

**THE COMPLEXITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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A CAREER IN ACADEMICS AND ACTIVISM

**PHILIP G. ALTBACH**



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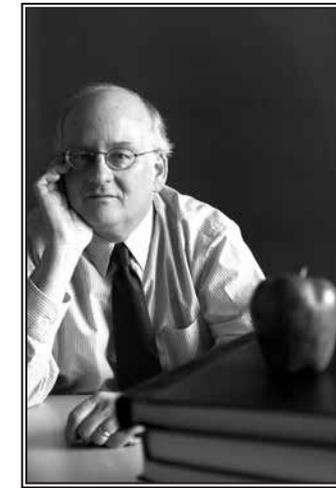
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## The Complexity of Higher Education: A Career in Academics and Activism

Philip G. Altbach

Organizing a discussion of a career—and the ideas that have shaped it—that has covered more than a half century and taken a variety of unanticipated twists and turns is not a simple task. This essay is organized in two parts. The first discusses the elements of a career that has taken place entirely in the world of academe, but which was shaped in part by the social and political movements of the 1960s in America and the world. The second part focuses mainly on the ideas and concerns that have animated my work over time. These aspects are, of course, intertwined. Commitments have shaped ideas and actions, experience contributed to ideas and perspectives. Thus, this is not an autobiography in the traditional sense; the experience of a rather typical academic hardly warrants that. Rather, it is a consideration of ideas swirling in the social and academic environment of the times and how these, as well as somewhat random circumstance, shaped a career.

## ORIGINS AND FORMATION

I was born in the shadow of the University of Chicago, grew up in its neighborhood, and was entirely educated after secondary school at that same institution—highly unusual for an American. Further, this institution, was and remains a rather unusual academic institution, with its commitment to the ideal of liberal education at the undergraduate level and to research throughout. That institution has shaped my perspective on intellectual life and the role of higher education in society.

I am also the product of Chicago's South Side and particularly the neighborhood of Hyde Park that surrounds the University of Chicago. Growing up in the 1950s, it was possible to bicycle from Hyde Park to downtown along the lakefront. Later, urban blight in parts of the South Side made life rather more problematical. Even then, the area was highly diverse, with a growing African American population, as well as many other ethnic groups. For primary and secondary education, I am a graduate of the Chicago Public Schools, which are now much maligned but then were still a rather good public school system. The primary school I attended was next to the Illinois Central railroad and with a clattering street car out in front, making for constant motion and not a little bit of noise. At the same time, the school provided regular trips to a matinee of Chicago's symphony orchestra, cultivating in me an affection for classical music that remains to this day, as well as a solid if rather traditional grounding in basic school subjects.

Hyde Park High School, which I attended for two years before moving further south in the city, was then a remarkable school. By then, at least 80 percent of the students were African American, and the school was rigidly tracked. The academic track was largely white and Asian. The heritage and many of the teachers remained from the days when the school was one of the best in the city. Hyde Park High School provided an outstanding education, at least for those in the academic track—as well as numerous lessons, mostly quite positive, in multiethnic relations. My final two years of secondary education took place at South Shore High School—then perhaps equally divided between Jews and Catholics—also an excellent school. With mostly white and relatively homogenous in terms of social class, there was no tracking there.

During the height of the anti-Communist “witch hunts” of the mid-1950s, a group of South Shore students, encouraged by several teachers, gravitated toward political liberalism, the emerging civil rights movement, and nascent radicalism. We were welcomed by the local Unitarian-Universalist Church and soon became their youth group, even though only one of our members had any connection to the church. From that base, the group sponsored talks by local civil rights leaders, joined in some of the activities of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). We also made occasional forays downtown to the recently established Second City theater.

By taking several advanced placement courses and an innovative summer literature program, offered by the Chicago Public Schools at the University of Chicago, I graduated a semester early from high school. Having been accepted for midyear admission to the University of Chicago—I recall applying only to the U of C and to the University of Illinois as a “safety school”—I matriculated at Chicago in January 1959. In those days, the University of Chicago had a good reputation, but was not all that difficult to gain entry, since most of the applicants were self-selected. Students interested in the university's serious academic atmosphere and its well-known general education curriculum were attracted. Among my motivations for studying

there was the appeal of the active political culture that I had already experienced as a high school student. I entered the groves of academe in 1959 and never left, and have had a career of more than a half-century in a variety of higher education settings.

The University of Chicago, still well-known for its rigorous general education program, was soon to end its famous “Hutchins College”—what might be described as general education on steroids. The first two years were a rigidly prescribed series of arts and science courses, specifically designed for all undergraduates. Many were a year-long, three-quarter (Chicago, then as now, functioned on a quarter rather than a semester system) sequence, for which an examination was given at the end of the academic year for the course. Most of the courses were a combination of lectures, given by some of the most-eminent scholars in the country, and small group discussions led not by teaching assistants but by regular members of the faculty. Textbooks were typically compilations of primary source materials. For example, the social science courses featured books by de Tocqueville, Freud, Marx, Weber, and others rather than traditional textbooks. Mathematics included the history of the topic—a course in which I did not excel. At least, the readings were English translations rather than the original French or German! Papers submitted were based on original sources and were rigorously evaluated by the instructor. Without question, this intellectual underpinning, the way in which courses were taught, provided a valuable academic base and rigorous evaluation excellent training in critical thinking and clarity of written expression.

