

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Access and Equity

Comparative Perspectives

Heather Eggins (Ed.)



SensePublishers

Access and Equity

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Volume 20

Higher education worldwide is in a period of transition, affected by globalization, the advent of mass access, changing relationships between the university and the state, and the new Technologies, among others. *Global Perspectives on Higher Education* provides cogent analysis and comparative perspectives on these and other central issues affecting postsecondary education worldwide.

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Access and Equity
Comparative Perspectives

Heather Eggins
Editor



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to
the memory of
Soleà
the little daughter of *Gaele Goastellec*

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JANUARY 2010

FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to write this foreword since the present book has special significance. Its origins are in the 2005–6 Fulbright New Century Scholars Program which presented the findings of its research on higher education at a seminar held at UNESCO in October 2006 with support from the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge.

The present volume tackles one of the major areas of the current debate and action in higher education, issues of equity and access continue to be located centre stage in the analysis of higher education as both national and institutional policy-makers and concerned social stakeholders ponder options for the future orientations of these systems and their role in the Knowledge Society and in its main engine, the Knowledge Economy.

Over the past fifty years, higher education has devoted priority attention to the reality of massification whereby more than 50% of the age cohort are enrolled in some type of post-secondary educational provision. By 2007, the global figure for this phenomenon was 26% compared with 19% in 2000. Further growth is expected as the Knowledge Society and Economy depends on highly skilled human capital endowed with a broad range of sophisticated competences, including strong IT capacity.

Equity and access are complex domains which present urgent challenges for all countries, whatever their levels of socio-economic development. Their scrutiny poses crucial prior questions, namely equity for whom and access to what type of provision? It is worth revisiting these questions as an introduction to this rich collection of specialised studies.

Equitable Entry to Higher Education

The principle of equal access was proclaimed by the *World Conference on Higher Education* convened by UNESCO in 1998. The principal statement from that meeting reaffirmed Article 26 (1) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which states that “Everyone has the right to education...higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”

The original intention of this declaration targeted specific groups: middle and low income countries where higher education enrolments represented much smaller percentages of the age cohort, minority segments of the population such as immigrants and second chance learners, students with disabilities, and women. To respond effectively to these challenges, many countries implemented a diverse range of policies such as affirmative action, reserved admission, special funding schemes, tutoring programmes, promoting continued study after secondary education, the wider use of CIT provision for teaching and learning and strategies to open international mobility and opportunities for academic research careers to a much broader student public.

Certainly participation in higher education has increased exponentially in all regions of the world. Female enrolment has witnessed spectacular rises, along with the resulting impact of women’s role in and contribution to social development.

FOREWORD

While this is cause for satisfaction, the gains have often been uneven and the root causes of exclusion for certain social strata indicate that special intensive strategies will be needed to eliminate the continuing barriers and their attendant attitudes.

Promoting Access to Tertiary Education for All

Moreover, the goal of equitable access is more complex than it may first appear. The changes of the past decades and advent of the knowledge society and economy have further qualified this goal because of the global need for skilled citizens and professionals in virtually all areas of the labour market. This poses the question of access to what type of provision, thus evoking the terminology of tertiary education to denote diversified systems and institutions. Equitable access to teaching, to training and to research are all important. This variety of mission is both justified and necessary, hence value and status are equal and the twin pillars of quality and relevance should be reinforced.

Also in 1998, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published its seminal report entitled *Redefining Tertiary Education*. This forecast the expected profound changes in this area of the system, notably increased demand, varied learner profiles and the general requirement for a more skilled workforce. A decade later, the OECD presented *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society* based on 24 reviews of this sector both in OECD countries and beyond. Essentially, this sets out the parameters of the modern academy and proposes policy directions to achieve these.

Equity and access constitute a key domain for action which should include identifying the origins of inequality, reinforcing career guidance, recognising the particular obstacles related to cultural differences, providing incentives for transfer amongst varied types of institutions, responding to the needs of adult learners, considering alternative ways to acquire eligibility for tertiary education, ensuring that young intellectual talent is not excluded from entering the field of sophisticated research and endorsing the varied learning outcomes from tertiary provision. The proposals constitute a new framework suited to the needs of the global society and economy in the 21st century. For this reason, they are pertinent for countries in all regions which are seeking the rapid modernisation of their post-secondary systems and institutions.

These remarks have sought to emphasise that equity and access are multi-faceted issues which concern all missions relating to higher education. The chapters in this book explore this complex reality in depth due to the expertise of the authors regarding the numerous aspects involved. This publication should generate wide interest due to the actuality of its outstanding scholarship and foresight.

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INTRODUCTION: ACCESS AND EQUITY: THE ISSUES

Changing Inequalities: The Necessity for Research

The massive expansion of higher education across all continents is one of the defining features of our time. The pressures generated by the impact of globalisation and the desire to take part in the knowledge society have had the effect of making governments much more aware of their higher education systems as a tool to advance the prosperity of their countries. Simultaneously the expansion of communications, with television, mobile phones, and email and internet providing ever easier access to knowledge and being available in far flung locations, has had the effect of heightening the demand for higher education worldwide. It is no surprise that the fastest expanding higher education systems are those in the less developed but rapidly rising nations. The importance of the proper management of access to higher education as a tool of government policy has been increasingly recognised in recent years. Research continues to be essential in understanding how inequalities are engendered and what can be done to enable countries to move towards equality of access. The development of meaningful data can provide a basis for government policy decisions which have an influence on the shape of their societies, particularly in terms of opportunities for social mobility. Koucký et al. (2009), for instance, have developed a model for defining and calculating an Inequality index for Europe. Their analysis indicates that, within Europe, there has been a change in the character of inequalities: they are becoming ‘more subtle and less discernible as they changed from quantitative to qualitative characteristics. Today they affect predominantly access to preferred fields of studies and to prestigious institutions, and later on, to positions in the labour market’. However, studies which consider access in non-European and developing countries, along with Koucký’s work, all indicate that the problems of inequitable access to higher education are inextricably linked to low levels of attainment and high levels of non-completion at second level. As is pointed out in the OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education (2008) “Equity in tertiary education is affected by inequities in preceding levels of education”.

MAPPING THE ISSUES

The importance of the history and culture of the individual countries and groups is fundamental to an understanding of the question of access to higher education. Sarah Guri-Rosenblit examines the historical and cultural contexts which give rise to the shapes of particular education systems. Unique patterns in the historical

development of higher education systems can be discerned, some of which are able to adapt quickly to new circumstances, and others are much more rigid, so that change is difficult and slow. Some countries, which have come under the influence of successive dominant nations, exhibit characteristics in their higher education systems drawn from a number of different national models. These unique features of national systems arguably affect the formation of access policies and retention patterns. There are thus different national patterns of widening access, which can bring about the formation of new higher education institutions (public and/or private), influenced by the impact of political rulers, and of different academic cultures.

The massification of higher education (with between 15 and 40% of the relevant age group attending higher education) is now a common factor in much of the world; universal higher education, where over 40% of the relevant age group attend higher education, is an expanding phenomenon. However the level of flexibility, which can ensure greater equality of opportunity, is clearly affected by cultural contexts, as is the attitude to diversification. Some countries are able to diversify their institutions in such a way as to expand access and support social mobility: others have systems either with little diversification or with compartmentalised systems where there is little movement between institutions. Historical and cultural contexts can also affect attitudes towards the retention of students in higher education institutions. Some cultures such as the UK provide appropriate infrastructures for high retention rates, while others, like Germany, Italy and France, do not. Yet conversely one can get virtually open access in some countries, but difficult entry hurdles in others.

The investigation of the effects of different cultures is explored in relation to two key ideas: merit and equality – in the chapter by Gaële Goastellec. She notes that the tension between meritocratic access to higher education and equity in access can not only be explored in national distinctive histories of access but also in the range of definitions of equity in different national contexts. Her chapter examines the shifts in meaning of both ‘merit’, particularly ‘inherited merit’ and of ‘equality’. She argues that four distinctive rationales have affected attitudes to the old, dominant idea of ‘inherited merit’; namely human capital theories, democratisation, the impact of the knowledge society, and knowledge production. The concept of ‘the knowledge society’, explored in Manuel Castells’ work, carries with it a ‘dimension of social, cultural, economic, political and institutional transformation’ which creates, in Goastellec’s words “a symbolic pressure on public bodies to increase access”.

The evolving norm of equality of opportunity, in Goastellec’s view, has led to two different mainstream conceptions of equality: one is a formal equality of identical treatment for all; the other is the view that inequalities are acceptable if they produce advantages for the less favoured members of society. The differentiation of higher education systems and the development of databases can be viewed as expressions of social categories and national priorities. Yet the tension between merit and equality continues, exemplified by the expectation of governments that their universities should simultaneously provide high quality graduates drawn from socially diverse backgrounds and provide a fair range of degrees based on merit.

The underlying concept of globalisation, touched on in previous chapters, is examined in detail by Teshome Yizengaw and Heather Eggins, and considered particularly in terms of its impact on access. Globalisation, like equity, is a complex concept to which are ascribed different meanings. However, its impact on access has been huge, in a number of respects. Non-governmental organisations, such as UNESCO, and the World Bank and Commission for Africa, have all argued for the necessity to expand higher education which must 'promote development of the whole person and train responsible, informed citizens, committed to working for a better society in the future'. (UNDP 1999 Human Development Report).

