The Impacts of Globalization on the Internationalization Process of Management Education Programs

Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to question the impacts of globalization on management education, based on changes in the production and consumption of knowledge in the contemporary international context. Grounded in the literature reviewed, we intend to propose a research agenda aimed at understanding how and why international masters programs of management education are included in this new global agenda that aims to reach emerging countries such as Brazil, India and China.

Key words: Globalization, master management education, emerging countries

Introduction

As a result of the globalization era, universities must improve and change their processes of internationalization, while adapting to and meeting new demands. This process can be observed through the growing importance of emerging economies in the international context and its inclusion in the management education curricula and in the agendas of business schools. These changes have transformed educational institutions into major "players" in the Knowledge Era, acting as disseminators and creators of this new social context, in a scope that involves both the consumption and production of knowledge. Thus, we believe it necessary to open new discussions and conduct research in this area in order to observe the phenomenon of globalization and its implications in the arena of management education through the masters’ international programs. (Toyoshima, 2007; Zadja, 2005, Santos 2011).

We emphasize that it is through management education that practitioners of the contemporary world, managers from organizations in many different sectors, can experience in an authentic form, the phenomenon of globalization with transforming possibilities. Thus, it is important to adopt a critical perspective at how globalization impacts in the field of management education and how the recent internationalization processes has occurred (Zadja, 2005, Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002).

Some studies have been focused on these issues, such as training management (Scott, 1998), impacts of globalization in the management education process (Zadja 2005; Toyoshima, 2007) intercultural issues embedded in management programs and the value or lack thereof in MBA programs (Kehm, 2003). However, we believe that this debate has gray areas that should be further developed, mainly through a critical perspective, with respect to the contemporary geopolitical changes and the rise of emerging countries on the management education agenda of many international programs, such as the: TRIUM Global Executive MBA programme; GEMBA Global Executive MBA; Global Executive MBA Programme (EMBA); The Global Emerging Markets MBA (GEMBA); IESE’S Global Executive MBA; The Duke MBA.

First of all, this paper develops a critical perspective on the phenomenon of globalization. Subsequently, we discuss how this phenomenon impacts the management education around the world and how this academic sector can become a vehicle for the dissemination of "globalizing" ideas. In the third section, we discuss the issue of managerialism, as one of the key concepts of international education in management. Finally,
we intend to discuss how international master management education programs fit within this context and which research paths can be followed.

Theoretical foundation

Globalization: Debates and Concepts

While there is an apparent consensus on globalization as an ideological and multifaceted phenomenon, defined by the convergence of cultures, economies and political dimensions, there are significant differences around the debates focused on globalization in terms of theoretical, ideological and disciplinary perspectives.

To some extent, the very multidimensional nature of globalization reflects a broader interpretation of what culture means. Currently, information and communication technology has contributed to an unprecedented speed of data transmission, and consequently, increased business transactions that have together resulted in an increasingly complex and interactive context with the participation of multiple players at multiple levels, such as individuals, organizations and governments (Zadja, 2005).

Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) developed the world-system theory to explain how the world had expanded in accordance with an ordered pattern of relationships between societies ruled by a capitalist system of economic exchange. This theory opposed a linear emphasis of development advocated by modernization theory, wherein Wallerstein has demonstrated how rich and poor societies were locked together in a global system, and how it influenced their relative economic advantages and disadvantages that, in turn, influenced political and cultural spheres.

As Banerjee and Linstead (2001: 222-3) explain, "in an increasingly global era, informed and configured by the neo-liberal economic thought ... the definition of who or what constitutes the 'international other' depends on who is asking the questions and often gets lost in much of the research on international management". In order to keep the pureness of the concept of free market of the dominant model, the asymmetrical power relations in the international context are not taken into consideration. Nevertheless, such relationships occur between governments, global and transnational organizations and various social agents (Faria, Ibarra-Colorado and Guedes, 2010). Jack et al (2008) suggest that business literature about international management, or whose object of study are transnational companies, is strongly rooted in the positivist-functionalist tradition and do not go through a reflective process of its epistemological consequences, deriving from a decontextualized historical perspective (Jack and Westwood, 2007).

We believe that international management education plays an outstanding role in this scenario since it promotes the flow of management and business information and knowledge between people and countries, but it remains little explored as a social phenomenon without sufficient evidence about its impacts for societal transformation and the possibility of legitimate construction of knowledge in local management.

In the following section, we will move on to the impacts of globalization in education and how it responds to this increasingly dynamic and complex phenomenon.

Globalization and its impact on education

We can consider that the main disseminating agents of knowledge, the educational institutions, represent a prominent role in the globalization process. Some early examples include the worldwide spread of religions, especially Islam and Christianity, as well as colonialism, that interrupted and replaced original forms of education throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Epstein, 1989). However, it should be noted that
postcolonial globalizing influences in education took more subtle forms that may be disguised in various ways (Epstein, 2005, Zadja, 2005).

Thus, when ones talk about globalization and education it becomes important to keep in mind issues such as (i) whether the homogeneity embedded in global culture may have decreasing effects on the adaptability and flexibility of individuals and organizations, (ii) whether there is a quick and automatic accommodation caused by the changes brought by globalization, (iii) whether the purpose of globalization works against the emergence of fragile senses of common identity, and finally, (iv) how the multidimensional nature of globalization impacts the issue of education (Santos, 2006).

