

AN EVALUATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF MARKETISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The discussion of sustainable development in higher education has become important in contemporary times, due to various purposes, partly as a mean for developing individual and society as a whole in any aspect of their life. Education and educational institutions also have significant roles partly in sustaining knowledge for the individual within the society to accommodate in the Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) blueprint by United Nations. The importance of sustainable development education has led to a systematic and philosophical investigation at the sphere of conception and philosophy. Various concepts of sustainability, development and education were formulated and introduced during the time. However, some interpretations also led to shift the foundations of higher education especially through the marketisation interpretation. This paper aims to evaluate marketisation interpretation and its influence on higher education.

Keywords: *Education, Higher education, philosophy, sustainable development, marketisation*

Introduction

Higher Education is one of the main and pertinent components which has been given attention by various parties, mainly the scholars, politicians, leaders and teachers. Higher education has proven its self-evident impact towards individuals' and the country's development. It is also proven that it serves as an important centre to the changes in all of the aspects of human life such as economy, inculcation of the value of citizenship, preservation of cultures, and preservation of life's values (Paul, 1975). The higher education is a crucial part of judging whether it strategically and culturally reflected the spirit, work ethos and the quality of the community living in a country (Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, 1998).¹ It is undeniable that the higher education also functions as an agent of dispersing and developing knowledge (Paul, 1975).

The strategic importance of higher education was recognised to achieved much important development in human life which led to the need for a proper planning and designing strategy. However, the plannings and strategies were often implemented through the pragmatic interest of many, which is not rooted in religion, philosophy and culture in the highest form. Through pragmatic interests, the highest values, religious values, morality and ethics were being sacrificed to attain pragmatic aims, which will lead to destruction not only in the domain of nature, but more importantly, the destruction in religion and culture. The impacts from pragmatic interests occurs not in the context of physical alone, but more important is the destruction of the human himself, which was lead astray from the

recognition of his purposes and existence in this world.

Higher education also is the highest form of institution that will produce leaders in every important field (Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, 1995). Since leaders cannot be separated from the constituent elements of a good man, therefore religious and humanistic education should be a foundation and core element in every phase of education, especially at the higher education level (Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, 1995). Higher education cannot be perceived as an institution to produce experts who are only knowledgeable and skilful regarding their own specific field without being rooted in religious and humanistic education.² Consequently, this will lead to social and individual lameness, since the wisdom from religion and humanistic education are important for every aspect of their life as a whole, and not only in the context of their jobs and work.

Through our elaborations above, our aims in this paper are to address some of the characteristic of our current higher education which contributes to many destructions in human life, which became a concern for many scholars, known as the marketisation of higher education. The process of marketisation of higher education changes the role of education to making more income and operating as a business entity. Based on this background, Harry R. Lewis, a former Dean of Harvard College raised concern on his university having failed to produce a better human being due to marketisation element, competition and consumerism (H. Lewis, 2006). The same concern was also raised by Bill Reading in 1998, where the university becomes more of "an autonomous

¹The treasures and heritage of knowledge culture of a country could only be described through an intellectual investigation. Hence intellectual inquiries of its highest medium can be found in the practices centralized in the higher educational institutions. For more information, see Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud. (1998). *The Educational Philosophy*

and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization. ISTAC. page 170-171.

² The term humanistic education use here does not refer to the study of humanity that reject, neglect and separated from religion or the humanity that refers to humanism.

bureaucratic corporation” and focusing mainly on the aspect of “economic management” rather than on social and cultural aspect (Bill Reading, 1998, Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, 2012). Some concerns raised by scholars above is enough to show how the influence of marketisation shifting various fundamental aspects of higher education. This leads to the need for a re-examined marketisation interpretation on higher education and evaluate their ideas and influence as well as its impact. To continue our discussion, we will elaborate more on the influence of marketisation on the university.