Thus it is now accepted that higher education has important implications for the economic, political and socio-cultural development, sustainability and global competitiveness of nations. The processes of globalisation enable cross-border connections and international networks to be established, and further the integration of economies and cross-cultural interactions. The major actors in developing countries such as Vietnam and Ethiopia are drawn from the bilateral and multilateral agencies. They are able to provide funding for the higher education system and influence the direction of policy. In these countries, policies are also significantly informed and influenced by what is happening in countries such as the USA, UK and Australia. Agendas for these actors are mainly related to requirements or pre-conditions for financial support or development assistance in many of the developing countries. The effects of the actors include pressure on national policies to adopt 'recommendations' such as education finance, widening access, quality assurance, horizontal or vertical diversification, and differentiation in expansion. Elsewhere, and particularly in Europe, the USA tends to be seen as an international competitor: it is the adoption of and compliance with regional agreements such as the establishment of the European Higher Education Area which affect policies and their implementation.

The agendas of European countries are largely driven by the competitiveness imperative with a focus on student and research outputs. The need for harmonisation of procedures and degree structures, the focus on quality assurance and accreditation, and the mobility of students are the mechanisms by which national policies are effected. It is notable that English as a globalised medium of instruction and communication has affected national policies and strategic thinking in both Europe and worldwide.

An important effect of globalisation is the facilitation of the movement of students and professionals, and the promotion of the connectedness and networking of the international community of scholars. Mobility has negative consequences in terms of brain drain and positive consequences in terms of brain gain and the transfer and exchange of knowledge, skills and technology. These have had a marked impact on access and equity in national systems.

The effects of globalisation are continual and dynamic: plans are already being drawn up for a South East Asia grouping which would have a similar agenda to that of the EHEA. Other countries watch these developments with interest as evidenced by the US interest in the Bologna process. The cross-fertilisation of ideas and policies is constant.

Patrick Clancy, in his chapter on measuring access and equity in a comparative context, emphasises the necessity for research findings on which policy decisions are based to be as contemporary as possible. Much of the published research is, in effect, ‘historical’, based on cohorts of students who finished their studies a number of years ago. As governments strive to reduce social inequalities, they need reliable up-to-date data to inform them of whether their policies are proving effective. Policy borrowing, an aspect of globalisation, is pervasive: policy initiatives need to be carefully evaluated before being copied. Clancy argues that there is an urgent need to collect data on access and equity from those currently in the HE system and to compare these data with those from earlier enrolment cohorts. There is good comparative data on access for women to higher education, and also on the extent of persisting generational inequalities, but little is known about the changes in social group inequalities and about changing inequalities in terms of ethnic groups and of those with disabilities. Clancy examines measures of equity, and looks at the relationship between expansion and equity, using data from the EUROSTUDENT surveys and a limited selection of findings from national surveys to assess changing levels of inequality. A precondition for the analysis of equity in higher education is the availability of reliable comparative measures of participation. Thus an important feature of Clancy’s article is his detailed analysis of the OECD data base on higher education statistics to develop an overall index of participation.

The following chapter, also by Patrick Clancy, examines structural diversification in higher education and in second level education systems and explores empirically how these structures are related to levels of participation and equality of access in higher education. The performance of unified, binary, and diversified systems of higher education are examined. He points out that differentiated systems can arguably extend the benefits of higher education to previously underrepresented groups. However, the new forms of higher education providing access to new social groups may offer only limited opportunities.

The ease of transfer from one part of the higher education system to another becomes crucial. Likewise the structure of secondary school systems are of importance in providing opportunities for as high a percentage of pupils as possible to qualify for entry to higher education. Thus school structures are important determinants of both quality and equity. The author draws on the PISA project to categorise second level systems in terms of the level of differentiation/stratification. This structure, he argues, is clearly important in its effects on the pipeline of potential higher education students. To what extent there is an optimum structure for higher education systems, and what exactly it might be, is still not established. The analytical challenge, as he points out, is ‘to conceptualise and measure the nature of the diversification which characterises higher education systems and to explore the linkages between such characteristics and their consequences whether this is in terms of levels of expansion and inequality or other outcomes’.

Given that policies to widen participation and improve access for disadvantaged groups are a dominant feature of much government thinking, it is unsurprising that a range of intervention strategies have been developed. Chapter seven, by Heather

Eggs, examines the types and aims of such strategies. Apart from restructuring the higher education system, which Vietnam is undertaking currently, governments continue to make use of a number of types of strategies: the introduction of new programmes to provide the skills needed for the twenty-first century labour market; initiatives to raise aspiration and improve attainment, motivation and self-esteem; and financial interventions. The latter include targeted funding, such as the provision of grants, scholarships and loans to widen participation: a recent example is the rise in the value of the Pell grants in the US. However, in view of the burgeoning demand for higher education, and the rising cost, there is a tension between what can be afforded, and the drive to widen participation.

The recent financial crisis has exacerbated this problem. The British government, for instance, is facing difficult choices across the whole of the public sector, and is calling upon the higher education sector to bear down on costs while protecting quality and access. Despite major financial difficulties the commitment to widen access to the UK higher education system remains: 'our ambition is wide-ranging; from more local vocational study opportunities for those with little recent educational experience, to more help for our most talented young people to go to highly selective universities, whatever their background.' (Grant announcement for higher education 22 December 2009). Recent efforts to widen participation for disadvantaged groups have been having some effect in the UK, but it is evident that those from lower socio-economic groups still find it difficult to access the highly selective institutions.

However, university funding in many countries is being adversely affected by the financial crisis. A number of European countries have already given notice of large cuts. UK universities, for instance, will have to make another £153m of cuts in 2010–11, on top of £180m savings they had already been informed of. Overall, the higher education grant will have fallen by £500m, from £7.8 billion to £7.3 billion, in three years.

The tension between demand for higher education and the supply of places is likely to be found in many countries. In the UK, in October 2009, about 130,000 university applicants failed to find a place: in 2010 it could well be 200,000. Government funding per student is also falling in real terms. The amount per student for 2007–8 was £4,140: in 2010 it will be £3,950 per year. Added to that is a review of tuition fees. Currently fees are set at £3,225 a year: a review is likely to recommend a rise to at least £5000 a year. The concern is whether higher education can remain affordable, and whether the current numbers attending (43%) can be maintained and/or expanded.

The final chapter, by Phuong Nga Nguyen, considers the mechanisms used to support students. These are provided. We have combined our brief review of the literature on the diversification of higher education systems and the interface with second level systems with an empirical analysis of how system structure relates by a range of sources: governments, NGOs and Foundations, and higher education institutions. Support is often financial in nature, and includes, from governmental and non-governmental sources, grants, scholarships, bursaries and tuition discounts. Some schemes in developing countries cover accommodation and food.

CHAPTER 1

Another means of support is that supplied by the institution to help with studying: tutoring, language support, revision classes in subjects such as maths, skills training and academic advice. Personal support is also often available, with students being assigned to a personal tutor with whom the student can discuss any welfare or personal problem. Counselling can be offered, with doctors and psychiatrists linked to the university. This range of support can be particularly important for students whose families know nothing of higher education: the alien culture of a higher education institution can be problematic for those totally unused to it.

Student retention is also briefly touched on. It is, in its own right, an important topic which is inextricably linked to access: those from disadvantaged groups often need to be supported in order to achieve success. Reasons for low rates of retention are considered; some of the difficulties are addressed by targeting the improvement of entry grades, by making information about higher education easily accessible, by improving communication between staff and students, and by making sure of the suitability of the course for the individual student. Even so, retention and how to improve it remains an intractable problem.

CONCLUSION

The unique focus of this book is to bring together an analysis of the theoretical literature on equity, to focus on the methodological problems of measuring access and equity from a comparative perspective, and to review the current literature on measuring equity, which points to the need for the development of a comparative research programme. The book also provides a comparative analysis of trends and policy developments and offers a comparative analysis of targeted initiatives, together with support mechanisms, which are currently in place in different societies.

The need for comparative research on access and equity is vital in a context of the further expansion of higher education, and the continuing policy by governments to broaden the social base. The OECD Report (2008) noted that 'attitudes and policies relating to access as well as the consciousness among disadvantaged groups will change and become more central to national debates'. Without question, the future of higher education worldwide will continue to be affected by inequities, and by concerns to achieve, as far as possible, a student population replicating the composition of society as a whole.

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ACCESS AND EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide operate within national settings, in which various variables shape their historical and cultural contexts. Most meaningful and important differences do exist between different higher education systems. Some higher education systems are very old and their history can be traced back to the first medieval universities, while most higher education systems are relatively young and have been established in the last century. Several higher education systems are composed mainly of public institutions, whereas many others have a strong and influential private sector. The nature of the private sector differs markedly from one nation to another. The private prestigious universities in the USA, like Harvard and Stanford, have nothing in common with the private for-profit institutions that have been established in many countries in the last decade. Many higher education systems are highly diversified and contain various types of institutions, while some others are quite monolithic in their composition. Comprehensive universities reflect the nature of most higher education institutions in some national settings, while specialised institutions are the leading models in other countries. Liberal education and the cultivation of human nature constitute the supreme goals of some leading higher education institutions, while professional training and the response to market demands shape the nature of other higher education institutes. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes briefly how the historical background of several higher education systems has shaped their external and internal boundaries. The second part depicts some unique features of academic cultures that affect the formation of access and equity policies in various national settings.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical background of each higher education system shapes to a large extent its external and internal boundaries and as such affects its access and equity policies. External boundaries define which institutions are included in or excluded from any given higher education system. In some countries, like Israel, tertiary level professional institutes are not considered part of higher education because they do not award academic degrees. In other countries, all post-secondary institutions are considered as part of the higher education system, as in the USA, where two-year community colleges constitute an integral part of the higher education system.