Somehow, almost all educational institutions in the world have been affected by the phenomenon of globalization, and this would be no different in the scenario of management education. The results of changes in educational policies in each country and how they relate to other countries and the internationalization processes around this issue have, in a way, reflected the degree of the impact of globalization in each one (Banya, 2005).

Thus, the role of higher education has shifted to support and monitor the economy on a global level. Higher education becomes part of the agenda of the WTO in the sense that it does not only contribute to the development, but becomes a service provider in global trade, including and through the exportation of education programs. The question to be raised would be for whom the control of the production and consumption of knowledge, in a global level, is of interest. Of course, the interest remains in the hands of the developed countries (Banya, 2005; Santos, 2011).

It is necessary to reinforce this view with the information that higher level business education has become an extremely lucrative business. It has been reported that the export of higher education services contributes significantly to the U.S. economy. To demonstrate this idea, in 2010 alone it was estimated that the U.S. (the world's largest provider of education services), produced a revenue of $ 21 billion, in a world market that moves $ 70 billion per year on average.

Considering the debate about globalization and its impact on the education sector, we note that several courses in management education (MBAs and others who criticize and reject this label) follow a similar path of internationalization, in a noticeable move to approach emerging countries, like Brazil, India and China. Then we ask: what are the motivating forces of this logic? Are they explicit and intentional? What are these processes really like? Who enforces this standard?

In the next section of this paper we discuss the role of management education according to the phenomenon of globalization and the role of managerialism in this context.

Globalization, Education Management and Emerging Countries

The discussion of globalization, management education, and managerialism should consider that the process of building the field of International Business (IB) was influenced by the political interests and the guidelines of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, which, in reality, represented the dominant perspective in International Relations (IR) (Guedes and Faria, 2010).

This dominant perspective brought to the surface issues relating to states’ political and military interaction in a context of great instability and anarchy, and assuming that "big power brings big responsibility" (Jackson and Sorensen, 1999, p.88) in peacekeeping worldwide.

Guedes and Faria (2010), as well as others, argue that these policies can still lead and also be behind some theories related to development and modernization. On behalf of these "responsibilities", developed countries impose their discourse in management and a dominant pattern of management knowledge over peripheral and developing countries.
The expectation of a universal knowledge or, to a lesser extent, a generalized knowledge level is a local position and a historical accident by business schools, mostly in the United States. As such expectations become the international standard or the dominant pattern, and education programs are treated as products and are exported to universities around the world, little can be said, since any novelty or contradiction becomes easily labeled as ignorance of the 'other'. However, it is obvious and sometimes ironic that this social construction of global knowledge 'convergence' comes to be the greatest contribution of our own ignorance (Jack et al., 2008).

Thus, Jack and Westwood (2009) argue that within the context of a neo-colonial perpetuation, such systems leads to a continuous dependence on the South and the belief that the development and modernization rests on ingrained and imported mechanisms from the North in terms of knowledge, systems and technologies. These same structures and relationships can be extended to higher education, and, with even greater emphasis, on international education in management, because they serve to reinforce and perpetuate inequalities between universities and organizations from the center and those of the periphery around the world (Jack and Westwood, 2009).

In summary, we question how the international programs in management education have been internationalized and why emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil have been selected as partners.

**Final Considerations**

The aim of this paper, based on changes in the contemporary international context, was to question the impacts of globalization on the internationalization process of master international management programs.

To accomplish this, it is necessary to further develop debates on globalization from a critical perspective that question how this phenomenon impacts education on a worldwide basis, and specifically in international programs of management education. Moreover, we highlighted how international management education can become a vehicle for the dissemination of "globalizing" ideas. We also stressed how the theories and practices of the field of IM have been responsible for the spread of managerialism on a worldwide scale, reinforcing its own role as one of the key elements of the production process, and also as a key concept in the dissemination and consumption of management knowledge.

Altogether, the internationalization of education in management, mainly the one focused on international management, supports the dominant agenda imposed on the world by American and Eurocentric hegemony, in order to favor the interests of these countries (from the center) to the detriment of less developed or peripheral countries, accentuating asymmetries (Faria, 2010). Thus, it seems that this scenario that unfolds results in disadvantages for emerging countries such as Brazil, India and China, as new "partners" in the international master programs of management.

We believe that the contribution of this paper is centered on providing a critical view on the role of management education in the new global setting, regarding the production and consumption of knowledge from the emerging countries and the path of internationalization of the master management programs (Zadja, 2005).

Finally, grounded in this literature review, we intend to propose some theoretical propositions aiming to set a research agenda focused on the understanding of the impacts of globalization on management education. More specifically, how and why occur the internationalization process of international master programs that follow the path of reaching out and integrating the emerging countries into their agendas.

A large part of this topic refers to the different nuances of the subalterity for which these southern countries will be subjected to within the scope of an international program of
management education (Santos, 2006). Especially, in that countries like Brazil, India and China enter massively on the agenda of these programs, but still fulfill an agenda of hegemonic assumptions, knowledge and service to the interests of the North. What we see in this framework is the perpetuation of a model of localized globalism, which develops through master international programs of management in a mimetic and isomorphic movement that represents in its form and content the imposition of unilateral choices and the imposition of the consumption of knowledge.

Then it is worth asking whether these changes, which occurred mainly in the economic field, will come with social change and if they will be supported by a system of education itself, capable of creating its standards and not just importing the standards already established and imposed for some time by developed countries.

References