1. Marketisation practice in higher education

The importance of higher education has been recognised as becoming more associated and concentrated with aspirations for market-oriented institutionalisation and knowledge economy. Though the trend existed in the past, and was rapidly adapted in the early 20th century, its influence still being perceived and held firmly in our contemporary times (Callaghan, 1962, Wan. Mohd. Nor Daud, 2013). The British academician, Halsey and Trow, more than a century ago, have indicated that the pressure from the national economic development summons up responses from the higher education community to gradually link the institutionalisation of the economic development through educational institutions by supplying the market with professional manpower and research activities in the applied sciences (Halsey & Trow, 1971). As Frank Newman, Lara Couturier and Jamie Scurry analyses through their research, explained numerous force urging higher education to turn into a market oriented growth due to several reasons:

“The existing superstructure, although effective in orchestrating the expansion in size and scope of the public system of higher education, has been largely ineffective in preventing mission creep and program overlap. It has not been able to address issues of cost and efficiency or the quality of learning, nor has it been able to mobilize higher education in support of the reform of elementary and secondary education. legislators have grown impatient, and accountability has become a hot-button topic.”³

The marketisation interpretation tends to address the issues of the guiding forces in management and operation of higher education. It will then measure the effectivity and efficiency of their institutional operations by using some indicators based on its market demands. Consequently, a new form of higher education associated with the management of economic enterprise and economic growth rises rapidly. With the positive responses and acceptance towards the economic forces, higher education institutions were formulated and operates through the indicative influence of a market-oriented economic philosophy. The most influential was from the neo-liberal framework coined as the *marketisation mechanism*. Through marketisation interpretation, the idea and philosophy of higher education changed and transformed into several features. What are the characteristics of marketisation in higher education? The following are the typical manifestations of marketisation in higher education:

³ For further explanation, see Frank Newman, Lara Couturier and Jamie Scurry. (2004). *The Future of Higher Education: Rhetoric, Reality, and the Risk*

of the Market. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, San Francisco.

(i) The characteristics of marketisation indicates that the higher education is a private enterprise and business institutions associated with market orientation in every aspect, either in its purposes, curriculum, methodology and management. As private enterprise and businesses, their aims and purposes are to sell their commodity and services to anyone who needs their services. The higher education then acts as an institutionalised body of sales persons, participating in the market by selling their commodity, goods and services to the customers (Friedman, 1980). The customer can be anyone who sees the value of the commodity provided by the supplier. Furthermore, the generic characteristics of these customers also participates in the act of buying according to the services or products which they need and want. In this context also, the customer refers to the student, the industry, and the stakeholder (Friedman, 1980). Therefore, as a private enterprise, higher education must supply their product and services to compete with others enterprise. In the context of marketisation, higher education should work towards the demands and awareness of the market forces (Conradie, 2011, Jahannes, 2017). To them, market forces are the sources of motivations that guides all act of progress in the higher education. Market forces are used as mechanisms deliver signals and coordinate various useful information to the higher education to make sense of 'immediate' and 'real' demands, enabling them to assign and design the courses, and curriculum of the given institution.

(ii) In the context of marketisation, higher education provides their curriculum, courses, and knowledge based on the practice of demand and supply. The practice of demand and supply refers to the correlation between the quantity of

commodity and the quantity of consumers' wish. By using this practice, the accumulation of the information on demands will be known to the provider for them to place their services. Higher education applies the practice of demand and supply to perceived the kind of services that should be provided to the consumer's wishes.

(iii) To the marketisation interpretation, higher education is integrated into the system of production and accumulation in which knowledge reduces to its economic function, pragmatic function and refers to the individual economic utilities (Barnett, 2000, Gerardo, 2020). The knowledge was measured through the indication of whether it contributes effectively to the growth of *economic aims*. The quality of the courses, the knowledge and the department performances are measured through the indicator of the *economic contribution*.

(iv) Through marketisation, students are portrayed as customers, especially international students. As a customer, higher education should satisfy customer's purposes and aims who used their services.

Up to this point, we already explained the marketisation characteristics of higher education in general. What follows are to evaluate them to arrive at its implications and destruction to higher educational growth.

2. An evaluation of the implication of marketisation.

In this part, we will evaluate some of the marketisation characteristics that have been explained above. However, our evaluation will not cover all characteristics stated above. We will only evaluate some of the characteristics as follows:

Firstly, our evaluation will regard the shift of the purposes and aims of higher education. The marketisation process shifts the real purposes of higher education from producing good man to producing workers demanded by market forces and industry. They aim to improve their financial aspect and maximise their profit. Through this process, profit and revenues will be a priority of higher education to design their goals and its mechanism. The higher education becomes more like a private agency competing with each other, to become successful. Therefore, the success will improve their image and profile to attract customers, not only local customers but more importantly, international students (customer), attracting global currencies and networks.