Having no clear vocational commitment, I was able to take courses of interest during the last two years of undergraduate study. These included comparative religion, a wonderful year-long sequence in South Asian civilization, a much-less excellent Chinese civilization sequence, modern literature, and others. I ended up with concentrations in sociology and history, and no particular expertise in anything.

## POLITICS

One of the attractions of the University of Chicago was its active, mainly leftist, political culture. Even in the apolitical 1950s, and unlike most American universities at the time, there was an array of social action and political organizations on campus, from communists (a few) to conservatives (despite Professor Milton Friedman and others—even fewer). I gravitated to the small but active youth affiliate of the Socialist Party and also to the Quakers. The socialists provided a short course on interpretations of the Russian Revolution, the role of the labor movement in social change, and the argument that both the Soviet Union and the United States were culpable in the then raging Cold War. The Quakers brought ideas of pacifism and a principled opposition to nuclear testing, then a “hot button” (no pun intended) issue, and a commitment to nonviolent social action.

American politics were, at the end of the 1950s, in transition from the political apathy that characterized the immediate post-World War II period. The Cold War was at its height. Anticommunist hysteria, fueled by Senator Joseph McCarthy and numerous “witch hunts” of “subversives” in government, the entertainment industry, and in education, along with general apathy, characterized the political scene. Chicago’s South Side, along with such places as California’s Bay Area, Manhattan’s Upper West Side, and some college towns across the country, were somewhat immune to these trends. Political debate and activism remained part of the environment.

By the end of the 1950s, social issues such as an emerging civil rights movement (especially salient on the increasingly African-American South Side), a revival of interest in civil liberties in an effort to blunt McCarthyite repression, and especially a growing consciousness of the dangers of nuclear war in an increasing volatile world contributed to a modest revival of student activism (DeBenedetti, 1990).

In this context, the Student Peace Union (SPU) was established in 1959 by University of Chicago students in order to bring together the nascent antinuclear groups emerging on campuses, especially in the Midwest. The organization quickly grew to be the largest left-oriented national student organization in the United States, with affiliated groups on more than 100 college campuses. I was elected the SPU’s national chairman and served in that capacity from 1959 to 1963. I was chosen mainly because I was happy to wear a necktie and “respectable” clothes at a time when beards and sandals were the norm in the student movement. My job was to work with other organizations and to serve as the “public face” of the SPU. In this role, I had the opportunity to organize a series of fund-raising concerts with such luminaries as Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Pete Seeger—most were in fact not luminaries at the time but rather emerging young talents. I also worked with the group’s advisory board and donors—respected people on the left of the American political spectrum such as Socialist party candidate Norman Thomas, civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, Nobel prizewinning chemist Linus Pauling, philosopher Bertrand Russell, Harvard sociologist David Riesman, and many others. I also spent a lot of time fund raising—convincing wealthy liberals to donate funds to an emerging student movement. The political and organizational experience of the student movement provided many very useful skills.

In 1960, the SPU was invited to send two representatives to a major rally of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in London. I was selected and at age 19 and a second-year undergraduate, I went overseas for the first time. In London, the two SPU representatives participated

in several antinuclear marches and a large rally at Royal Albert Hall. Unlike in the United States, the antinuclear weapons movement was at the time a significant political force in the United Kingdom—trying unsuccessfully to keep nuclear weapons off British soil. While in England, I was impressed by the ubiquitous symbol used by CND, now known in the United States as the “peace symbol.” I carried a pocketful of peace symbol pins back with me and, after considerable debate, convinced the SPU to adopt and widely disseminate it (Miles, 2006, p. 116). Soon afterward, the symbol came to be used universally, as perhaps the most widely recognized sign of peace anywhere. Without doubt, introducing and popularizing the peace symbol in the United States was one of my more significant accomplishments—at the time it seemed just another small aspect of work in the student movement.

The SPU had collected some 10,000 signatures on a petition asking for an end to nuclear weapons testing to the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, scheduled to meet in May in Paris. We set out from London to Paris with our petitions, intending to deliver them to the summit, only to learn that the meeting was abruptly cancelled by the Soviets in the aftermath of shooting down an American U-2 spy plane in Soviet airspace. We left half of the petitions at the Soviet embassy and the other half at the American embassy in Paris—no doubt to be tossed into the garbage in both places. Two peace activists were left with nothing to do but to enjoy a first visit to Paris.

As perhaps the largest campus-based antiwar organization in the United States at the time, the SPU national office kept track of perhaps 100 campus chapters and thousands of members. The group issued a bulletin highlighting political events, as well as the organization’s own activities. While the SPU had no clear ideological perspective, keeping the organization and its membership focused on the central issues of antinuclear weapons and opposition to American military forays was not an easy task. The organization’s insistence on placing responsibility for the Cold War and its conflicts on both sides differentiated it from some other organizations that tended to lay blame only on the United States and of course from the general public, which viewed international relations through anticommunist rhetoric of the Cold War.

The SPU was one of the first American organizations to recognize the dangers of American involvement in Vietnam and called for the withdrawal of US advisors several years prior to Vietnam becoming a major political issue in the United States and before the escalation of American involvement. However, political events—including the Cuban missile crisis, The Freedom Rides and the growth and radicalization of the civil rights movement, and the beginning of the major student movements of the 1960s—overtook the SPU. Thus, by 1964 the SPU lost much of its energy and soon ceded leadership to the Students for a Democratic Society and other more militant groups focusing on a wider range of issues (Altbach, 1997d; Gitlin, 1993).

