

Theorising value capture of ideas of the university in international organisational policy discourse within the SAIOS framework

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Overview

1. Ideas & values of the university
2. Value capture
3. Complexity of global governance & international organisations (IOs)
4. Power of ideas, power of IOs
5. SAIOS framework
6. Framing IO value capture within SAIOS framework
7. Implications for higher education

Ideas & Values of the University

- **Idealised ideas of the university may be understood as exemplary or *ideal models*** of a social phenomenon in terms of its “essential nature” and “how it works” (Mills, 2017, p. 74), in this case what a university is, what its purpose is, what its functions are (DeLaquil, 2023)
- **Idealised ideas and models of the university may be found in academic literature** across fields of study affiliated with higher education - including philosophy of higher education, international development higher education, international higher education, etc.
- I argue that idealised ideas offer complex, rich, nuanced, sometimes contradictory, social imaginaries, and that **international organisational (IO) policy discourses narrow how we collectively imagine what the university is**, is for, ought to be, might be, and might have been, in the past, present, and the future

Value Capture

“Our values are, at first, rich and subtle... We encounter simplified (often quantified) versions of those values... Those simplified versions take the place of our richer values in our reasoning and motivation... Our lives get worse.”

(Nguyen, 2020, p. 201)

How values become narrower, more standardised, less nuanced, “when a person or group adopts an externally-sourced value as their own, without adapting it to their particular context,” and the imposed values become “the dominant source of reasons for action in a domain.”

(Nguyen, forthcoming)

Complexity of Global Governance & IOs

Global governance in multiplex world order (Acharya, 2017a)

- Transition of global governance through vertical and horizontal differentiation (Kahler & Lake, 2004) resulting in multiple layers “including global, interregional, regional, domestic, and substate levels” (Acharya, 2017b, p. 40)

Complexity of IOs

- IOs as “transmitting & receiving mechanism” bargaining across “contradictory interests” of local, national, and regional interests (Cox, 1970, pp. 11, 16), with a widening range of tasks/functions since WWII, including education

Power of Ideas, Power of IOs

- *Ideas* or *ideologies* can become “globalized in a strictly geographical sense,” becoming part of the “global vulgate that endless media repetition progressively transforms into universal common sense” → cultural imperialism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999, p. 42)
- *Cultural imperialism* operates by universally imposing particular ideas and omitting the “historical roots of a whole set of questions” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001, p. 3)
- IOs are powerful due to extensive *linguistic capital* (Bourdieu, 1991) wielded in their roles in standardising values, goal- and norm-setting, measurement, evaluation, data-collection, analysis
- *Elite capture* by IOs as control over policy knowledge & values gives “power over and access to... resources... to describe, define, and create political realities” (Táiwò, 2022, p. 32)
- IOs thus become “forces for convergence... mechanisms for influence... dynamic networks” in higher education policy (Shahjahan & Madden, 2015, p. 706)

SAIOS Framework

Geopolitics: “...a process by which discourse, communication and the operationalisation of power and knowledge produce a spatialisation of international politics and the materialisation of hierarchies and structures of power therein.”

(Moscovitz & Sabzalieva, 2023, p. 2)

- **Scales** - irreducible, nested, geographical dimensions
- **Agents** - multi-actor higher education space
- **Interests** - variety of interests motivating agents decision-making (economic, political, individual, collective)
- **Opportunity Structures** - norms, rules, institutions, conventions, practices, discourses

SAIOS-Framed IOs

Scales - “global” complexes of “national” actors (Cox, 1970), influenced by regional, national, and local actors (Acharya, 2017a)

Agents - elite, powerful agents (Táiwò, 2022) holding significant linguistic capital to universalise ideas, values, and hide or omit other ideas and values (Bourdieu, 1991, Shahjahan & Madden, 2015)

Interests - complex systems with multiple levels or value-spheres (Ratner, 2004; Mowles, 2008), influenced by individual, disciplinary, sectoral, and organisational value complexes (DeLaquil, 2023)

Opportunity Structures - organisational norms, value- and norm-setting practices, measurement, indicators (Fontdevila, 2023; Shahjahan & Madden, 2015), organisational structures, policy concepts (ideas & values of the university) (DeLaquil, 2023), policy ontology (Gibson & Bengtsen, 2023)

Implications for Higher Education

Narrowing collective ontology

- “... the policy ontology of the problem sets out a policy reality system whereby whatever policy captures is reality. Policy pre-forms the world in a narrower mode than the full diversity of possible ways of being and knowing that exist outside the policy ontology”
- This limits our common social imaginaries (Taylor, 2007) and has a performative effect on reality (Blakely, 2020; Táíwò, 2022)

Loss of multiplicity of models

- The way we theorise what the university is, what it is for, and what its functions are then becomes limited → loss of a pluralist approach to idealised ideas of the university, at the very least marginalises some ideas (Bourdieu, 1991)

Thus, interpretation of history becomes restricted, alternatives for the present and speculations for futures become difficult to imagine

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