Secondly, as mentioned above on the practise of demand and supply, the change of function to higher education as agent to provide services, goods and commodity based on the demand of customers or anyone who sees the value. Since higher education relied on the practice of demand and supply, they have to provide curriculum, content and courses that meets the demand of the customers. There are two issues of demand and supply in marketisation interpretation: (i) First, the issues of dominance criteria followed by the provider. The dominant criteria for higher education (provider) to supply their services are based on their motives to generate more income and to improve their profile in the market. Therefore, to do this, they need to supply and attained the best customer who are willing to pay. At the same time, their

motives for profit leads them to satisfy the big demands rather than the small demands which does not give the best return. Through this, higher education curates a curriculum that are suitable for the customers from whom they can generate more income. Therefore, the principle of generating more income will be used to design the curriculum and courses instead of for the importance on the content itself. Recently, many courses in higher education were being removed due to the indicator of its small demands by the industry. The humanities and religious courses, which are important for the development of humans are among the courses that were left behind. (ii) The second issue is concerning the nature of demand forces itself. The demands came from various goals. Some goals are to attain public needs, at the same time some for personal needs. The possibility of the demands from the customer or student is also due to their aims to acquire a better career standing, therefore they can earn higher income. His choices of subject, courses, and educational content is customised only to acquire trending abilities, skills, and tangible knowledge that are within the scope of his career. Through manoeuvring of the market demands and supply, consequently it will lead to a debasement of non-tangible knowledge such as the religious and humanity education due to their alleged smaller demand.

Thirdly, marketisation views market order as a supreme source and principle of human action (Hayek, 2006). As we mentioned earlier, marketisation urges higher education to be aware and rely on market forces to guide their action. However, the market forces itself changes over time. Therefore, if higher education were to follow the market forces, then they will inherently and continuously change their end goals through adjusting their purpose, courses offered, and curriculum construction gradually in accordance to the pragmatic demand of the market forces. The changes brought by market forces will

affect the important and central aspect of higher education, keeping the integrity of knowledge, as not a priority anymore. The usefulness, the need, priority and the function of curriculum and knowledge were reduced to fulfil the contribution of pragmatic economic growth and the market demand. The criteria of usefulness, utility and relevance of knowledge will only be determined by pragmatic market criteria that subscribe to changes. Since the market criteria changed over time and evolve, the categorization of knowledge will also be changed.

Fourth, marketisation interpretation of higher education changes the role of the university from to produce a good man and responsible human beings to the production of man that serves the market order. By relying on the market order, it shapes the curriculum to fit the capacity of the consumers, by fragmentising the curriculum and knowledge that can serve the changing market demand. Market demands itself cannot be free from monopoly of a bigger demand, and in this context, market demands are monopolised by the extended market, the industry. Therefore, it cannot be stated that by relying upon market orders, the university serves the need of society. The truth is, by relying upon market orders, it refers to the satisfaction of the client to the university, which is the industry. We can see through history that the first occurrence of this phenomena take part in the West in the birth of the Neoliberal university. The neoliberal university arranged the priority and the importance of knowledge by criteria provided by market order due to the economic downfall of capitalism in the late 18th century.

Five, another important aspect to be highlighted is that marketisation caused a fragmentation of the classifications of knowledge. The division of labour since the first industrial revolution has led to partitioned and specialisation of work

(Peter Drucker, 1993). Through marketisation, the higher education are cast to play a role that supplies their services to the demand of the market and, in a bigger scale, the industry; where divisions of labour are the consequential means for an efficient and productive work to be executed. This is reflected in the creation of partitioned subjects taught and courses offered which led to the fragmentation of knowledge into a small utilisable units. The unity of knowledge was gradually broken into small units in order to serve the immediate demands of the market allegedly contributing to the production of specialised, skilled worker. This fragmentation of knowledge will separate and cause a wider gap between knowledge which is against its nature in the first place.

Conclusion

From our description and evaluation on marketisation interpretation of higher education, there is a need to rethink the true role and the purpose of higher education and development. Higher education should not be sacrificed to attain pragmatic interests to generate more income, extreme priority over financial improvements, transforming educational institutions into business structures and forgetting its true role and purposes which will led to the destruction of many aspect in our lives.

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