Student activism also provided several other opportunities for international involvement. In 1963, the SPU hosted a delegation from Japan’s ultraradical national student union, the Zengakuren. Based on interviews, I published an article introducing Western audiences to the Japanese student movement (Altbach, 1963b). Later, I was invited to Japan to look more carefully into the Japanese student movement and, through this and other efforts, brought the growing student activist movement in other countries to the attention of American students.

The SPU was also invited by the Independent Research Service—headed by Gloria Steinem, later a pioneering feminist and founder of *MS* magazine—to participate in several communist youth and student conferences in Europe. Following much internal discussion, it

was decided that I would participate in a youth forum in Italy and, in 1964, a larger conference in Moscow. Representing the SPU in Italy—Gail P. Kelly, then the general secretary of the SPU and later my student at the University of Wisconsin and a faculty colleague at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and I—presented an “independent left” perspective, much to the dismay of our Soviet hosts. In 1968 when *Ramparts* magazine exposed that the Central Intelligence Agency had funded a number of liberal and left publications and organizations, we discovered that the Independent Research Service was indeed a conduit for CIA activity.

My involvement in student activism also earned a Federal Bureau of Investigation dossier. In the 1980s, I requested, under the Freedom of Information Act, any files that the FBI kept concerning me; and much to my amazement, a file of papers, perhaps an inch thick, was provided. The US government was spending its scarce resources, trying to keep track of my activities during the 1960s. They seem to have decided that I was not a subversive influence, although much of the file was redacted.

By the time I entered graduate school at the University of Chicago, my direct involvement in student activism largely ended. I learned a great deal from my experiences in the student movement. I was immersed in the central political events of the day and kept abreast of foreign policy and the Cold War, developing countries, and nuclear issues. Student politics inevitably created a need to explain global events in broader perspective. The SPU attempted, with only limited success, to draw attention to the central issues of war and peace, something that required a sophisticated argument. All of this was excellent training for an academic career. The organization sponsored a variety of events and demonstrations, including one of the earliest student-led marches on Washington, that focused on nuclear war and weapons testing. Coordinating a national demonstration that attracted more than 10,000 students to the nation’s capital cultivated skills in organization. Writing newspaper articles and speaking to diverse groups was also excellent “on the job” training.

## GRADUATE SCHOOL

By the time I graduated from college in 1962, I had decided a career in education was a good way to make a contribution to society and started work on a master’s degree in educational administration at the University of Chicago. Staying at Chicago seemed a good choice—the department of education was well regarded and I was able to remain somewhat involved with campus politics. I thought that I could provide educational leadership as an administrator or researcher. My master’s degree work focused on education policy, and I wrote a master’s thesis concerning James B. Conant, an influential policymaker and former Harvard president (Altbach, 1963a). I realized, however, that this career path required work experience in order to make a significant contribution, and as a newly minted 22-year-old master’s graduate, I had few opportunities to acquire it. By this point I had discovered I was not especially interested in the field of educational administration; however, I was quite interested in a course I had taken on comparative education.

Quite coincidentally, the Comparative Education Center happened to be at the opposite end of the corridor from educational administration in Judd Hall, and was one of the best such centers in the United States at the time. I was admitted to the doctoral program in comparative education. Further, my wife was completing work on a master of arts in teaching at Chicago, and in any case I could not have imagined studying anywhere else. Because I had taken many of the required courses in education, I had the freedom to choose courses broadly in the social sciences and in development studies. The key comparative educators in the department, C. Arnold Anderson and Philip Foster, offered a variety of courses on the role of education in socioeconomic development globally, with a special focus on developing societies. I was also able to obtain a fellowship funded by the Ford Foundation to support my doctoral study.

I was particularly interested in courses taught by Edward Shils, in Chicago’s well-known interdisciplinary Committee on Social Thought. Shils, a polymath sociologist who had translated the work of German sociologist Max Weber into English, focused on higher education and the role of intellectuals in society. For many years, I maintained an active relationship with him. When I was in Chicago, even after his retirement from active teaching, I visited him—I recall one dinner when he brought me along to meet Nobel-laureate and author, Saul Bellow, a good friend of Shils’ at a rather modest Chinese restaurant. The scene, and the conversation, was reminiscent of one of Bellow’s novels. On another occasion, Shils, who spent half the year as a fellow of King’s College Cambridge, England, brought me to a dinner at high table at Kings—where I chanced to sit next to E. M. Forster, author of *A Passage to India*, then in his mid-90s, and still quite articulate. After Shils passed away in 1995, I edited a volume of his writings on higher education (Altbach, 1997a).

Professor Shils proved to have the greatest influence on my academic interests and dissertation. Through his courses, I became aware of the importance of universities in modern societies, the main interest and focus of my subsequent career. Shils had done research in India and wrote a pioneering study of the role of Indian intellectuals in society. As a result of his courses, I decided to focus my doctoral dissertation on higher education. My experience in student politics and earlier interest in India pointed me toward student activism in India. A grant available from the University of Michigan, which at the time supervised a collaboration with the University of Chicago and the University of Bombay, provided funding for a year of research. My topic focused

on the history of student politics in Bombay, tracing the history of activism from the struggle for Indian independence through the 1960s.