CHAPTER 2

The external boundaries have a direct impact on the statistics of access in each country. Hence, it is extremely important to be knowledgeable as to the external boundaries of different higher education systems when comparing their access rates. From time to time, external boundaries change when, for instance, non-academic institutions are upgraded to academic status, or a new higher education law alters the status of tertiary-level institutions or research institutes.

Internal boundaries reflect the structure of each higher education system. They relate to a variety of variables: the overall structure (unified, binary or segmented into several sectors), the hierarchy of different institutions, the focus of the study programmes, budgeting profiles, research and teaching policies, evaluation and accreditation practices, etc. Internal boundaries explain differential access policies for different types of higher education institutions. We examine below the impact of the historical background on shaping the external and internal boundaries of higher education systems in several countries.

United Kingdom and Ireland

Several models of universities have been developed in the islands of Britain and Ireland since the 12th century. The formation of new types of higher education institutions in order to widen access to higher education and cater to the needs of diverse student clienteles has characterised the historical development of the UK higher education system since the 15th century (mainly in Scotland), and most particularly since the 19th century throughout the United Kingdom.

England

England has a very old university tradition. Oxford University has its beginnings in the early 12th century, in groups of young scholars who gathered around the teachers of the town. The exact date of the University's foundation is unknown, and indeed it may not have been a single event that led to the foundation of the University. When Henry II of England forbade English students to study at the University of Paris in 1167, Oxford began to grow very quickly. The University of Cambridge was established as a result of a struggle between Oxford townsmen and the university in 1209. Oxford and Cambridge introduced the idea of a 'collegiate' and a 'residential' university. Both universities are composed of many colleges, and each college enjoys great autonomy in teaching. The system of the residential colleges began with Merton College in 1264. Apart from a short-lived medieval university in Northampton, Oxford and Cambridge were the only universities in England until the 19th century (Guri-Rosenblit, 2006a).

There seems to be a most interesting pattern in the expansion of the English higher education system since the 19th century. Rather than duplicating existing models of universities, new university models have been founded in order to cater to the needs of different clienteles and fulfil diverse national and societal needs. England can be regarded as an inventor and exporter of a variety of university models that have been influential in shaping higher education institutions in many different countries.

When the University of London was established and received its first Charter in 1836 as a state examining body, the external and internal boundaries of the English higher education system changed. The University of London was a totally different type of university in comparison with the Oxbridge model. It was focussed on different student clienteles, and it was more attentive to teaching practical subject matter (Guri-Rosenblit, 2006a; Rothblatt, 1997). Given its nature, it did not regard itself as being a 'residential educating body'. Its buildings were scattered in a large city, and it did not purport to protect its students within closed and guarded walls. Many of its students were able to work and study concurrently. The external boundaries extended greatly when the University of London was given in 1858 a new Charter, which enabled it to enrol students from all over the world (except for medical studies). The University was no longer concerned whether its students had pursued a course of study at a recognised institution, or had studied with a recognised tutor, or had gained their knowledge purely by self-study. Henceforth, all were allowed to enter the examination system on equal terms if they possessed the needed entry qualifications.

Since 1898 the University of London got an additional Charter entitling it also to become a teaching institution. It was decided that the teaching and the examining functions of the university should be split between two separate operations within the one institution. In other words, the University would internal students in its own colleges and institutes, and at the same time would continue to operate as an examining body for students studying in various colleges and institutions all over the world, conferring upon them degrees and diplomas, if they have completed successfully the final degree examinations in relevant study areas. To this date, the external students constitute about one third of the total student body of the University of London. Its external student system has entitled it, in the view of some scholars, to be the first 'open university' in the world (Bell & Tight, 1993).

The University of London is composed of many colleges, academies, institutes and professional schools teaching specialised fields of study, which are autonomous in shaping their academic curricula, and interconnected to each other as a federation. This federal model was subsequently adopted as the basis for universities not only in England, but also in Ireland, Wales, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. In the USA the idea of a federal university has been transformed into the different entity of a multi-campus system.

Until the 20th century, England constituted one of the most selective higher education systems in the world. The first decade of the 20th century was remarkable for the transformation of six civic colleges, some of which were associated with the University of London, into independent universities (Eggin, 2006). These universities are commonly referred to as the 'red brick universities'. The term 'red brick' was inspired by the fact that The Victoria Building at the University of Liverpool is built from a distinctive red pressed brick. The 'red brick' civic universities were founded in the industrial cities of England in the Victorian era and achieved university status before World War II. The civic university movement started in 1851 with Owens College in Manchester (now the University of Manchester), which became the founding college of the federal Victoria University

in 1880 and attained university status when the federal university was dissolved in 1903. The civic universities were distinguished by being non-collegiate institutions that admitted men without reference to religion and concentrated on imparting to their students 'real-world' skills, often linked to engineering. They owed their heritage mainly to University College of London University. The focus on technological subjects distinguished these universities from Oxford and Cambridge and from the newer University of Durham (which was established in 1832) that were collegiate institutions which concentrated on the liberal arts and imposed religious tests on staff and students.

The most significant expansion of higher education in England, and in the United Kingdom in general, took place after the Robbins Report in 1963. The Robbins Report offered a model of a significant broadening of access to higher education. As a result of this report seven new universities were founded during the 1960s (*ibid*) and a group of Colleges of Advanced Technology were given university status. The seven new universities were variously described as the 'plate glass universities' or the 'green field universities' denoting their modern architectural design and their location in open countryside.

By the mid-1960s, however, a further development took place. Anthony Crosland, the Secretary of State for Education in the Labour government of that time, made a seminal speech at Woolwich in the Spring of 1965 in which he set out his policy that the growth of higher education should be concentrated in the technical college system under direct public control. The 1966 White Paper, 'A Plan for Polytechnics and other Colleges', proposed the incorporation of some 60 colleges of technology, building, art and commerce into 30 polytechnics whose degrees would be validated by the Council for National Academic Awards, a body that had been proposed by Robbins. The courses offered particularly emphasised professional and vocational subjects. Within a decade the CNAA would become the largest degree awarding body in the country. This expansion created the binary system of universities and polytechnics in the United Kingdom which existed until 1992. Interestingly, the pattern of establishing new types of higher education institutions rather than duplicating the existing ones, continued to characterise the great widening of access in England in the 1960s and 1970s.

A totally new concept of a university was manifested in establishing the Open University in 1969. The Open University was based on an open access policy designed to absorb thousands of part-time students, with particular appeal to candidates from a blue collar background. Until the establishment of the Open University, there were almost no opportunities for part-time working adults to enrol for academic study at the existing universities apart from Birkbeck College, University of London which had been founded specifically to meet this need. The British Open University has become a role model for establishing about thirty large-scale distance teaching universities in many countries (Guri-Rosenblit, 1999).

As a result of the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, the binary system separating universities and polytechnics in England was abolished and polytechnics were given university status. But there still remain differences of mission and subject mix between institutions commonly referred today as 'old' or 'pre-1992'

universities, and the ‘modern’ ‘post-1992’ universities. In general, the emphasis of the ‘old’ ones is on providing traditional academic studies rather than professional training, but the line is by no means clear as many of the ‘old’ universities offer degrees in engineering, accountancy, teacher training, business studies, sports studies, etc. Likewise the ‘post-1992’ universities tend to place greater emphasis on professional training, like business studies, legal studies, education, but also offer a wide range of academic studies. Since the Robbins Report, the English higher education system has expanded from a 5% participation rate in the 1960s to a mass system with a participation rate of about 43% in 2003 (Eggin, 2006).

A common feature of all universities in England that were established before 2005 is that they are expected to carry out research to a high level and can be described as research universities. In 2005 five higher education institutions were granted university status in England with a different remit. They offer their own undergraduate degrees, but do not have research awarding powers, and are not expected to be research-based universities (ibid).

Furthermore, one of the recent instruments in expanding tertiary education in England and Wales since 2000 has been through the Foundation Degree (Kaiser & O’Heron, 2005). The degree is offered in vocational subjects and is equivalent to two years of full-time study, rather than the three year traditional Honours Degree. It is normally delivered through partnerships between Further Education Colleges and Higher Education institutions. It has employability objectives that require the sustained involvement of employers, and defines a core role for work-based learning. The Foundation Degree is distinctive not least because it gives credit for learning through engagement with employers and for work placements, in addition to learning through more conventional academic study. Again, the Foundation Degree constitutes an example of an innovative degree that has been introduced in England as a major vehicle for expansion. The intention of the government is that it should play a key role in modernising both private and public sector work forces by addressing skill shortages at the associate professional level. In addition, it aims to address low rates of participation by students from lower socio-economic groups, low participation neighbourhoods and by those with disabilities (Eggin, 2006). This new degree is supported by the creation of a new national body, Foundation Degree Forward, whose task is to encourage the creation of close partnerships between employers and further and higher education providers. Scotland and Ireland have not adopted the Foundation Degrees, since their overall tertiary and higher education structures differ in several respects from the English one.

