



The Implications of Massification and Marketisation on Access and Widening Participation

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ABSTRACT. Multiple competing pressures are presently placed on higher education access and participation. A global trend that seems impossible to reverse is the rise of massification and marketization. This article will make the case that massification effects stratification, breaks up the authority of the elite to some extent, promotes access, and broadens participation by drawing on the experiences of the UK, China, and the USA. Although these factors may have the effect of promoting social equity, if there are too many students enrolled, the perceived value of university degrees and the quality of the education may be diminished. This may have the effect of deterring individuals from lower social classes from attending university, though it can be very challenging to determine the exact number of students who constitute an excessive number. Although there is evidence that the marketization of education has increased access chances, tuition costs are likely to deter those with limited financial resources from enrolling in higher education. The rise in the number of private institutions is mostly a result of this.

Keywords: Education, Widening Participation, Marketisation, UK, China, USA.

1 Introduction

Martin Trow divided the development of higher education into an elite system (with 15% of the age grades), mass system (15%-50%) and universal system (also called 'open access') attaining around half of the age range) [1]. Elite education's primary goal is to develop academic elites and mould the governing class. It is suggested that a greater variety of elites be cultivated during the mass stage of higher education. This level has some potential for social mobility up the social ladder and is mostly funded by the state.

Access to and widening participation in higher education is a significant policy issue. Widening access to and success within higher education (HE) is global issue and interventions in the higher education sector in many countries have been designed to increase the participation of minority ethnic, low-income, and other under-represented groups [2,3]. For example, widening participation in Higher Education has been a pol-

icy issue in the UK for the past 50 years admission but the whole learning stage, including the learning outcome [3]. Getting students into higher education is simply the first step; if they don't graduate with the skills necessary to enter the labour market with confidence, their efforts are for naught. The importance of financial returns on degrees to the Teaching Excellence Framework exemplifies the relevance of graduate labour market results to current HE policy and regulation. The demand for personal labour market returns from school investments is growing among students and recent graduates as a result of rising tuition costs and rising student debt in a period of intense consumerization. '93 % of full-time first-degree students are employed within six months of graduation. In the UK, those with higher education make, on average, 50% more income than people without higher education [4]. Higher financial incentives after graduation and lower financial entrance barriers have boosted school-age youth's understanding of the importance of higher education, which has encouraged residents to enrol in higher education. It is needed to acknowledge the difference between the US market tuition system underpinned by commercial loans (modified by scholarships and subsidies) and the UK tuition loans system, which have important effects in WP and also the degree of expansion at any given time.

More educational opportunities are brought by massification of higher education [5]. In the UK, political forces have led the way for change and active innovation, with institutional plans advocating access to higher education for all, in contrast to the path of development of higher education in the US. Additionally, the massive expansion of higher education in China has increased the level of expectations for fairness. [6]. Systems in higher education are coordinated in varying ways [7]. Massification affects internal reform at colleges and universities significantly, in addition to implying larger changes in higher education. The average yearly enrolment growth rate from 1987 to 2003 topped 26.8 percent thanks to China's national programmes in prior decades. The strongest wave of higher education massification ever recorded occurred in China [8]. Higher education in China has rapidly increased while simultaneously improving in quality, making it a worthwhile subject of study. Before 1970s, the Chinese government paid institutions of higher education to train graduates to their requirements. Instead of receiving a free university education as they once did, students now have to pay higher tuition fees as a result of the government's switch to a private pricing system. Higher education significantly contributed to the abundance of options for upward mobility that were made available in China during the early phases of market transition [9].

Although the massification of higher education has increased the enrolment and the likelihood that students from disadvantaged classes will enter university, it is still students from advantaged social classes who have benefited most from the massification and marketisation policy [10]. According to UNESCO (2020), 'despite the increasing opportunities arising from a changing economy, social inequalities arising from advantages of background and birth remain strong in the UK and its education system contributes to their maintenance and reproduction' [11]. Students from high socioeconomic level, men, and members of racial and ethnic majorities have profited from the expansion of higher education [12]. Similarly, in China, 'disadvantaged groups retain their unfavourable status in accessing higher education' [13]. As Bourdieu's reproduction theory concluded, social advantages reproduce themselves between generations,

with education as a key vector [14]. Upper-middle class families can transfer their economic capital to cultural capital to rise the probability of their children accessing higher education. Moreover, socially advantaged families are better at advancing their status using educational structures such as access to selected universities, for entry to which competition becomes ever more intensive [7, 15]. This pulls that sector away from a large group lower down the social scale.