I became convinced that higher education in general and the role of universities in particular are central to the process of social and economic development—and that universities are central cultural and research institutions in all societies. Work in India made it clear that higher education is a complicated and a many-faceted phenomenon in developing countries—worthy of study and understanding. I have kept up an interest in the manifold roles of universities, trying to understand and illustrate aspects of higher education. In fact, my entire academic career has engaged with different aspects of higher education—the role of students in politics, knowledge networks and scholarly communication, the academic profession, the role of research universities, and others. Underlying this concern has been a special interest in developing countries and a commitment to highlighting the special circumstances and problems they face.

During the period from the 1970s to the end of the 20th century, many experts and policymakers, led by the World Bank and UNESCO, argued that the best “payoff” for development was investment in primary education and literacy training. I continued to argue for the centrality of higher education in the development process, pointing out that universities educate society’s leaders, produce research, and are central intellectual institutions. I was involved as a senior consultant, at the end of the 1990s, to one of the first influential reports that attempted to shift the balance back to higher education—*Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). The report, released with great fanfare by the World Bank president, proved to be influential in restoring higher education to prominence in the thinking of major policy organizations in governments around the world.

The importance of higher education was greatly enhanced at the end of the 20th century, no doubt stimulated by globalization, the advent of the Internet, and especially the emergence of the knowledge-based economy even in developing countries. These realities required highly educated personnel as well as linkages among institutions and countries. Further, the recognition by a growing number of people worldwide that higher education was a key to social mobility has stimulated the expansion of enrollments everywhere and the advent of massification of higher education (Altbach, 1999). Postsecondary education has since then been central both to the lives and careers of young people around the world and to policymakers and the economy, as well.

While for much of my career as an international higher education researcher, my interest in universities was not widely shared nor considered very important—universities were thought of as peripheral institutions for elites in most countries. Although universities shared common historical roots, there were relatively few international links among universities. However, in the 21st century, higher education has been recognized as a key part of the knowledge economy of the era, and academic institutions worldwide have been internationalized. Without question, there has been a sea change in thinking about the role of higher education in the emerging global knowledge society.

## ENCOUNTERS WITH INDIA

My first significant experience outside of the United States was my sojourn to India to collect data for my doctoral dissertation. I landed in Bombay in 1964, with precious little knowledge of the details of my topic but with a reasonable grasp of Indian society and politics, due to my academic training. Since there was no information available on the student movement, I was researching an entirely blank slate. My research on student activism was the first study of that topic done anywhere in India. I was able to affiliate with the Department of Sociology at the University of Bombay, and benefited from excellent mentors there—including Professor A. R. Desai. I started by delving into historical sources, including reading the back issues of the *Bombay Chronicle*, huge bound volumes of which were fetched for me from the Maharashtra State Archives, located behind Elphinstone College—and literally tossed to the ground by staff members, amidst great clouds of dust. Much more importantly, I was able to interview many of the alumni of the student movement who had been active during the independence struggle in Bombay. I found nuggets of Bombay’s activist history, such as the 1946 naval mutiny that started among Indian sailors on British ships in the Bombay harbor, and spread elsewhere in India, and was supported by the students (Altbach, 1965). The mutiny helped to convince the British that their position in India was untenable, and they granted independence in 1947.

My interests moved beyond the role of students in the independence movement and into student organizations in the 1960s in Bombay, and I decided to include other contemporary groups in my dissertation. I interviewed student leaders from left to right, visited many of the colleges to examine student activities, and got a sense of higher education in the 1960s. Much to my amazement, doors were always open to a young graduate student from the United States interested in themes seldom studied by scholars. I attended the national conference of the Hindu nationalist Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad in Nagpur and numerous other meetings of groups from all parts of the political spectrum.

Indian students were active in the struggle for independence and were often considerably more militant than Mahatma Gandhi’s nonviolent movement. After independence, students continued a tradition of activism—but generally without the sense of national purpose that characterized the independence movement. Student activism often moved to the campus, politicizing the colleges and universities and focusing on local conditions. In Bombay, activism ceased to be a major force, although from time to time students were enlisted in off-campus political movements. Political factions—from Communist groups to right-wing Hindu nationalists—continued to be present among students.

While living in Bombay in 1964, I met Sachin Chowdhury, the founding editor of the *Economic Weekly*—later the *Economic and Political Weekly*—resulting in a 40-year relationship with that distinguished publication. I wrote brief news stories and editorials, summarizing stories from the *Economist*, *Time*, and other international publications that were of interest to an Indian audience. This exercise gave me invaluable training in writing succinctly and on deadline—skills that have proved invaluable over time.

I returned to Bombay in 1968 as a Fulbright Research Professor, again affiliated to the University of Bombay’s sociology department. This time, my research focus was on higher education; and I researched the culture of the University of Bombay and its affiliated colleges, spending time on several of the colleges and again benefiting immensely from the cooperation of many

academic colleagues. I was impressed at the time by the diversity of Indian higher education, the complexity of the system, and the importance attached to higher education by Indians. My research resulted in a short book, *The University in Transition: An Indian Case Study* (Altbach, 1972). In addition, I edited several books relating to student political activism, including *Turmoil and Transition: Higher Education and Student Politics in India* (Altbach, 1968c).

