pressures for “education for all,” including ideas about the need for globally expanded secondary and higher education (World Bank 2000). Further advantages lay in the confrontation with decolonization. A disorderly Third World, threatened by Communist ideas, could find a true and peaceful way to progress through expanded education. The actual Cold War competition made the discovery of pathways to national development an urgent matter, and education provided an obvious means. Universities were set up, and rapidly expanded, in the furthest Third World countries, eager to achieve national integration and progress and to replace imperial elites with home-grown ones. Finally, the need for societies to function in an open global world rather than a closed national one was obvious. The atomic age made international military conflict unattractive as a means to progress, economic globalization and expansion offered obvious advantages to the skilled and competent, and political integration made expanded education a reasonable strategy.

All these changes hit with special force on European education and society. The delegitimation of the older world was especially extreme. And the expansive supra-nationalization of the new world in discourse, organization, and very tangible reality was an overwhelming presence with the rise of the whole panoply of European institutions. In fact, forceful Europeanization and globalization often merge in modern European thinking about educational expansion. National policy-makers imagine their people and their countries have to compete on a vastly broader scale, with technical developments and human capacities requiring enormous educational expansion, standardization, and improvement. The new and emergent world polity is expansive and rationalized. And, even in Europe, it is stateless. As Tocqueville long ago noted in discussing American society, such social systems rely on forms of social control outside the state. A core mechanism of this sort, of course, is education: and theories of American educational expansion call attention to the roots of this expansion in American ideologies of social control. So the institutions of the new globalized world are all built on models of a more schooled population (Meyer 1977), as a core component of a world polity. Expanded and empowered individuals are central: Expanded individual rights certainly include education, and other rights (e.g., to health, to population control) rest on education.

Another mechanism of social control, also built into the higher education system is science. In the modern rationalized but stateless world polity, science functions as a kind of common cultural frame and source of control (Drori et al. 2003). And the modern social order is highly rationalized, providing a fertile field for education: the modern business

firm is a rationalized organization, as is the modern state, and the modern medical care system, the modern religious body, and so on and on. The models of rational organization that spread are essentially all rooted in the university and other institutions of higher education: it makes a certain sense in a stateless expansive Europe, or world polity, that managerialism and the business school would be the most rapidly expanding forms of education (the papers in Sahlin-Andersson/Engwall 2002).

All this scientization and rationalization, of course, transforms higher education organizationally, beyond simply massive expansion. A striking feature of higher educational change around the world – and most dramatically in Europe – is its managerialist organizational reconstruction. In Europe, this is embodied in the Bologna Process (Ramirez 2002, Teichler 2002). The old corporatist boundaries around the academic profession, and its traditional university arrangements, are undercut at every turn. Old exclusionary arrangements limiting the access of both types of students and types of knowledge to higher education tend to disappear. Students have choices, and so do the old academic underclasses laboring under the old Professors. And so do all sorts of formerly excluded interests in state and society, who demand entry for their young as well as their substantive agendas. The “knowledge society” is linked to the university, and the linkage is a two-way street. The university is more dominant in society than ever before. But society is more dominant over the university than ever before, too (Schofer 1999). Thus, especially in Europe, the whole change gets organized, and formal organization of it greatly expands. There is talk about accountability, and measurement (of teaching and research, for instance). The old universities are forced to become something called “decisionmakers” (Krücken/Meier 2006). Resources are to be rationed and accounted. Categories from an older world of tradition and opacity are defined and standardized (unique degrees turn into BAs and MAs; specialized institutions are re-legitimated in terms of standard academic credits). Autonomous professors are assembled into rationalized organized units, and old privileges redefined in standardized accountings. One can describe it all as progress and/or as the destruction of tradition.

Statistical evidence from pooled panel regression analyses of higher education enrollments provides strong support for these arguments. Quantitative measures of the rise of a liberal, democratized, and rationalized global culture have massive positive effects on national enrollments (Schofer/Meyer 2005). And, nations with strong ties to the world polity (e.g., measured by country memberships in international non-governmental organizations) expand education more rapidly than do nations with fewer international ties. Results suggest that the world polity

played a major role in encouraging the global expansion of higher education.

Conclusion

A wave of higher educational expansion, starting around 1960 and running into the present, characterizes the entire world. Its universality convincingly demonstrates that it is not driven by particular national characteristics like economic requirements or resources. Higher educational expansion is clearly part of a global model of society and of education. It gains power on a world-wide scale not because the world's societies are so similar, but because their goals similarly focus on socio-economic progress, and because education is seen in all dominant world ideologies as a main means to achieve progress.

Older notions of education as properly organized to fit people into positions in an established social order were undercut in the post-War period, most dramatically in Europe. The new model stressed education as a cause, rather than a necessary functional consequence, of economic growth and change. In economic thinking, human capital ideologies replaced the older model. In political and social life, models of expanded individual capability as creating progressive change replaced more static models, with their stress on orderly conformity to the social order. It is now difficult to conceptualize conventional older ideas like "over-education" as a real social problem. Expanded human potential, presumably to be carried along on a life-time learning basis, is seen as a source of social progress rather than of disorganization and anomie. It is linked to conceptions of an expansive global society built on greatly expanded conceptions of human rights and human potentials.

It is beyond our purposes here to discuss at length the effects of this revolutionary change. Obviously a world in which masses of people even in the furthest periphery have higher education – and education in a common world culture – is transformed. Potentials for organized collective action are enormously enhanced. A sweeping world movement for the environment can be built on university science. A similar movement for organizational reform, standardization, and transparency can be built on rationalistic university social science. And a global human rights movement can celebrate the rights and capacities of highly schooled populations. Expanded collective action possibilities produced by expanded education also increase potentials for conflict. A common universalistic world culture makes even more problematic the extreme inequalities in resources characteristic of world society. And it makes re-

maintaining cultural and religious differences sources of conflict on a global scale. Under conditions of integration under common elites, inequalities can readily come to be seen as injustices, and cultural differences as violations of supposedly common norms.

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