Scotland

The first Scottish university, St. Andrews University, was established in 1411. It resembled in its ethos and mode of operation the Oxbridge model, but the universities of Glasgow (1451), Aberdeen (1495) and Edinburgh (1582) were created on a very different model of how a university should operate. They were established in large cities, and were partially sponsored by the municipal authorities. They have shaped the idea of a ‘comprehensive university’ that combines together professional schools, practical subjects and the classical liberal arts curriculum (Guri-Rosenblit, 2006a).

The Scottish universities from their very outset admitted everyone who wished to study any taught subject, and were attentive to market demands for offering new fields of study. The Scottish universities, unlike their English counterparts, had shown a willingness to launch almost any new and relatively respectable subject that seemed likely to draw an audience. They were entrepreneurial from their very early days. In the 1830s, for instance, one professor from Edinburgh University dispatched to a rich London patron a proposal for a Chair of business studies that, it was hoped, would attract a wide and varied new student body of all ages from every part of the town (Bell & Tight, 1993). In this case, the private sponsor remained unconvinced. It was, however, his legacy that 40 years later, in 1876, enabled Edinburgh and St. Andrews universities to establish the first university Chairs in Education, specifically to serve the market that they hoped would result from the creation of the new school system established by the Education Act of 1872. The comprehensive university model of the Scottish universities has influenced the formation of many universities in the USA, and in many other national jurisdictions.

The size of the Scottish professor's salary was entirely dependent on the number of students whom he could attract. The fee was placed directly in the professor's hand by the student at the beginning of the session, and those with bulging pockets attracted even more demand because this was evidence to the new students of a particular professor's worth (McPherson, 1973).

A number of Institutes of Technology and 'Central Institutions' underwent a similar status change to that of English technology colleges in the 1960s by being able to offer CNAAs degrees. These institutions, like their English counterparts, were awarded university status in 1992.

There are some structural differences between the English and Scottish degrees. First, degree programmes in Scotland are four years in length, whereas they are three years in England. However, the standard age of entry to university studies in Scotland is one year younger than in England. First degree graduates in Scotland get an MA degree. In England most of the 'other undergraduate' or associate degrees are provided by universities (or awarded by universities and provided by Further Education Colleges). In Scotland, the bulk of 'other undergraduate' and associate programmes are offered and awarded by the Further Education Colleges (Kaiser & O'Heron, 2005). Currently the Scottish higher education system is composed of 14 universities and 48 Further Education and Higher Education Colleges. The access rate in Scotland is higher than in England and it exceeds 50%. Historically, participation rates in higher education have been higher in Scotland than in England (Eggins, 2006).

Ireland

The formation of the Irish higher education system reflects its unique history, and the tensions between the Catholic and Protestant religions. Ireland's oldest university, the University of Dublin (Trinity College), received its royal charter in 1592. While some Catholic students were admitted to Trinity in the early years, the operation of religious tests in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries meant that

only members of the Established Church could avail themselves of university education in Ireland (Clancy, 2005). The first concession to allow higher education for Catholics was the granting of direct funding for the establishment in 1795 of a Catholic college at Maynooth. This college was founded to educate Catholic priests, the view being that it was preferable to provide this education at home rather than risk Irish students being 'exposed' to revolutionary thought and fervour which was sweeping Continental Europe in the wake of the French revolution. The problem still remained of providing university education for lay Catholics, as the atmosphere and control of Trinity College remained essentially Protestant. During the course of the nineteenth century several attempts were made to provide a form of university education which would be acceptable to Catholics (ibid).

In 1845 the Queen's College Act established three colleges: Queen's College Cork, Queen's College Galway and Queen's College Belfast. In 1850 these three colleges were linked together under the umbrella of the Queen's University of Ireland established by a Royal Charter.

A papal prescript issued in 1847 condemned the Queen's colleges as 'detrimental to religion', and proposed that the Irish bishops found a Catholic University modelled on Louvain. The Catholic University was established in 1851 and opened in 1854, and John Henry Newman was appointed as its first Rector. The Catholic University was founded and funded independently of the State. While Newman's stewardship was short-lived, the Catholic University, as well as a number of other institutions, evolved to become University College, Dublin.

The University Education Act of 1879 provided for the formation of the Royal University of Ireland, whose examinations were open to all candidates whether they had attended college lectures or not (basically it followed the model pioneered by the external student system of the University of London). In the context of Ireland, the Charter of the Royal University that was granted in 1880 gave an opportunity to improve the position of the Catholic University students to whom recognised university degrees had not hitherto been available. As a result of the establishment of the Royal University, Queen's University was dissolved in 1882. The University College in Dublin took over, under the control of the Jesuit Fathers, all of the work of the Catholic University, except the teaching of medicine which continued under the aegis of the Catholic University Medical School.

The foundation of the Royal University of Ireland portrays British policy towards Ireland throughout the 19th century. This policy attempted to provide an educational system that would satisfy the needs and aspirations of the Catholic majority without offending Protestant susceptibilities, not just in Ireland but in the United Kingdom as a whole (Bell & Tight, 1993). One of the clearest benefits of establishing the Royal University was the educational opportunity that the university gave to Irish women, who until then were denied access to the Queen's University and to the male colleges of the Catholic University. Women, including nuns in enclosed orders, enrolled at the Royal University.

The Irish University Act of 1908 established two new universities – the National University of Ireland and the Queen's University of Belfast and dissolved the Royal University in 1909. Under this act the National University of Ireland became

a federal university with its seat in Dublin, and with three constituent colleges established by Charter – University College Dublin, University College Cork, and University College Galway. The Jesuit University College Dublin was given a new constitution and the Catholic University Medical School was merged into it. Power was granted by the 1908 Act to the National University of Ireland to recognise courses of study in other institutions for the purposes of a degree, such as studies at St. Patrick's College in Maynooth (from 1910) or Our Lady of Mercy College in Dublin (from 1975). The Universities Act of 1997 redefined the nature and role of the National University of Ireland. It reconstituted its three constituent colleges as constituent universities. There are currently altogether seven state funded universities in Ireland.

Although the Irish university sector was shaped on the basis of English universities, its interesting history of establishing, reconstructing and dissolving universities in the 19th century and the start of the 20th century reflects the unique historical background of Ireland and the religious tension that constitutes an integral part of the Irish society.

There are several structural differences between the English and Irish higher education systems. Unlike the situation in England where the binary system was abolished in 1992, the Irish higher education system is still structured as a binary system composed of seven universities, and 16 technological colleges, plus a few religious colleges. The rapid expansion in enrolment which started in the 1960s was accompanied by a diversification of the Irish higher education with the development of a large technological sector through the establishment of a network of Regional Technical Colleges and the expansion of a few pre-existing technical colleges (Clancy, 2006). Currently the access rate in Ireland is 55%, significantly higher than in England.

France

France also has a very old higher education tradition, but its development followed a very different path as compared to the British higher education system. The University of Paris emerged from the schools of priests controlled by the Notre Dame Cathedral in the 12th century. The king, Phillip Augustus, conferred a charter on the masters and scholars of the University of Paris in 1200, thus protecting them in relation to the townsmen. The Pope, by a bull of 1231, often called the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, ensured their right to control examinations and licensing of teachers. Many students were enrolled at the medieval University of Paris. There is documentation indicating that in the 13th century it had over 7,000 students (Burns et al., 1980). Many of them were young and poor. However, the original University of Paris, as well as all other French universities, were abolished during the French revolution and the Napoleonic times.

The French higher education system was reconstructed totally anew at the end of the 18th century. The abolition of the 'old' universities and the foundation of totally new higher education institutions fitted the leading spirit of the French revolution that purported to get rid of all of the social institutions of the old regime,

and start everything anew. In the new reconstructed system of French higher education, a clear distinction was established between elite institutions (the *grandes écoles*) and the universities.

The first *grandes écoles* were already established at the middle of the 18th century, but they gained their unique status mainly since Napoleonic times. In 1794 the *École Polytechnique* that aimed at preparing artillery officers was founded. A year later was established the *École Normale Supérieure* that has served since then as a leading institution in training the political and intellectual elites of French society. The *grandes écoles* enjoy a high and privileged status in the French higher education system, and admission to them is highly competitive and selective, whereas the universities are open to all graduates of high school who possess a *baccalauréat* diploma. In 2006, 5.6% of the 1,357,000 higher education students in France were studying in the two-year preparatory classes for admission to the *grandes écoles* (Goastellec, 2006).