My research highlighted the complex relationships between the mainly undergraduate colleges and the University of Bombay and the often ignored variations among college cultures. The culture of Indian colleges is at the heart of the reality of higher education since the vast majority of students (and staff) are affiliated with India's more than, by 2013, 34,000 colleges (Altbach, 1970a).

While in Bombay, due in part to my work at *Economic and Political Weekly* and also writing occasionally for *Times of India*, as well as due to my contacts with several Indian publishers, I became interested in the Indian publishing industry and how it worked. This research resulted in *Publishing in India: An Analysis*, published by Oxford University Press in Delhi in 1975 (Altbach, 1975a). I also wrote a case study of publishing in the Marathi language (Altbach, 1979). I think that this book was the first in-depth study of the Indian publishing industry, at the time one of the world's larger publishers of books in English.

My work on Indian higher education was immensely strengthened by colleagues in India and particularly by my collaboration with Suma Chitnis and Amrik Singh, both later distinguished vice chancellors and researchers on higher education. In 1979, with Suma Chitnis, I coedited *The Indian Academic Profession* (Chitnis & Altbach, 1979). Chitnis and I also coedited *Higher Education Reform in India: Experience and Perspectives*, in 1993, based on research funded by the World Bank (Chitnis & Altbach, 1993). I coedited with Amrik Singh *The Higher Learning in India*, one of the first full-scale analyses of higher education, published in 1974 (Singh & Altbach, 1974).

Between 1964 and the 1970s I visited India almost annually. By the 1980s, my academic interests were less focused on India; and I was able to travel there less frequently, although I kept writing occasionally for the *Economic and Political Weekly* and other publications. In 2010, at the invitation of the Government of Kerala, I returned to India and, specifically to Kerala, for several weeks of intensive lecturing throughout the state, and was introduced to the rich culture of southern India—a sharp contrast to the regions with which I was more familiar.

I suspect that I may be the only American researcher who has kept up a fairly steady interest in Indian higher education for half a century; few non-Indian scholars have a continuing interest in this topic. During the past several decades, I have contributed numerous articles to journals and magazines in India and the West, concerning Indian higher education. I have been particularly gratified to be able to contribute to the continuing debates about Indian higher education, through many op-ed articles in the *Hindu*, one of India's major national newspapers.

Over the years I have watched Indian postsecondary education expand tremendously, although I have been dismayed to see that the quality of the system as a whole has not improved—and perhaps has even deteriorated. I have been impressed by a few parts of the system, including some distinguished colleges that have managed, against all odds, to keep high standards of quality and of course the Indian Institutes of Technology and related specialized institutions. I have written that India's higher education system is “Tiny at the Top,”—referring to India's very small quality sector but a very large and rather poor quality university and college system (Altbach,

2006). India's more than 600 universities and the 34,000 colleges that are affiliated to them are in desperate need of reform and upgrading. Until this happens, quality will remain modest to deficient. The proliferation of “deemed” universities—institutions, often private, given university status by acts of state or occasionally central government fiat—has, by and large, weakened the system as a whole.

I have valued my involvement with India over almost a half-century and hope that I have contributed to a broader understanding of the problems and possibilities of Indian higher education (Agarwal, 2012). Since I first arrived in India in 1964, I have found the country endlessly fascinating. Its complex culture, diverse ethnic and religious population, and perplexing societal and educational realities are the source of great interest. Indians may be uniquely open to letting curious foreigners have access to debates and data, and I have had the pleasure of making many good Indian friends and colleagues over the years. I have also had the unusual privilege of participating in some of the debates about higher education policy in India.

## STUDENTS AND POLITICS

No doubt, influenced by my experience in the American student movement and my research on Indian student activism, I pursued research on student politics—arguing that students, particularly in developing countries, in the mid-20th century were and, to some extent even now, are a potent political and educational force in many societies (Altbach, 1966, 1970e; Lipset & Altbach, 1967). In the aftermath of the global student activism of the 1960s and 1970s, there was considerable interest in understanding the nature of student movements and their role both in society and on campus (Altbach, 1984, 1989a). It is clear that student activism has had more impact on society, including causing regime change, in developing countries than in the industrialized nations, although students on occasion have contributed to political change in the West. Not surprisingly, most of the research conducted about student political activism was published in the aftermath of the activist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Much less analysis has appeared recently, although students remain a potent political force in many countries.

The history of student political activism remains largely unexplored, but is nonetheless of considerable importance (Altbach, 1970d). Students, for example, were involved in the 1848 revolutions in Europe and the rise of nationalism (Altbach, E. H., 1969), including to some extent in the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe. The involvement of students in the struggle for Indian independence from the 1920s to independence in 1947 influenced student involvement in more recent decades (Altbach, 1968b). Similarly, students were involved in independence movements in other Asian societies (Altbach, 1970e). While students have never overthrown governments in Western countries as they have done in the developing world, students have been involved in political activism, and the history of that activism helped to shape the movements of the 1960s and beyond (Altbach, 1973, 1997c).

