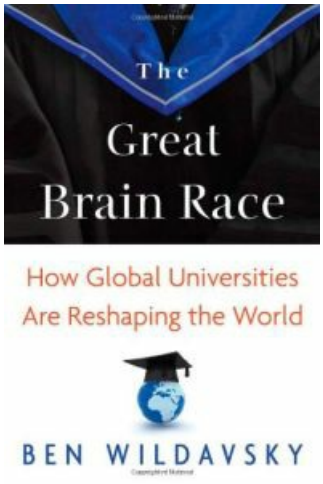

Book The Great Brain Race

How Global Universities Are Reshaping the World

Ben Wildavsky
Princeton UP, 2010
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Recommendation

Given Ben Wildavsky's focus on higher education, you might assume that only educators would be interested in his book. Don't make that mistake. Certainly anyone in higher education should read it to understand the forces reshaping that world, and so should secondary teachers and advisers, who need to guide their students. But Wildavsky's book deserves a wider audience. He convincingly analyzes the changes in higher education as part of globalization and shows how these trends affect international economics. *BooksInShort* recommends this thorough study primarily to educators, but also to those interested in human resources, strategic planning, the industry of education and widespread social trends that are reshaping the world economy.

Take-Aways

- Globalization is transforming higher education in many ways.
- Globalization has made higher education "a form of international trade."
- Social change and technological improvement contribute to globalizing education.
- School rankings are controversial, but they're useful for consumers and institutions.
- For-profit institutions are playing an increasing role in expanding access to education.
- These universities have a highly pragmatic focus and are more likely than traditional schools to use technology in teaching.
- Globalizing higher education has social and cultural implications, such as the democratization of access to college.
- Several nations are starting new universities to raise their prestige.
- Many countries respond to global pressures in education by raising barriers to protect their schools and their perceived national interests.
- Education benefits everyone, so universities should minimize barriers to entry.

Summary

Exploring "Global Higher Education"

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Madras offers one example of a growing, important new trend: the globalization of higher education. The school is located in a relatively remote area, but its administrators cooperate internationally with leaders from high-profile institutions such as Yale. Visiting faculty come from Brown. Graduates get jobs at Infosys and Sun Microsystems or go to graduate school at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia, or at Oxford or Harvard.

> "The global academic order is transforming in far-reaching ways – and not for the first time."

Global higher education takes a wide variety of specific forms – a satellite campus here, a study-abroad program there, institutional cooperation in a third country – but look closely and you'll see that globalization is reshaping education from Singapore to London. Such changes have happened before. Medieval students traveled across Europe to study at emerging "universities in Bologna, Paris and Oxford." After World War II, the United States drew many foreign students. Today's change is faster and more intense. Higher education has become globally competitive. No longer do American schools compete only with one another, or French schools only with French schools. Students choose to attend college anywhere around the world, putting incredible pressure on existing institutions.

> "Increasing knowledge is not a zero-sum game. Intellectual gains often benefit others."

Between 1999 and 2009, the number of students studying "outside their home nations" grew by more than 50% to nearly three million. The United States attracts 22% of non-native undergraduates, with 12% going to the United Kingdom and 11% to Australia. America has an edge in luring grad students, in that "about two-thirds of all foreign graduate students worldwide study" there. Most of these students come from Asia's economic powerhouses: India, China, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Studying abroad is easier than it once was, both technologically and socially. After World War II, higher education in the United States became part of a broad strategy of "diplomacy and international cooperation." This meant more money for students to travel abroad. The Cold War pumped funding into scientific research, driving university growth in several fields. More recently, colleges have begun viewing education as a marketplace. This is heating up competition for the best students, including those from beyond US shores.

What Forms Does Global Higher Education Take?

The globalization of higher education is playing out in several ways. The most basic form is universities' quest to recruit top students from other nations. The next level is the well-known "overseas study program" or "study abroad" program in which students spend a quarter or semester studying in another nation. Many US schools recently began establishing "branch campuses" in other countries. For example, New York University is trying to set up a complete liberal arts college in Abu Dhabi to help transform the city into one of the world's international "idea capitals," and its students into global citizens. This mission has solid financial and faculty support, but critics say that NYU shouldn't establish such a major beachhead in a place that limits free speech and women's activities.