Interestingly, the French medieval universities enjoyed a greater autonomy in conducting their academic affairs, in comparison with the new higher education institutions in France. The French higher education system is considered to be one of the most centralised systems in the world, controlled by governmental and bureaucratic procedures (Rothblatt, 1997). The public universities in France are named after the city where they are found, followed by a number if there are several. Paris, for instance, has 13 universities, labelled Paris I to XIII. All of the universities and specialised higher education institutions are expected to follow the same curriculum in any given subject area. The degree diplomas are national and all of the French universities are considered to be of equal status (Goastellec, 2006). Much of the research is conducted outside the universities in special designated research centres, such as CNRS or INSERM, sponsored by the government, a fact that diminishes the research function of the universities. Nevertheless, a large proportion of the academics are teaching in the universities and are conducting research in mixed research units (*UMR - Unité Mixte de Recherche*) belonging both to the universities and the CNRS.

Studies are divided into several cycles at the French universities. Students can study academic studies in a first two-year cycle, through a three-year programme that leads to a *licence*, and a four-year programme that leads to a *maitrise* (equivalent to a master degree), a 5 year diploma (equivalent to a two-year master degree), and 8 year diploma (Doctorate). Since the 1960s a new middle range selective sector has been initiated in the French higher education system, consisting of two-year University Institutes of Technology (IUT) and Superior Technicians Section (STS). The overall structure of the two-year institutions in France is currently in the course of change in line with the framework of the Bologna Process, which will be discussed later. More than 50% from the relevant age cohorts enter higher education institutions in France (including the two-year institutions), but there is a very high drop-out rate from the French universities, a theme that will be discussed further on.

Vietnam

The historical background of the Vietnamese higher education reflects the impact of its various political rulers on the ethos and practices of its higher learning institutions. In the period of Chinese Imperial domination (from 111 BC to 938 AD) the

Vietnamese system imitated the Chinese education structure, and was composed of primary education lasting about 15 years, and higher education lasting also about 15 years (Nguyen, 2006). The higher learning institutes served mainly for preparing the administrative elite. From 938 to 1850, the period of Vietnamese national independence, higher education was provided by public and private Buddhist schools. The higher education system was still highly selective and aimed only at the privileged classes. The overall system was heavily dependent on competitive examinations. Students had to take the inter-provincial competitive examination to get a bachelor degree. Bachelor holders were eligible to take the Pre-court competitive examination held at the Capital Thang Long to get the degree of a Junior Doctor. Junior doctoral holders could take the prestigious court competitive examination for the first rank of the doctorate degree (ibid).

During the first stage of French Colonialism, the feudal system of Confucian education was maintained, but from the beginning of the 20th century, many professional education colleges were established (such as the College of Medicine and Pharmacy in 1902; the College of Teacher Training in 1917; the College of Experimental Sciences in 1923, etc.) on the basis of French professional education. Although some of these colleges were termed as 'universities', they were basically two-year vocational colleges. From 1924 to 1939, the college system underwent some changes toward establishing a university system. All the colleges were combined to form the University of Indo-China (following the monolithic structure of the national French University) enrolling in total a relatively small number of students - 600 in the academic year of 1939/40 (ibid).

During the period of revolution from 1945 to 1975 the higher education system in Vietnam changed and was divided into two parts. One was under the control of the North Vietnamese government, and the other under French rule, and later on under American domination. The system in North Vietnam adopted the former Soviet Union system, based mainly on specialised institutions focussing mainly on one subject and a few comprehensive universities. In 1974/75 there were in all 41 universities and colleges with 55,700 students in North Vietnam. The South of Vietnam has changed and adopted some of the American higher education features, based mainly on large comprehensive universities. In 1974/5 there were four large public universities enrolling around 130,000 students, and in addition some small community colleges, enrolling only 2,600 students, and 12 private institutions, enrolling about 30,000 students. After the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, for more than two decades all the higher education institutes were organised on the basis of the Soviet model, but from 1991 onwards postgraduate studies were constructed on the basis of the American model. The number of students grew dramatically from 99,807 in 1974/75 to 1,319,754 in 2004/5, enrolled in 137 universities and 127 colleges. The case of Vietnam provides a most illuminating example of how historical developments have a clear impact on the structure of the higher education system, its access policies and academic curricula.

South Africa

South Africa provides another interesting example of a unique higher education system that for many decades reflected the government apartheid policies of the time.

Until 1994, the South African higher education system was segregated into different segments for different racial groups. Its first colleges were created in the midst of the 19th century for its white population, based very much on the model of the federal University of London. In 1873 was established, for instance, the University of the Cape of Good Hope, as a federal university. After all of its eleven constituent colleges developed into autonomous degree-granting institutions, the university was reconstituted in 1951 as the University of South Africa (UNISA) to provide courses for external students only. In 1962 it was established officially as a distance teaching university, and is considered to be the first fully-fledged distance teaching university in the world (Guri-Rosenblit, 1999).

In 1953, the Bantu Education Act called for the creation of new universities for non-white racial groups. The Education Act of 1959 prompted the establishment of four new universities for non-white ethnic groups, and two new universities for Afrikaans. Only a few universities, like the University of Cape Town and the University of Witwatersrand had admitted a small number of black students, in fields of study that were not offered in the non-white universities. In the 1970s more universities opened their gates to small numbers of black and coloured students. As a result the percentage of black students increased significantly, and they constituted 47% of the overall student population in South Africa in 1976, as compared to only 15% in 1960 (ibid).

When the ANC started governing South Africa in 1994, the access rate to higher education of the relevant age cohort was just 15%. However, drastic differences existed between the participation rates of different categories. Among the 'whites', 39% of the relevant age were enrolled in higher education institutions, as compared to 17% of the 'Indians', 12% of the 'blacks' and 9% of the 'coloured'.

The end of apartheid has drastically changed the structure and policies of the South African higher education system. In 1992 a National Education Coordination Committee was established in order to reconsider all the education policies. In 1996 a National Committee on Higher Education was established by Mandela to define how to promote equity in access to higher education. In 1998 the Committee on Higher Education replaced the National Committee on Higher Education (Goastellec, 2006). Very little has been implemented and changed until 2001. Based on the National Plan for Higher Education from 2001 following mergers aimed at abolishing apartheid gaps, higher education institutions in South Africa are mainly required to improve the retention of the existing students and to make their programmes more efficient and effective, rather than to widen participation. Unquestionably, South African higher education operates currently in stormy waters, and it will take a long time to stabilise it and improve its access policies and graduation patterns.

Israel

Young higher education systems have the privilege of choosing the academic structures and models that have evolved over the centuries in different national settings and that best suit their national, social and economic needs. The unique

cultural context of each setting defines to a great extent how the higher education system is structured. Israel has a relatively young higher education system. Its first higher education institutions were established in the 1920s, a quarter of a century before the foundation of the State of Israel. Interestingly, though, it was then under the British Mandate, its first higher education institutions were formed on the basis of the German *Humboldtian* university. Since the founding professors of the Technion in Haifa (which was established in 1924) and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (which was established in 1925) came from Germany, they zealously implemented the idea of the *Humboldtian* research university in the Israeli context. For 50 years this was the only university model in Israel. The other five university-level institutions that were established between 1934 and 1965 (the Weizmann Institute, Tel-Aviv University, Bar-Ilan University, Haifa University, and Ben-Gurion University) have all followed the model of the two veteran institutions. However, the establishment of the Council for Higher Education in 1958 as a buffer body between the universities and the government was influenced by the British University Grants Committee. In 1976 the Budgeting and Planning Committee, which was also based on the British model, was created.

The composition of the Israeli higher education system changed drastically from the mid 1970s. Since then higher education in Israel has moved gradually from a highly selective, elite and research-oriented system to a mass higher education system, in which academic education is perceived by many as a right rather than as a privilege; from a relatively homogeneous student body to a most heterogeneous student body; from a higher education system based predominantly on research universities to a very diversified system, in which the non-university sector is expanding at a tremendous pace and volume, both as a result of several bottom-up initiatives side by side with governmental top-down planning. Indeed, the most conspicuous development of the last two decades is the growth of various types of colleges outside the university sector. No new university has been established in Israel since that of the Open University in 1974.

Upgrading post-secondary institutions to academic status has been one of the main strategies of the Council for Higher Education in expanding the higher education system in recent years. The academic accreditation of post-secondary professional schools can be seen as a response to the growing demand for career-oriented higher education. In the framework of this policy 27 teacher training colleges, as well as 7 of the schools preparing practical engineers, were upgraded to academic status.

Since the late 1980s new colleges were established, both public and private. The new public colleges were established mainly in the periphery, absorbing many students from lower status groups. The private colleges mainly offered studies which were highly in demand in the labour market. Until 1986 there was no private sector in Israeli higher education. In April 1991 the Law of Higher Education was amended and it confirmed the eligibility of founding privately-funded higher education institutions that were not sponsored by the Planning and Budgeting Committee. At the same time it authorised the Council for Higher Education to

supervise the programmes in these externally-funded institutions, if the latter wished to get permission to grant academic degrees. In other words, the Council of Higher Education has remained the only body authorised to confer academic recognition on higher education institutes in Israel.

In reality, the private colleges opened the doors to mainly privileged and well-to-do populations, since their tuition fees are much higher in comparison with those in the publicly sponsored universities and colleges (sometimes three-fold or more). Nevertheless, even the private colleges offered special fellowships to qualified applicants from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Altogether there were, in 2006, 67 higher education institutions in Israel: 8 universities (including the Open University), 27 teacher training colleges and 32 other colleges (Guri-Rosenblit, 2006). The proclaimed aim of the Council for Higher Education is to reach in the coming decade a participation rate of at least 50% of the relevant age cohort in higher education institutions.