Research on a peripheral aspect of the student movements of the period, the international student organizations that were enmeshed in Cold War politics, showed how student groups interacted across borders and how they were influenced by Cold War machinations (Altbach 1970c; Altbach & Uphoff, 1973). While there was a good deal of international communication among student political organizations during the heyday of student activism, the fact is that student movements were national in character, with little direct involvement from abroad. Ideas did spread across borders, but only in the broadest sense. The specific international student organizations, such as the Soviet-dominated International Union of Students and the pro-Western International Student Conference (ISC), had little influence on the struggles going on at the time. Both were, in fact, funded and largely influenced by the Soviet Union and the United States, respectively. The ISC, along with the US National Student Association, were exposed in 1967 for being funded by the Central Intelligence Agency, and soon collapsed (Stern, 1967).

I have come to believe that understanding the role of student movements at several key junctures in the development of higher education is central. As noted, the role of students in struggles for independence and against colonialism in the developing world was significant, and that involvement gave students a sense of power and legitimacy that lasted to the postindependence period. Students in many developing countries functioned as key political players—and in some cases where the ruling authorities were weak—managed to topple regimes, but never were able to take power themselves (Altbach, 1984). In contrast, despite the powerful student movements in Europe and North America, students were never able to force governmental change,

although they did influence policy in some area, including in higher education. In Germany, for example, students influenced reforms that institutionalized for a time aspects of student involvement in university governance. After the 1970s, students in the developed world were no longer involved much in activist politics. In some developing countries, students remained sporadically involved in activism.

## RESEARCH AND TEACHING—AND BUILDING CENTERS AND PROGRAMS

I have had the good fortune to spend an academic career now approaching a half-century, studying, researching, and teaching about aspects of higher education, mostly in an international perspective. While I have served as a department chair and in several other administrative roles, I have not held a position of senior leadership. I will describe briefly the progression of my career in part to illustrate a time, at least in the United States, when academic positions were relatively plentiful and mobility fairly easy.

My academic activities have always been grounded in research and graduate education—I have never taught undergraduates. I have been doctoral supervisor for 88 students at 3 universities, and have been on many master's and doctoral committees at the universities where I have worked, as well as at several others. Former doctoral students have gone on to academic positions, in more than 20 countries, and many other key posts—including as ministers in several governments, staff members in a variety of nongovernmental organizations, staff members at the World Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNESCO, and other agencies. I have always enjoyed working with graduate students and attempted to let them develop their own research foci, rather than try to shape their thinking or methodology. I have never been skilled in building academic theories, and perhaps as a result, I have always encouraged students to pursue detailed research and be guided by results.

While completing my dissertation in Chicago in 1965, I was invited by Professor Seymour Martin Lipset at Harvard University to join his research team as a postdoctoral researcher studying student political activism, mainly in developing countries. This research was, of course, directly related to my own interests, and I was delighted to accept this opportunity. I arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts and had appointments in Harvard's Center for International Affairs and as a lecturer in the Graduate School of Education, where I taught a course on education and development. Marty Lipset, one of the world's most prominent sociologists, was a wonderful mentor. I learned from him the value of collecting a wide range of data and then trying to make sense of it without preconception. I enjoyed working with his team of doctoral students as well. I completed my dissertation and worked with Lipset on several books, including *Students in Revolt* (Lipset & Altbach, 1967), and several bibliographies (Altbach, 1970b, 1970d).

Having completed my dissertation, I moved into the academic job market. American higher education was in its period of great expansion, and jobs were not difficult to find. Offers from two excellent midwestern universities materialized, and I joined the faculty of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the fall of 1966 as an assistant professor. I was also appointed in the Department of Indian Studies, and had an opportunity to teach courses both on comparative education and on South Asian education. Madison was building its comparative education program at the time. I was promoted to associate professor with tenure in 1968 and, at the age of 27, was one of the youngest tenured professors on the campus at the time. While at Wisconsin, I coedited *Academic Supermarkets*, a book about the university's challenges during the 1960s from a moderately critical perspective (Altbach, Laufer, & McVey, 1971). The book was widely ignored on campus, but I later met the chancellor while we were both in Malaysia, and he asked me why I had edited such a critical volume. Thank goodness for tenure.

In 1974, an offer to join the faculty of the State University of New York at Buffalo as a full

professor with appointments in higher education and in social foundations of education lured me to Buffalo. I held a joint appointment in the School of Information and Library Studies and taught a course on international publishing. The position was a presidential professorship and I was encouraged to build up the graduate program in comparative education and establish a Comparative Education Center. With Gail P. Kelly, and later Lois Weis and Sheila Slaughter, all of whom had studied with me at the University of Wisconsin, and other colleagues, we built exciting programs in comparative and higher education. The comparative education program and the center attached to it became one of the strongest such programs in the United States during the 19 years I was on the Buffalo faculty. I became the editor of the *Comparative Education Review*, the major journal in the field, in 1978 and served in that role for a decade. At the end of my editorship, the center became the secretariat of the Comparative and International Education Society, with Gail P. Kelly as the CIES general secretary.

I moved to Boston College in 1994 to join the university's higher education program. Soon after arrival, I was appointed to the newly created Monan University Chair, a position I have held until my retirement in 2013. I proposed to president J. Donald Monan, SJ, that we establish a Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) in 1995, and the university agreed and provided support with additional funding from the Monan Chair. CIHE also benefited from 15 years of steady support from the Ford Foundation that ultimately totaled more than \$1 million. Additional support for specific research projects and other programs has come from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Rockefeller Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Toyota Foundation, and others.