Furthermore, according to Qian and Walker [16], the household registration system in China greatly affects students' access to educational resources. There is a huge gap in the distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas, which creates even more unequal educational opportunities between rural and urban students than between students with different socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, more and more students are learning remotely through the Internet. Teaching relies increasingly on distance learning and other technical means. As a result, it is important to improve the design of information-based education and set up online learning environments for students. According to Yang's argument, China's educational resources are not expanding as quickly as its student population and many universities are increasingly experiencing a lack of faculty members, instructional supplies, and library materials [17]. Teachers' energy is limited, they are overburdened, and their attention to students decreases. Furthermore, due to the lagging development of teaching modes and curricula, the current hierarchical structure of higher education in China is not conducive to the highest educational outcomes and many universities pursue the expansion of disciplines and the expansion of enrolment with little consideration for the construction of discipline levels. Moreover, there is a shortage of highly skilled workers and innovative researchers with basic technical knowledge and high skill levels [18]. Despite the increased access to higher education that massification brings, it has been argued that it may also result in a decline in educational quality, which has an impact on students' decision to return to higher education, particularly students returning to elite institutions as seen from a social stratification perspective.

In conclusion, massification promotes access and participation by 1) improving the enrolment rate, so that more people have access to education; 2) increasing the horizontal diversity of higher education institutions (HEI) to some extent in the early stages and establishing HEI with various purposes to draw in students. On the downside, massification prolongs access inequality, a kind of social inequality. Poor students frequently lack access to prestigious schools, and if they graduate, their income and employment chances are inferior to those of students who attended respectable colleges.

2 The influences of marketisation on access and participation

Marketisation leads to increased positioning of students as consumers by higher education institutions [19], and opens new opportunities and ways for universities to expand their brand, for example by crossing borders and setting up campuses, collaborating with partners to extend their brand. By charging tuition fees, universities are enabled to invest in teaching equipment. They become more efficient, producing more research

and attracting more students. But at the same time, high tuition fees may reduce students' desire to attend university. Students expect a better choice and a return on their investment since they view the chance to earn a degree as a service they have paid for [20]. With the in-depth development of the knowledge-based economy, the popularization and application of information technology and the close connection of world economic and trade relations, marketisation of higher education has become an unavoidable global higher education trend. Higher education has been subject to a progressive process of marketization from the early 1980s in the UK, according to Brown [21]. The UK government encouraged and supported university-industry partnerships to foster knowledge transformation as a result of the economic and technological advancements. A knowledge-based economy is being built by the government, businesses, and universities, and universities have a greater societal duty to develop a skilled labour force and foster innovation in knowledge and technology. In response to the urgent requirement for a sizable number of high-level scientific and managerial employees in the corporate world, expanding student enrolment, improving teaching quality and increasing practical courses have become important ways to upgrade society's human capital. Along with these attempts at higher education marketization, a series of higher education reform measures also appeared [22].

The institutionalisation of marketization measures has changed the culture of academic life. Universities are starting to take more and more cues from the management styles of private and public-sector enterprises. [23]. Marketing evolved as a strategy to encourage broadening participation [24]. Higher education may be able to become more adaptable and efficient through this process of marketization, as well as more sensitive to the requirements of society, the economy, students, and parents. A potential positive aspect of marketisation is that it may increase access and participation. For example, in some schools, private funding may improve teaching conditions and promote participation; furthermore, there more private HEI have arisen to meet more enrolment needs. After higher education has embarked on a market-oriented development path, education funding has been supplemented, not only reducing financial pressure on the government but also facilitating the effective allocation of education resources and promoting high-quality and rapid development of higher education.

Universities' competitiveness and influence are crucial in the context of the marketization of higher education. Excessive marketization can cause colleges to engage in ruthless competition and steer higher education in the wrong directions. UK higher education is a stratified system for a stratified society. 'The spread of meritocratic routes, allowing vast numbers of schoolchildren to gain access to higher education, does not, in itself, produce a more level playing field or spell the end of class divisions.' [25]. For example, it potentially intensifies the vertical differentiation of HEIs, and thus stratifies individual access and participation in 'a highly controlled quasi-market that forces institutions to compete against one another for resources and funding' [23]. Market competition can enhance vertical diversity (stratification between institutions) over time, in status, resources and employability of alumni [26]. According to Teichler (1996), vertical differentiation (stratification) distinguishes higher education institutions by 'quality, reputation and prospective status of graduates' [27]. When there are horizontal differences in mission these can turn into vertical differences of status, with

research universities in the leading role. As a result, teaching-focused higher education institutions are undervalued and underfunded, and they are forced to admit a sizable number of students from underprivileged backgrounds and with dim future prospects. They will face competition from colleges that only provide vocational courses and from corporations that offer apprenticeships for those students. Additionally, those attending institutions with higher degrees typically obtain the most bursaries [28]. For instance, in 2015, the lowest-income students at Imperial College London (ranked 8th globally by the 2015 QS World University Ranking) earned £6,000 annually, while those at Liverpool John Moores (rated #801-1000) received just £500 [29]. Building a research university sector fosters stratification, and growth and massification generate greater stratification, all else being equal: First, as participation increases, the majority of the expansion is borne by institutions in the mass sector with lesser status. Second, as a percentage of total opportunities in higher education, the number of positions at elite schools is decreasing, and rivalry to join the elite group is growing. [7].