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian higher education system is also relatively young. Throughout its development it has been influenced by higher education models from various countries. Some of its higher education institutions were established in collaboration with the USA, the former Soviet Union, and several European countries as well as with international bodies, like UNESCO. The major focus of its tertiary level institutions has been on professional education, which is relevant to the societal and economic needs of Ethiopia.

Post-secondary education in Ethiopia started a little over 60 years ago with middle level training in Agriculture. Ambo was the first post-secondary education institution established in 1946. In 1950, higher level education and training in Chemistry and Biology were started in the then University College at Addis Ababa (now Addis Ababa University). Housed in the old Palace compound, this University College grew to become Haileselassie I University in 1961 by including Alemaya and Gondar Colleges. In the early fifties Alemaya Agricultural College and Addis Ababa Commercial College were established. Alemaya was established by technical cooperation between the Imperial Ethiopian Government and the government of the USA. Jimma and Gondar colleges were established in the late 1950s. Gondar started as an institute training public health officers and mid-level health professionals (Yizengaw, 2006).

The early sixties saw the establishment of Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute and Kotebe College of Teacher Education while in the late sixties Awassa, Bahir Dar Teachers College as well as several faculties and schools of Addis Ababa University were founded. These institutions were under the Addis Ababa University for a long time. Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute was established with the cooperation of the former Soviet Union and the Imperial Ethiopian government in 1963. The Bahirdar Teachers College was established with the cooperation of UNESCO, UNDP and the Imperial Ethiopian government in 1972. Since the 1970s many more professional colleges were established throughout the country.

Graduate level training started in Addis Ababa University in 1978, immediately followed by Alemaya University (then Alemaya College of Agriculture under Addis Ababa University) in 1983. Later on the Wondo Genet College of forestry started graduate programmes in forestry in collaboration with a Swedish University in 1994 after the faculty was moved out of Alemaya to Wondo Genet.

Higher Education in Ethiopia is organised by types of institution, qualification level and ownership. With respect to type, institutions are designated as University, University College, College or Institute. University status could be granted only by the government. Institutions are also organised as those conferring diploma or/and degrees as well as graduate level (Master and doctorate) degrees. Currently most private higher education institutions offer diplomas. Addis Ababa University, Alemaya University, Debub, Jima, Gonder, Arbaminch, Bahirdar and Mekele universities are all public institutions offering graduate level degree programmes, in addition to undergraduate degree level programmes (ibid).

In 2000, institutions in different regions of the country were amalgamated to form Universities. As such four new universities, namely Debub, Bahir Dar, Jimma and Mekelle, were established. In 2004, Gonder and Arbaminch were upgraded to University level by a Council of Ministers' Charter. Ethiopian higher education is composed currently of nine higher education institutions under the direct auspices of the Ministry of Education. In addition to these, there are three institutions under different Federal government entities, eight teacher-training colleges under Regional Governments and over 64 accredited private higher education institutions.

As the system's geographical spread extended, enrolments also grew. In the 10 years between 1991 and 2005 the annual intake of students has grown from a bare 6,000 to over 36,000 in Ministry of Education sponsored institutions alone. The number of graduates has also increased from 17,579 in 2000/1 to about 28,455 in 2004/5. At the graduate level the enrolment has increased from 1,286 in 2000/1 to over 3,600 in 2004/5. However, Ethiopia has still a very low access rate to higher education. For a population of over 70 million, the enrolment in higher education remains low. In 2004 there were 220–240 students per 100,000 inhabitants (as compared to 62–70 in 1995).

DOMINANT FEATURES OF ACADEMIC CULTURES

This section examines several dominant features of academic cultures that also influence access and graduation policies in different national settings. The discussion refers to the degree of diversification, massification and flexibility of the higher education systems, the interrelations between access and exit (retention) policies, the nature of the coexistence of public and private higher education institutions, and the role of language, particularly the English language, in promoting globalisation trends in higher education.

Diversification, Massification and Flexibility

There seems to be a close interrelation between the patterns of diversification and the flexibility of higher education systems and their access policies. The more

diversified and flexible a higher education system is, the more likely it is to exercise a mass-oriented or even universal access policy. For hundreds of years, higher education has been considered as a privilege for the few and well-to-do, and its main purpose was to educate and train the elites. Since the end of World War II, a huge expansion of higher education systems has taken place. Recent decades have seen an accelerated widening of access to higher education worldwide. This has been accompanied in many countries by an extensive diversification of their higher education systems, through the foundation of new types of higher education institutions, both public and private, and a significant expansion of the existing institutions. However, diversification by itself does not suffice. As aforementioned, England has invented new types of higher education institutions since the 19th century, but until the 1960s it was a very elitist system, enrolling only 5% of the relevant age cohort. American higher education, on the other hand, has provided an illuminating example of a diversified, flexible and mass-oriented system from its very start.

The history of American higher education is characterised by the growth of multi-purpose institutions which continue to add functions and responsibilities without discarding older commitments (Rothblatt, 1997). The American higher education system is the most pluralistic and diverse system in the world. It has inherited most of the existing university ideas from Europe, and it has adopted them in a very flexible way. It has also invented new types of higher education institutions, such as the community colleges, land-grant universities and corporate universities. American higher education institutions have been expansion-minded since the War for Independence and have generally shown a willingness to stretch existing resources to support new ventures. By the 19th century, the United States had laid the basis for a highly diversified and stratified system that provided opportunities of universal access to higher education to all of its citizens, at a time when all higher education systems in Europe were extremely selective and based on meritocracy (Trow, 2000).

The United States has the leading research universities in the world, side by side with community colleges open to all who wish to pursue post-secondary education. It has large-scale multi-campus universities that teach many thousands of students side by side with small-scale colleges. It operates broad comprehensive universities concurrently with specialised institutes. It has created what Clark Kerr called a “multiversity model” (Kerr, 1963).

American higher education has always been characterised by the confluence of different educational practices. The early colonial colleges followed the curricular practice of Oxford and Cambridge, and the Scottish universities have had a significant impact in shaping comprehensive universities, which include faculties of arts, science and social science and professional schools. The modular system was also adopted from Scotland. The Americans have defined an acceptable ‘academic currency’ from the outset (Trow, 2000). The currency of a ‘unit’ is used in all American higher education institutions, and it enables ease of transfer of academic studies from one institution to another. The European Credit Transfer System introduced by the Bologna Process aims at achieving a comparable academic currency in Europe (Bolag, 2003). In the late 19th century, the land-grant colleges

and universities added a strong practical dimension of training and service to society to the more familiar traditions, and the new *Humboldtian* idea of a research university has been most successfully implemented in the leading research universities of the USA (Guri-Rosenblit, 2006a). The idea of the federal university of London was adopted in the United States in the form of multi-campus universities, such as the reputable University of California system that is composed nowadays of ten high status universities, or the network of the State University of New York (SUNY) that is composed of different types of higher education institutions.

One of the most unique features of the American higher education system is not merely its diversity, but most specifically its flexibility, which can hardly be found elsewhere. Even students at community colleges can transfer eventually to leading research universities if they excel in their studies. In the three-tier California system, there is a written agreement between the community colleges, the state universities and the University of California systems, that defines exactly the percentage of students from community colleges that can be admitted each year even to a prestigious university like UC Berkeley, and continue there their third and fourth year of studies towards an undergraduate degree from the renowned research university.

European higher education has evolved in a different way. Particularly after the foundation of the nation states in the 19th century, the national higher education systems were perceived mainly as training the political, intellectual and professional elites of each state. Each nation shaped the structure of its higher education system on unique underlying premises that seemed to fit best its political and societal needs. Multiple academic cultures flourished within the different states, manifested through diverse access policies, many study tracks leading to a wide range of diplomas and degrees of different lengths and reputation, and a wide spectrum of different types of tertiary and higher education institutions.

As aforementioned, some of the systems, which, as in England, were quite diversified, in the sense that they contained many types of universities and other higher education institutions, have not necessarily turned into mass-access oriented systems. Countries with a socialist ideology have stayed quite elitist in their access policies to higher education. The fact that all of the former communist countries have provided higher education free of charge, has not turned them into systems that adopted a mass access policy. Most of the Eastern European countries had a very low access rate until the 1990s, ranging from 11% to 23% (Neave, 2003; Kovac et al., 2006; UNESCO, 2003). Even in the communist countries higher education was perceived for decades as a privilege based on meritocracy rather than as a civil right.

The flexibility of the American system, enabling students to move from one type of higher education institution to another has been nearly non-existent in most countries. It is almost unthinkable to this date to move in the midst of academic studies from Paris University to a *grand école*, from a college in Israel to the Hebrew University, from a 'new' English university to Oxford and Cambridge. Even the most diversified higher education systems in Europe portray inflexible patterns of mobility between different types of higher education institutions.

The last decade has witnessed far-reaching reform in Europe, aimed at consolidating and integrating the various national higher education systems into a harmonised and balanced continental system. On June 19, 1999 representatives of twenty nine countries signed the Bologna Declaration and set in train an intensive process which aims at establishing a harmonised and/or unified Higher Education Area of Europe by 2010. By the Berlin meeting of the Ministers of Education in 2003, there were already forty countries that had signed the Bologna Declaration (Commission of the European Communities, 2003).