The research projects undertaken by the center dealt with a range of issues of interest to the center and our funders. Typically, a group of researchers were brought together to focus on a specific theme. The produced essays, which were discussed at a working editorial conference, were then revised and published as a book. Some of the research topics resulted in books: the rise of private higher education in global perspective (Altbach, 2000), the academic profession in developing and middle-income countries (Altbach, 2003), the emergence of Asian universities as key global academic institutions (Altbach & Umakoshi, 2004), leadership for developing country universities (Altbach, 2011), and several volumes concerning research universities in developing and emerging economies (Altbach & Balan, 2007; Altbach & Salmi, 2011).

The center has been closely tied to Boston College's master's and doctoral program in higher education administration and has greatly benefited from the collegiality of faculty in the program and also from outstanding doctoral students who have served as graduate assistants over the years. One of these students, James J.F. Forest, introduced me to the Internet in 1995, and through his efforts and additional expertise by many others, the center has had a robust Web site and other Internet resources ever since. Roberta Malee Bassett and Liz Reisberg served as managing editors of the *Review of Higher Education*, which I edited between 1996 and 2004. Damtew Teferra assisted with the Bellagio Publishing Network and initiated the International Network for Higher Education in Africa. He also obtained funding for the pioneering *African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook* (Teferra & Altbach, 2002).

Sensing in 1995 the emergence of an international consciousness in higher education, I established a quarterly publication, *International Higher Education*, to provide a forum for analysis and information concerning the rapidly expanding arena of international higher education. *IHE*, which recently published its 70th issue, has proved to be a valuable source of analysis

worldwide. The concept of publishing short but authoritative articles by key experts has been successful. Busy experts are prepared to write short articles, and our audience of higher education leaders, government and organizational officials, and the research community finds short analytical articles useful. *IHE* now appears in Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Discussions are in progress to expand to Arabic and Vietnamese. It is distributed in English as part of the *Deutsche Universitätszeitung*, the major publication for the German higher education community. *IHE* is distributed in paper and electronic editions.

## THE SHAPING OF FIELDS OF STUDY

Two new academic fields—comparative education and higher education—and especially the international aspects of higher education have been of concern to me throughout my career (Altbach & Kelly, 1986a). By editing prominent journals in these fields, *Comparative Education Review* and the *Review of Higher Education*, I have contributed to their development. I have also helped to create standard textbooks in both fields. In the field of comparative education, three volumes were widely cited for a period of time. These are *Comparative Education* (Altbach, Arnove, & Kelly, 1982), *New Approaches to Comparative Education* (Altbach & Kelly, 1986b), and *Emergent Issues in Education: Comparative Perspectives* (Arnove, Altbach, & Kelly, 1992). These volumes were used in many courses on comparative education and helped to shape debates, at a time when the field of comparative education was rapidly expanding and the debate about whether the field was a “discipline” or a multidisciplinary field of study was actively discussed. The multidisciplinary advocates, with whom I was affiliated, prevailed (Altbach, 1991b).

Even the field of higher education studies, although better established than comparative education, was relatively new. Coediting *American Higher Education in the 21st Century: Social, Political, and Economic Challenges* provided an opportunity to contribute to thinking about American higher education (Altbach, Gumpert, & Berdahl, 2011). That book, now in its fifth edition (two with Prometheus Books and three with Johns Hopkins University Press) is the standard text in many courses on American higher education. The opportunity to edit the *Review of Higher Education* permitted me to contribute to shaping a key journal.

I have had the opportunity to be involved in the development of the “subfield” of international higher education just as the international dimension of university education became more central due to the impact of globalization and importance of the knowledge economy. Coediting *Higher Education Research at the Turn of the New Century: Structures, Issues, and Trends*, which surveyed key trends in the field, provided a benchmark for the field’s development at the time (Sadlak & Altbach, 1997). Two volumes of my essays on comparative higher education themes also made a contribution to the development of the field (Altbach, 1998, 2007c). My involvement as North American editor of *Higher Education*, the pioneering international research journal in the field, between 1975 and 1996, permitted further involvement with an emerging field. Editing several book series on international higher education between 1977 and the present—from 1977 to 1984 with Praeger Publishers, 1985 to 1994 with Pergamon, and from 2005 to the present with Sense Publishers—provided an opportunity to contribute key work on global higher education.

Globalization and all of its ramifications contributed to the remarkable growth of the field during my professional lifetime. In 1970, I prepared *Higher Education in Developing Countries: A Select Bibliography* for the Harvard Center for International Affairs—it included just 1,600 entries (Altbach, 1970b). The research literature dramatically expanded soon after that. Also in the 1970s, I served as secretary for several conferences organized by the International Council for Educational Development (ICED), an early effort chaired by James Perkins to bring together senior university and policy leaders to think about the international implications of higher education policy and practice. The ICED found, for example, that there was little knowledge available about higher education systems and commissioned a series of short books on higher education in a dozen or so countries. Annual ICED conferences also produced several volumes focusing on higher education in a comparative framework (Altbach, 1975b). In 1977, the first comprehensive

encyclopedia on international higher education, in 10 volumes, was published (Knowles, 1977). At the time that UNESCO, the World Bank, and other international agencies were beginning to take an interest in postsecondary education, my book *International Higher Education: An Encyclopedia* provided an additional contribution (Altbach, 1991a).

