

Comparative and International Education Society conference

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Session: State transformation and higher education
in comparative perspective

UK and Australia

Simon Marginson

University of Oxford

ESRC/OFSRE Centre for Global Higher Education

Exogenous shocks, state transformation and effects in higher education

- National emergency under threat of invasion in World War 2 (1940-42 in Australia and UK), post-war reconstruction policies, and foundations of mass higher education

DRIVERS OF CHANGE: GLOBAL GEO-POLITICS, POPULATION MANAGEMENT

- Breakdown of the post-war international financial order and Keynesian management (1975 in UK and Australia), neo-liberal policies, partial marketisation of mass higher education

DRIVERS OF CHANGE: FINANCIAL CAPITAL, FINANCIALISATION OF SOCIETY

- Global decline, refusal of European region (2016 in UK), post-imperial state in flux, higher education (partly?) falls out of European Higher Education Area and Research Area

DRIVERS OF CHANGE: GLOBAL GEO-POLITICS, DEMOGRAPHIC BREAK WITH REGION

National emergency in World War 2

The state and population management



1940s: State centralisation, post-war reconstruction, towards massification

- In Britain and Australia, beginning from the highpoint of invasion fears in 1940-42, the state was modernised and centralised
- While mobilising the population at new levels of scale and expertise, both governments held out the promise of a better life after the sacrifice was over ('post-war reconstruction')
- Australia began its first national policy in universities in WW2, designed to develop skilled graduates on a meritocratic basis
- Britain's Beveridge report (1942) and post-1945 welfare state
- Watershed moments in higher education massification, British Robbins report (1963), Australia's Martin report (1964) and Whitlam reform (1972), extend wartime population management
- Free tuition underpins both massification and state legitimisation

Financialisation in the 1970s and after

Capital suborns and reworks state regulation



1970s: The neo-liberal moment and later marketisation in higher education

- After the collapse of Bretton Woods (1971) free capital flows render national Keynesian economic management unsustainable, amid high inflation and unemployment. Finance sector New Right deconstructs wartime states, sudden transition to 'monetarism' in monetary and fiscal policy in 1975 in both UK and Australia
- Capital presses for new opportunities in state sector via privatisation and marketisation. UK leads the evolution of neo-liberal regulation, in which the population shares the cost of public services and competition is a means of governance
- After a lag both governments develop higher education policies which maintain population control but part-marketise the sector
- Tuition fees in Australia (1989) and UK (1999, 2012) ground 'self-responsibilisation', and legitimate socially unequal outcomes

Brexit in UK 2016-

As in 1940, geo-politics not class drives transformation



The UK's Brexit as state transformation

- Self-inflicted, yes, but an (inchoate) response to external geopolitics. Loss of Empire, declining benefits of 1990s neo-imperial globalisation, resistance to free people movement in Europe. EU authority seen as a brake on neo-imperial freedoms
- The transformed state project is incoherent, 'in development', but it entails a break with regional identity and machinery
- Manifestations in higher education will be determined by the precise form of Brexit. UK higher education highly integrated in European Research Area. Less so via Erasmus and Bologna but inward flows of European talent at doctoral, postdoctoral and later career stages are massive and essential to UK universities
- Home Office regulation of inward educational migration shapes UK higher education (alongside continued population regulation via policies on domestic enrolment and tuition)

Concluding remarks

- Both geo-state politics and class politics drive external shocks. In 1940s and Brexit the state gained authority vis a vis capital; in neo-liberal transformation in 1970s capital suborned the state
- There are more striking examples of external shock/state transformation/higher education changes, e.g. Meiji Japan. The 1940s and 1970s in UK and Australia saw rapid state responses to the exogenous shocks but lagged effects in higher education
- The 1940s and 1970s state transformations are still playing out
- In the face of external shocks, in UK and Australia, the state's role in higher education is that of *manager of the national population*. State transformations are manifest in:
 - Mobilisation of graduates as human capital (after 1940s)
 - Legitimation of state, capitalist economy and society via structuring of education opportunity (after 1940s, 1970s)
 - Shaping of inward educational migration (Brexit UK)