The social pact between higher education and society

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The book

- The Rise of the BRICS and Higher Education Dynamics; investigating the pact between higher education and society
- Simon Schwartzman (Brazil), Rómulo Pinheiro (Norway) and Pundy Pillay (South Africa)
- Springer, 2015
What they have in common

- Leading countries in their regions
- Middle income
- Higher education in rapid expansion or transformation
Approaches to higher education research

- The functional approach: are the countries able to produce well-qualified people to meet the challenges of social and economic development?

- Our approach: to look at higher education as a social process of social mobility, raising demands and government initiatives, reactions and demands.

- The concept of a “social pact” that shapes the higher education sector as a whole and also the way the institutions are organized internally.
The broad themes - 1

- How are the BRICS being affected by the extraordinary expansion that has occurred in higher education worldwide, particularly in the last decade?
  - Positive side: more skilled manpower. Negative side: increasing costs, academic drift

- How has the higher education sector been changing to deal with the exponential growth in student enrollments and institutions?
  - Differentiation among elite and mass, research and teaching institutions; the expansion of the private sector; higher education as business; the impact of new technologies

- Who are the main stakeholders shaping the ways in which the higher education systems were originally established and subsequently transformed?
  - The new academic profession; students as consumers; private investors; government economic authorities; the business sector.
The broad themes - 2

- How are governments dealing with issues of access, financing, quality assurance and social relevance?

- How are higher education institutions responding to these changes? (two possibilities):
  - Resistance: political mobilization, resistance, isolation from society
  - Adaptation and transformation: changes in governance (external oversight, managerialism), curriculum (e.g., the Bologna process), partnerships with external stakeholders (local government, business)
The BRICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The BRICS countries, 2012</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>GDP</th>
<th>GDP per capita</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>198,656,019</td>
<td>2,252,664,120,777</td>
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<td>Russian Federation</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>China</td>
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<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>384,312,674,446</td>
<td>7,507.67</td>
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Brazil: the expansion of the private sector

Brazil, Enrollment in higher education, 1960-2011
Russia - from central planning to institutional stratification and markets

Russia, Enrolment in Higher Education, 1971-2009
India – Stratification, affirmative action, failed regulation, privatization
China: government control, strong institutional stratification, affirmative action
South Africa: from apartheid to transformation and integration
Findings: 1

- All countries are going through an intense process of differentiation:
  - Combining Western-type universities with a very broad set of institutes, schools, and distance-education arrangements
  - Even the notion of what a university is varies from country to country.

- In all countries, governments have and continue to play a crucial role in shaping the ways in which the higher education sector evolves:
  - Establishing priorities,
  - Allocating resources and creating quality assurance mechanisms.

- This role is limited, however, by the resilience of the existing cultures, institutions and stakeholders, as well as by their own financial limitations.
Findings: 2

- Private education is expanding everywhere, in large part as business endeavors to compete with the more traditional institutions in the provision of education services, without necessarily sharing their institutional ethos of collegiality and intellectual autonomy.

- Governmental agencies across the BRICS all have had to deal with issues of social equity, implementing policies of affirmative action, student support and regional imbalances.

- Distance education is expanding everywhere, but its impact is not very clear.

- ICT (MOOCs, etc) did not emerge as a main factor, but this may be changing.
Findings: 3

- Research and innovation are an important concern in all the BRICS countries.
  - The general tendency is for concentration of activities and resources in a selected number of institutions and regions.
  - For the most part, the bulk of the higher education sector deals primarily with education for the professions, with distance education playing an increasing role.

- Universities are changing internally to deal with a plurality of external and internal stakeholders, moving from the traditional academic collegial model to different forms of governance through more effective management and different forms of stakeholders participation.

- But they may also decay by institutional paralysis, internal conflicts and dwindling resources.
Findings: 4

- Internationalization and globalization affect all the BRICS countries in terms of the institutional models they have adopted; the quality assurance mechanisms that have been introduced; and, the ways in which the national research systems have developed.

- Global and multinational universities may be a trend in some places, is not a major policy concern for any of the countries.

- Internationalization is also important with regard to student flows to Europe and the United States
  - Often leading to serious problems of brain drain
  - But also creating new opportunities to build bridges (networks) and to benefit from the experiences of nationals living and working overseas.
The main challenge: to reestablish or create the pact between higher education and society

- In this pact, higher education sector provides valued goods and services to society - education, knowledge and opportunities for social mobility - and receives financial support and autonomy.

- For this, the higher education institutions must keep and enhance their core values as centers of higher learning and research - academic freedom, autonomy, social relevance – in face of growing diversification, external oversight, different stakeholders and limited resources.

- This pact cannot be taken for granted, and the institutions need to be responsive and to prove continuously their quality, relevance to society and effective use of resources, by improving their management practices and adapting their ways they teach, do research, provide services and meet their student’s expectations.
Thank you!