Universities need to focus on their students' academic performance and post-graduation outcomes in addition to just increasing the diversity of their student group. As previously mentioned, participation is a process and includes a whole learning stage and outcome. According to Harrison et. al [30], only providing access to higher education is inadequate if disadvantaged students are not able to flourish by participating thoroughly in the university experience. Some contributing factors may include a culturally unresponsive curriculum; also hidden challenges at home, for example, parenthood or other caring. Meanwhile, it is also important for government to use policy, regulation and funding to foster equity [31]. Moderate marketization of higher education benefits both the nation and universities, but excessive marketization will result in a reliance on student fees that is unsustainable. By doing this, the chances for low-income students to pursue higher education will be at least somewhat diminished. According to Office for Students (2018), government will try to 'ensure providers are committing the right resources to widen access and successful participation' [32].

3 The intertwining implications of massification and marketisation

Widening participation from conventional students to new and different students with distinct information demands has been a result of the massification and marketization of higher education [33]. Higher education institutes treating students as consumers means the student choice process has become complex. Unless government intervenes to create equality, massification will also increase stratification over time. This explains why it becomes increasingly difficult to provide greater equality of opportunity as systems grow. It's a paradox that while more social inclusiveness should promote upward meritocratic movement, it may not always make it easier to gain admission to prestigious institutions. As massification develops, a degree's economic and social value becomes less than it was.

As Busted claimed, the devaluation of academic degrees triggered by the rapid expansion of higher education has greatly damaged public confidence in American higher

education [34]. Some government circles as in the UK of the continued increase in higher education has also exerted political influence on universities to varying degrees. The US federal and state governments have begun gradually to reduce their funding for public higher education [35]. 'Underpinning the move towards enhanced marketisation in higher education is the need for considerable growth in the market' [21]. There are two driving factors. Universities are looking for other sources of revenue as a result of reductions in government funding. The international student market is an excellent illustration of how the trend toward globalisation has affected the market mechanism [23]. As independent entities, universities began to admit a high number of international students after realising that doing so would enable them to receive funding that was not governed by the government. The academic English proficiency of domestic and international students may vary, though. It's critical to consider both overt and covert kinds of discrimination that take place in institutions while promoting participation. There are tensions between widening participation and marketisation. Clark, Mountford-Zimdars and Francis claimed that widening participation programmes have become recruitment exercises [36]. This tension features a strengthened commodification of the relationship between potential students from disadvantaged backgrounds and higher education institutions, which conflicts with traditional ideas of the value of higher education, such as academic freedom. On the other hand, marketisation also promotes massification and, to a certain extent, marketisation has a positive impact on access to higher education. As enrollment in public schools became more challenging during the later stages of massification due to the growing student population, private schools slowly began to crop up. There are now greater chances and rights for more people to acquire higher education because to the growth of private investment in higher education and educational institutions. 'Post-18 education cannot be left entirely to market forces' [26]. It is important to lift the status and resources of non-university participation in Further Education (FE) and more effectively integrate all forms of post-18 education. In addition, to encourage adult and part-time study through lifelong learning entitlement, capital funding for upgrading FE colleges is essential. Universities need to be doing and laying out their access and participation plans. For example, traditional three-year degree programmes may not suit some learners, which may stop them from participating, so providers can promote more flexible ways in learning. For example, offering two-year degrees, evening degrees, part-time study, and preparatory courses to widen participation.

4 Conclusion

Higher education has expanded as a result of massification and marketization, as evidenced by the sharp rise in the number of students pursuing higher education, the expansion of the options available to students for pursuing higher education, and the quickening growth of research and institutional capacity. But, particularly for underprivileged people, they might result in quality difference and inequality. Graduation unemployment is a growing issue, and overall teaching quality has declined. Inequality in higher education will worsen as a result of excessive marketization, which will also

make it harder for kids from low-income families to attend college. Particularly, the rate and extent to which massification and marketization affect various nations varies. Similar to the aforementioned examples, marketization in China is not overt and is largely under government supervision. American and British marketization are more advanced. Higher education's equality and quality have, however, also been questioned, which may have an impact on participation and access. Governments should act to address these issues.

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