It appears that European higher education systems, under the Bologna Process, are currently becoming more flexible. The Bologna Declaration specified the means to achieve its goal: the use of a common three-tier degree structure (BA, MA and doctorate), the Diploma Supplement, the European Credit Transfer System, quality evaluation and the Europeanisation of academic curricula. Many higher education systems in Central and Eastern Europe had been based for centuries on a five-year first degree structure (which is equivalent to an MA degree). No bachelor level studies were available. The lengthy degree resulted, among other things, in a high drop-out rate during the study period.

Each stage in advancing the Bologna Process requires greater commitment to the commonality of purpose and action in the field of higher education, so that, by this year (2010), higher education services can flow freely from one side of the continent to the other, as material goods do today (Commission of the European Communities, 2003; UNESCO, 2003). Students of all ages will draw on the most convenient services, relevant in the terms of their intellectual interests, career development or social commitments. For learners, and administrators, the freedom of movement in a common European intellectual space will offer equal conditions of access to many providers and users of higher education, equal conditions of assessment and recognition of services, of skills and competencies, and equal conditions of work and employment. The tools given by the Bologna Declaration are intended to invent a European model of higher education sufficiently strong to establish its attractiveness *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world, and particularly *vis-à-vis* the American model.

Concurrently with decreasing the diversity between higher education systems at the macro-level, the architects of the Bologna Process have stressed from the outset that it is of tremendous importance to acknowledge the legitimacy of institutional diversity and heterogeneity of academic cultures. They emphasised that diversity must be preserved, even if convergence and common issues of concern should be implemented and pushed forward (UNESCO, 2003). In other words, the trend of convergence does not remove the inherent diversity of higher education institutions in European countries. Various types of higher education institutions will continue to operate in all national settings, and they will portray both vertical differences (based on various hierarchical and ranking criteria) and horizontal differences (targeted to different student clienteles) (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005; Neave, 2003). However, it is most likely that institutes of the same kind, such as 'world-class' research universities will exhibit in the future a greater resemblance (Altbach, 2004; European Commission, 2004).

In the long run, the Bologna Process is likely to influence access policies and practices in many other higher education systems in other continents. Many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are in close relations with European countries through the processes of globalisation and internationalisation, and the changes of higher education structures, diplomas and accreditation are likely to affect their policies and practices. It is most likely that the broadening of access in many third world countries will be characterised by greater diversity of their higher education institutions and by a greater flexibility of movement between higher education institutions within national borders and beyond them.

Access-Exit Policies

Access policies have changed drastically in the last thirty years all over the world. Many higher education systems have moved to a mass-oriented and even a universal access policy (Trow, 2000). The target of reaching at least a 50% participation rate of the relevant age cohort in higher or more broadly tertiary education is echoed in policy documents of dozens of countries in the last decade (Kaiser & O'Heron, 2005). However, access policies do not automatically reflect exit policies. Drop-out rates in some higher education systems are very high, and are a result of different dominant cultures in various national settings that perceive totally differently the role of the state in providing adequate infrastructures and support systems to assure high retention rates. In countries like Germany, France and Italy, the democratisation of higher education has been manifested through providing higher education to all high school graduates free of charge, but it is up to the students to prove their capabilities and to cope with the study requirements and the poor infrastructure of many overcrowded universities. In some universities, classes are crowded with hundreds of students who can hardly see the lecturing professors, not to speak of being able to communicate with them.

The English higher education system has been very concerned with the importance of the exit/graduation phase from its outset. The Oxbridge model makes a clear distinction between the role of the residential colleges that teach small numbers of students under the close supervision of caring tutors, and the role of the university that examines the students at the end of three years. To this date, Oxford and Cambridge universities have refused to adopt the modular system that was adopted by all other universities in England in 1992. Their students do not get grades throughout their studies. Their degree and its level (the Honours degree is divided into first, upper second, lower second and third levels) is totally dependent on the comprehensive exams that the students take at the end of their studies apart from certain groups of subjects which also have a block of examinations at the end of the year. London University, which was initially established as an examining body for studies conducted in colleges outside the university, still has to this date a third of its students registered as external students from all over the world. They do not study in the Institutes of the University of London, but do take its final examinations.

The emphasis of the English academic culture on the exit phase is also manifested through the unique external examiners' system. The external examiners' system seeks to ensure the comparability of standards across higher education institutions,

by appointing external academics to evaluate, and even modify the content and the structure of the final examinations in any given university (except Oxford and Cambridge, whose professors serve as external examiners, but are not examined by others). Even the examinations that are given in international locations in various countries by UK universities are monitored through external examiners.

Such an emphasis on the crucial importance of the final phase of academic studies in the UK higher education system from its very early start may explain to a great extent the fact that the UK higher education has one of the highest retention rates in the world – 83% in 2005 (Clancy, 2006; Egging, 2006).

In some countries in the Far East, like Japan and Vietnam, the graduation rates are also very high. In Japan it was 85% in 2003 (OECD, 2004), and in Vietnam it was nearly 95% in 2002 (Nguyen, 2006). It seems that the unique feature of the Chinese and Japanese cultures which emphasises the importance of working hard and succeeding after the individual is given the opportunity in any given field, be it sports, education, or work, is manifested also in higher education. In Vietnam, for instance, students have to pass very demanding entrance examinations. After they are admitted, they try their best to fulfil all the requirements in order to get the degree they enrolled for. However, there are differences between different types of higher education institutions. It is less competitive to get into a non-public university than into a public university in Vietnam. Nearly 7% drop out from non-public universities as compared to only 3.5% from public universities (*ibid*). In any case, the attrition rates in Vietnam are very low.

In the former Communist countries, the retention rates were also very high until the 1990s, since the participation rates were also very low. Those who got admitted were expected to complete their studies, and the majority of students did so. The situation changed after the reconstruction of the former Soviet Block. The higher education systems expanded dramatically, without providing necessary infrastructures for high retention, and by enabling many outside private providers to operate within the national jurisdictions of these countries. As a result, the attrition rates in some of the former Eastern European countries are currently very high. Poland, for instance, which expanded its higher education system hugely, enables nearly 70% of its relevant age cohort to study in various higher education institutions, but it has a drop-out rate of 41% (OECD, 2004), and the Czech Republic, which currently admits only 30% of the relevant age cohort to higher education, still experiences a drop-out rate of over 50% (*ibid*).

As mentioned previously, many European countries have very high drop-out rates ranging from 62% in Switzerland, 55% in Italy, 45% in Germany, 42% in Austria to 34% in France (*ibid*). However, the retention/drop-out statistics should also be handled with care. Some of the statistics include the completion of two-year studies, as in France, which are not included in many other countries. In France, for instance, 45% complete the first two-year cycle, and 21% complete the three-year cycle (Goastellec, 2006), which are combined together in a completion rate of 66% – definitely problematic statistics. Unquestionably, the Bologna Process will contribute in the future to the creation of various measures that will assist in improving the retention rates in many European countries.

Public-Private Sectors

The interrelation between public and private higher education institutions portrays different academic cultures and an impact on access policies in different countries. In some countries, there is almost no private sector in the higher education system. In England, for example, apart from Buckingham University which is private small-scale university, there are no private universities and colleges, and in Scotland and Ireland the proportion of private institutions is very low (Clancy, 2006, OECD, 2004).

The United States, on the other hand, has a very strong component of private higher education institutions, and it is particularly proud of its private research universities, that have established themselves as leading world class universities, and are the envy of and models for imitation by many nations. Japan, China, India and Germany have all proclaimed in the last decade that they are intending to establish world-class universities comparable to the American ones. However, the unique interrelation between the academic institutions and the corporate world in the USA non-existent in any other country (Levy, 2008). The generous donations and endowments of the business world and private alumni to American universities are the envy of all other countries, and are hard to imitate, because they are built on strong cultural roots that have been cultivated for centuries in American society.

Private higher education is far from being uniform. Only a few private institutions provide elite or semi-elite options. The rising bulk of private higher education institutions throughout the world accommodate mainly the exploding demand for higher education. Beyond the few leading private research universities in the US, there are other types of private institutions, like Phoenix University, that constitutes the largest for-profit distance teaching university in the USA, many non-profit and for-profit consortia, and corporate universities that cater to various clienteles and expand access opportunities in American higher education.

Quite evidently, privatisation constitutes one of the most striking global changes in higher education systems in the 21st century (Altbach et al., 2009; Douglass et al., 2009; Dogramaci, 2008; Levy, 2008). Privatisation has spread in recent years to Asia, Latin America, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In some countries, the percentage of private higher education institutions is striking. In Indonesia, 96% of the higher education institutions are private; in South Korea they constitute 87%; and in Japan 86% (Tilak, 2008).

The widening of access to higher education in Europe has also been linked to the development of many private higher education institutions. In some of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which experienced enormous increases of students, the proportion of private institutions in the overall number of higher education institutions is remarkably high. For instance, in Slovenia the private institutions constitute 82% of the total number of higher education institutes; in Poland - 63%; in Romania - 60%, and in Hungary - 52% (UNESCO, 2003, p. 5). But the prevailing number of these private universities and colleges is small, and provides mainly high demand subjects of study in business administration, economics and some other social science subjects.