> "The Western research university is being replicated around the world by societies that have realized that the road to economic success runs through college campuses."

London's Observatory on Borderless Higher Education counted "around 100 branch campuses worldwide" in 2005, some founded by US schools and others by Australian, Scottish and French universities (including the Sorbonne). Six US schools have come together on a new, 2,500-acre campus in Qatar's Education City to teach the students an array of classes in English. Most students speak English fairly fluently but struggle to write it at an academic level. Faculty members put in more teaching time in Qatar than at home, but the pay is higher (nearly double, if you factor in free housing). Classes are coeducational, which is new to the region. Education City's economic viability has generated questions, but it seems to be a force for liberalization.

Rankings and Quality

College rankings generate a lot of debate, particularly as a more international clientele comes to rely on them. Starting in the 1960s, formerly ad hoc rankings became more systematic. As college attendance became less elite, rankings became more necessary. Consumers welcomed rankings, but educational leaders often found them superficial and inaccurate. This led to further reforms in the process of deriving rankings, including more use of objective data such as faculty salaries and standardized test scores. Most ranking procedures, such as the widely cited ratings in the *US News & World Report* magazine, have remained largely the same since that time.

> "While US universities are major players in the satellite-campus world, institutions from many other nations are extending their presence in regions well beyond the Middle East."

Ranking systems are emerging outside the United States, sponsored by publications, governments and educational organizations. Governments refer to them in policy statements, and universities use them to study their own strengths and weaknesses. Institutional leaders often become anxious about their positions in various ranking systems, resulting both in reform and in further criticism that ranking systems are flawed and ignore systemic differences, like teaching quality or student preparedness.

> "Not only is China physically expanding its universities, it is also aggressively recruiting overseas Chinese to return to their homeland, in an effort to spur what some have dubbed a 'reverse brain drain'."

As higher education becomes more globalized, new ranking systems emerge continually. The best evaluate a variety of factors. However, some systems discard educational criteria and count which colleges have earned the most research awards, such as Nobel Prizes or Fields Medals. Such rankings often serve nationalist goals.

> "Perhaps the best eventual measure of the global scramble to create world-class universities will be whether and how the precious resource of knowledge has been expanded."

China has committed to establishing elite institutions and expanding faculty research. Several nations attempt to "jump-start their research campuses" by partnering with foreign scholars, "particularly US researchers." Starting in 2008, South Korea invested $800 million into importing foreign academics. Institutions also create joint-degree offerings, such as the University of Chicago's and INSEAD's programs in Singapore. Some of these fizzle (the University of Warwick's planned Singapore campus never bore fruit), and others simply break down. Johns Hopkins ended an eight-year program in Singapore "amid considerable acrimony."

> "International education now provides a significant source of revenues for companies better known for other activities."

KAUST is the most ambitious attempt to build a world-class university. The Saudis started it "from scratch," with the explicit goal of creating an elite school. King Abdullah donated $10 billion – making it the world's sixth-best-funded university in one stroke. Aramco, Saudi Arabia's national oil company, manages KAUST, which

recruited its Harvard-educated president from the University of Singapore.

The Rising Role of For-Profit Universities

For-profit universities are playing a new defining role globally in terms of who receives an advanced education. Until recently, attending college has been primarily "an elite phenomenon" for students with strong academic preparation and families who expect them to pursue higher education. In much of the world, students who lack this background are still eager for career-oriented, pragmatic, advanced learning. Demand is intense, especially in Latin America and Asia. In the eight most populated Asian countries, postsecondary enrollment grew 260% between 1991 and 2001. For-profits captured most of that growth. While the massive global investment in education has spurred the growth of these institutions, they also boomed because – unlike many established schools – they employ technology to make education more efficient.

> "In the decades since multinational corporations began to dominate industry after industry, their proliferation has dismayed critics, but has also brought huge benefits to the global economy."

Corporations recently have entered the international market for commercial higher education. These institutions take different approaches. Whitney International, which focuses on South and Central America (Brazil, Panama and Columbia), has controlling interests in several schools and is considering alliances with existing Latin American universities. Whitney emphasizes distance learning, which has driven its rapid growth, and the network plans to expand into India and Asia. Kaplan, an educational provider that started by preparing students for standardized testing, has moved into higher education in applied fields like IT and nursing. The Apollo Group, which owns the University of Phoenix, entered global education via a substantial partnership with the Carlyle Group, a "blue-chip investing firm."

> "With ever-fewer restrictions on the circulation of students, professors and ideas around the globe, this intellectual commerce could be called free trade in minds."

American for-profit universities aren't the only educational institutions that are expanding: Singapore-based Raffles Education has campuses in Australia, India, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Laureate "has more than 150 campuses" in Asia, Europe and the Americas. These organizations serve many nontraditional students: A rising number are older than 25, and many are much older. These students go to school part time while working, and they often seek job-related training to advance their careers. For-profit universities "rarely do more than dabble in research."

> "As with other kinds of free trade...greater movement of people and ideas in the academic marketplace may create both winners and losers."

This expansion of for-profit colleges has a different impact in different places: In the United States, most elite universities are private, and public universities traditionally provide lower-cost mass education. In most other countries, public universities are elite and exclusive, admitting almost no working- or middle-class students. In these nations, for-profits are democratizing access to higher education, in part by offering online learning or by augmenting classroom time with online interaction. Many students choose this route, with "two million postsecondary distance-learning students" in China, and one million each in Europe and South America. The numbers are still growing. In 2004, one million Americans studied online; that number reached two million by 2009.

Global Higher Education Is Creating a "Free Trade in Minds"

Globalization of higher education has made education itself "a form of international trade." Top students choose schools across national borders and expect ready access. Contemporary scholars are more likely to research globally and to teach or collaborate abroad. College recruitment has changed, especially at high-level universities. The best schools no longer want only the best local students. They want to train leaders from around the world: A survey of 6,000 members of the world's leadership "superclass" found that 30% "attended one of 20 elite universities." The same study found that leaders from developing countries tend to seek higher education at the top Western universities. Some experts worry that this may create "a worldwide power elite" whose members associate more with one another than with their home countries. Others worry that such schools exclude the poor.

> "In higher education, as in just about every 21st-century human endeavor, it seems hard to imagine that globalization will ever go away."

These legitimate concerns misjudge the positive possibilities in global higher education. You can be "cosmopolitan" and still remain loyal to your country of origin. The emphasis on luring the best students ultimately will make elite institutions more democratic. Nevertheless, in India and the United States, policies that make allowances in academic standards to open college admission to more people from formerly excluded populations create tension within the system. China has instituted a rigorous college entrance exam, a standardized test that emphasizes rote learning, even though the nation is moving away from that pedagogic approach.

> "To compete successfully in the community of nations, a modern economy clearly must embrace...higher education."

In education, as in other industries with international competition, established institutions sometimes seek government protection. This "academic protectionism" manifests in countries like India, which is maintaining long-standing barriers to foreign schools even as outside investment has risen markedly, and even though Indian students are going abroad to study. India's minister of higher education, Kapil Sibal, is trying to open doors to outside schools in a charged climate that is complicated by issues of control and social reform (such as setting quotas for specific castes). India blocks foreign institutions from hiring Indian faculty members and has denied Indian students credit for internships with non-Indian companies.

Some national laws governing education emphasize areas that their cultures see as crucial. India, the United Kingdom, Austria, and Belgium use bans and quotas to reserve most of their medical school slots for natives to protect "domestic jobs" and to ensure a high national quality of care. The United States has increased restrictions against, and examinations of, students from areas associated with terrorism (the Middle East and Pakistan) or, in some cases, economic competition (China). Other regulations make less sense, such as Germany's restrictions on who can receive the title of "Doctor" No matter where regulations originate, the higher the barrier, the less attractive a nation is to foreign students. This puts the top universities that want the best international students at odds with national policies.

The United States has limited how many H-1B visas it issues. This will result in fewer immigrants coming to start new companies or to work in expanding industries, and it will have a deleterious economic impact, given that immigrants founded 25% of the "American engineering and technology companies" started between 1995 and

2005. Some Americans worry about the many foreign students who study in the United States and then return home to bolster their native economies. Others counter that these innovators will benefit the United States, wherever they work, by generating new ideas that will serve everyone.

About the Author

Ben Wildavsky is a senior fellow at the Kauffman Foundation as well as a former education editor of *US News & World Report*.