The flourishing of these private enterprises has drastically changed the external and internal boundaries of many higher education systems, and affected the horizontal and vertical patterns of diversity in each national milieu (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). Unlike the well-established leading private universities in the USA, most of the private providers in European countries, as well as in many other countries worldwide, have weak infrastructure, relatively unstable full-time academic faculty, and they operate mainly for profit.

The emergence of a plethora of new providers of higher education, particularly private providers, has created an acute problem. In order to ensure the harmonisation of higher education at the system level, it is of tremendous importance to set stringent quality assurance measures. Nowadays, the Bologna Process in Europe aims at establishing accreditation agencies, both as state agencies and self-regulatory bodies of academic institutions, in order to enhance a quality assurance culture, setting clear criteria for the evaluation of the quality of higher education provided by both old and new higher education institutions. The introduction of the ‘European Credit Transfer System’ is viewed as a principle instrument in achieving transparency of the quality of academic programmes. Quality assurance mechanisms, the definition of clear “academic currencies” and diploma supplements will provide a more homogeneous and articulated degree system, which will enable easy comparison of diverse degree requirements and structures (Bolag, 2003, UNESCO, 2003). Quality assurance mechanisms have also been established in the last decade in many Latin American and Asian countries.

Language and Globalisation

Universities in different national settings are entrusted with cultivating the national language/s as an important cultural asset. In Ireland, for instance, prior to the war of independence between 1916–1921, higher education institutions were pivotal in the revival and spread of the Irish language as a spoken and literary medium which became a major political objective linked to the development of a sense of national identity (Clancy, 2006). Such was the case in Israel with the Hebrew language. When the Technion was established in 1924, its professors wanted to teach in the German language. A “war of languages” took place, and the final decision was that all studies in educational institutions, including higher education, would be conducted only in Hebrew. National languages will continue to develop and thrive in the future. However, in the globalised world we live in, it is quite obvious that English has become the lingua franca of the academic world, and this trend will intensify in the future. In China alone, there is evidence that in recent years five million Chinese are added each year to the number who are “English speaking”. It is not merely the major language of conferences, academic publications and research journals, but it also has an important impact on increasing the number of transnational students. It is not by accident that the English speaking countries are the main advocates of transnational education and support the finalisation of the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services).

The UK is currently one of the leading exporters of higher education. According to the Shanghai Ranking of Higher Education Institutions, the UK has the second largest global market share, (behind the US), which is worth up to £11 billion directly and £12 billion indirectly to the UK economy each year (Eggins, 2006). UK universities are international organisations with long-established links with universities and other organisations around the world. They have been consistently successful in welcoming international students and researchers attracted by the wide range of high quality courses and educational support, and a world class research base. In 2003/04 there were 213,000 international students and 104,000 students from other EU countries in UK higher education institutions. There were also many more international and EU students on exchange (Socrates-Erasmus) and study-abroad programmes in UK universities (ibid).

The UK is committed to a strategy of international competitiveness through the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI). Launched in 1999 by Tony Blair, the then Prime Minister, the initiative aimed to increase the number of international students in UK higher education, recognising their importance in fostering international relations and bringing long-term political and economic benefits. Targets were set to attract an additional 50,000 international students into higher education and an additional 25,000 students into further education by 2004/05. This target was achieved ahead of time. China was the largest supplier of overseas students to UK. The UK Government has funded the British Council (with offices in 110 countries) to launch a major five-year world-wide marketing initiative to encourage international students to study in the UK. This campaign includes the branding initiative, Education UK, designed to help UK higher education institutions promote themselves (ibid).

The Australian government has also greatly increased its numbers of transnational students in the last decade. It aims to have one million transnational students in 2025, a seventh of the total numbers (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005).

Transnational education is a potent manifestation of the impact of globalisation upon higher education, and is potentially the most significant one (Altbach et al., 2009; Douglass et al., 2009; Deem, 2001; Enders & Fulton, 2002). The positive aspects of transnational education include: widening of learning opportunities at various higher education levels by providing more choice for citizens in any given national jurisdiction; challenging traditional education systems by introducing more competition and innovative programmes and delivery methods; helping make higher education more competitive; assisting in diversifying the budgeting of higher education; and benefiting through links with prestigious institutions, mainly in developing countries. For instance, several prestigious American universities are operating currently in Qatar through the funding of the 'Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development', a non-profit organisation founded in 1995 by the Emir of Qatar (ibid). Cornell University opened there a branch of its medical school; Texas A&M University operates an engineering programme; Virginia Commonwealth University operates a programme in design arts; and Carnegie Mellon University has opened a campus for undergraduate studies in computer science and business. These respected universities provide high-level higher education studies in their field of expertise.

However, there are also negative aspects of transnational education. Currently many unregulated providers of higher education operate for-profit in many countries. They are not subject to external or internal audit/monitoring processes, and their operation remains outside official national quality assurance regimes. Many of these institutions constitute 'degree mills' that provide low level education. Furthermore, some claim that there is unfair advantage enjoyed by some transnational providers in comparison to the strictly regulated national providers, that might cause loss of income to the latter. Unquestionably, the intricacy of relationships between different types of transnational providers, delivery methods and programmes, creates a highly complicated situation, which affects the horizontal and vertical patterns of higher education structures at the national and international levels.

It is most likely that transnational education will grow in the future, and it will accelerate competition between various types of higher education providers. At the same time, much greater attention will be devoted by national higher education authorities and international organisations to monitoring and defining appropriate quality assurance regulations to ensure the quality of the higher education provided by transnational providers, as well as to secure and preserve the traditional values of higher education.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has highlighted the importance of the historical background in order to understand how the external and internal boundaries of higher education systems are defined, and how these boundaries, as well as the unique features of academic cultures, affect the formation of access policies and retention patterns in various national settings. External boundaries define which institutions are included in or excluded from any given higher education system, and the internal boundaries relate to the overall structure and hierarchy of a higher education system. There are unique patterns in the historical development of higher education systems. In the UK, for instance, since the 15th century, there seems to have been a pattern of inventing new university models in order to cater to the needs of different clienteles and to be attentive to new societal and national needs. In France, on the other hand, since Napoleonic times, a rigid system, which distinguishes between a small elitist sector and equal status multiple universities, has been established, and this structure, with little amendment, exists to this date.

Political rule has an important impact on shaping the ethos and operating practices of various higher education systems. The case of Vietnam clearly reflects the impact of the Chinese rulers, the domination of the former Soviet Union, and the influence of France and the USA on shaping the nature of its higher education institutions throughout its history. However, the direct ruler does not always have a say in the local higher education system. In the case of Israel, its first higher education institutions were established during the British Mandate, but they were based on the academic tradition of the founding professors who came mainly from Germany, and thus were founded on the tradition of the Humboldtian research universities.

Many countries have a unique historical background that greatly affects the dominant culture of their higher education systems. The development of the Irish higher education reflects from the outset the tension between the Catholics and Protestants. South Africa, as an Apartheid state, had built its higher education system on the underlying premises of segregation and partition, and in the last fifteen years is in the process of totally restructuring its higher education. Ethiopia, as a developing country, has built its higher education system in line with its economic and social needs, and has been assisted by many outside superpowers, ranging from the USA, the former Soviet Union, other European countries, to international bodies, like UNESCO and the World Bank.

Most higher education systems expanded extensively in recent decades. Diversification constitutes a common feature of widening access to higher education. But diversification itself does not suffice to turn a higher education system into a mass-oriented one. Flexibility turns out to be a significant feature in ensuring greater access, and greater equity in higher education. In this sense, the American higher education system is the most pluralistic and flexible system in the world, and it provides an illuminating example of how it is possible to nurture the leading world class universities, and at the same time to provide opportunities to all to study in community colleges, and for those who excel to move to elitist research universities. The Bologna Process in Europe is currently aiming at increasing flexibility, mainly between various higher education systems, and establishing a European higher education system that will be on a par with the USA.

Academic cultures also affect policies of retention. In some countries, like Germany, Italy and France, the democratisation of higher education has been manifested mainly through access policies, but the drop-out rates are very high. In the UK, Japan, Vietnam, and the former communist countries, the retention rates have been very high due to different features built into their academic cultures. It seems that concern about retention rates will remain high on the agendas of higher education systems worldwide.

The nature of private higher education is also related to national academic cultures. It is tremendously difficult, if not impossible, to imitate the unique nature and status of the leading private research universities in the USA. Most of the new private higher education ventures are operating mainly for-profit, and some are considered to provide a low level of study. Differential quality assurance agencies and mechanisms have been established in the last decade in order to monitor the quality of higher education institutions, with a particular emphasis on the new private providers.

Last, but not least, in the globalised and internationalised world we live in, the English language constitutes a very important vehicle for promoting and widening transnational education, which means that in the near future millions of students will either study outside their national jurisdictions, or study towards degrees offered by external bodies, or through distance education. The English speaking countries have a significant advantage in transnational education. Already, several countries in Europe and elsewhere have started providing some of their academic courses in English, in order to be part of this huge competitive venture.

Altogether, the various historical and cultural variables that were briefly examined in this chapter, demonstrate that any comparative study on access, equity and retention policies has to relate to many more facets than the descriptive statistics.

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