Since 1995, the Boston College Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) has played a role in expanding the knowledge base of international higher education through its conferences, books, and especially through *International Higher Education*. The center's Web site has also been a source of information and research on higher education, with a special focus on developing countries. Through articles in *IHE* and with the research that the center has sponsored over the past two decades, key issues have been illustrated.

Globally, the field has dramatically expanded. Two publications, the *International Directory of Higher Education Research Institutions* (Altbach, 1981a) and *Higher Education: A Worldwide Inventory of Centers and Programs* (Altbach, Bozeman, Janashia, et al., 2007) traced the status of the field at two different times, and illustrate how the field has grown and how it has developed in many parts of the world. The expansion of research and policy centers and institutes focusing on higher education in the past several decades has been unprecedented, indicating the importance of higher education in the era of massification and the knowledge economy. We also traced the development of degree programs aimed at training practitioners and researchers in higher education. Here, growth has been spotty—with most of the programs existing in the United States and in China—although expanding significantly in other parts of the world as it becomes clear that academic institutions need professional managers. As a contribution to the professionalization of academic administration and training academic leaders, I edited *Leadership for World-Class Universities: Challenges for Developing Countries* (Altbach, 2011). The focus of this book is on perspectives needed for academic leadership—such as, governance, strategic planning, fund raising and financial management, and others.

## CIRCULATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Academics and researchers create knowledge through research and analysis. They seldom consider the complexities of knowledge distribution. I have been interested, both as a practical matter and as an important intellectual theme, in issues relating to knowledge circulation and distribution throughout my career. Both editing and publishing—and efforts to understand how these complex phenomena take place in the modern world—are central.

I was interested in these issues even as a student. I was on the staff of the *Chicago Maroon*, the student newspaper at the University of Chicago, which provided valuable experience in writing and editing. I also worked at the *Economic and Political Weekly* in India, again providing useful editorial training. As a student, I wrote for a variety of publications on issues relating to student politics and movements (Altbach, 1963c).

A commitment to scholarly journals led me to editorial positions, to several of the top journals in my fields of expertise. I served as associate editor of the *Comparative Education Review*, generally acknowledged as the premier journal in its field, for several years in the 1970s, while on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin. In 1978, I later became the editor of the journal and served in that capacity for a decade. During that period, I convinced the board of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) to move the *Review* to the University of Chicago Press, which provided professional publishing services, an arrangement that has been beneficial to both the journal and CIES for more than 40 years. The services of a professional publisher permitted the journal to transition easily to the digital age and provided valuable technical and financial services. While at Boston College, I served as editor of the *Review of Higher Education (RHE)*, one of the top-three higher education journals in the United States, from 1996 to 2004. Again, I brought the journal from a self-published entity into a relationship with the Johns Hopkins University Press, which now publishes the journal, again enhancing the journal's professionalism. *RHE* was an original participant in Project MUSE, Hopkins' pioneering electronic platform, which increased both the impact of the journal and its income as well. I was also one of the founding editors of *Educational Policy* in 1985, along with colleagues at the State University of New York at Buffalo. *EP*, now published by SAGE, is an ISI listed publication.

The publication of books in emerging fields, such as comparative education and higher education, is also quite important for legitimizing the field and providing an outlet for original scholarship and analysis. While there has been a revolution in knowledge transmission as a result of the digital age, books and monographs remain central to the knowledge production process, although produced and distributed now in different ways. Starting the early 1970s and continuing through 2013, I have served as editor of a number of book series that I have created for several publishers. The first of these was a book series on comparative education for Praeger Publishers, at the time managed by its founder, the legendary Frederick A. Praeger, one of the pioneers of scholarly publishing in the United States. I continued with that series after Praeger Publishers was absorbed by Greenwood Press, which itself became part of Elsevier in a series of acquisitions that characterized publishing in the latter 20th century. Soon after coming to the State University of New York at Buffalo, I established "Frontiers in Education" at the SUNY Press. That series published more than 40 volumes until SUNY Press closed it down in the 1990s. In an effort to provide visibility for some of the best doctoral dissertations, I established "Studies in Higher Education: Dissertation Series" with RoutledgeFalmer publishers. This series was

later expanded to include nondissertation research-based volumes—40 dissertations were published over a decade. Most recently, “Global Perspectives on Higher Education” was started with SENSE Publishers. In all, some 200 books were produced in these various series. These volumes helped to build the research literature in international higher education and comparative education and provided outlets for scholarship that might not have existed otherwise as these fields were becoming legitimized as ones for analysis and as the research base expanded rapidly. Books and journals, particularly when appearing with respected publishers and in recognized journals, are central to the development of fields of study, particularly when these fields are new and multidisciplinary.

Another effort to contribute to the development of the field of higher education studies was editing two reference handbooks. Both are two volume compendiums of key themes and chapters dealing with regions and countries. The purpose of these volumes was to bring together key analysis and research. The first, *International Higher Education: An Encyclopedia*, was published in 1991 and contributed to the development of the field of higher education studies (Altbach, 1991a). The second, *International Handbook of Higher Education*, coedited with James J.F. Forest, was published in 2006 (Forest & Altbach, 2006).

## TRANSLATIONS

Almost by definition, research and publication concerning international higher education will be of global interest. Thus, publication in the field deserves worldwide circulation in languages other than English. Although English is today’s main international language of scientific communication, it is not the only language, and many professionals and researchers in higher education do not have adequate fluency in English to access this scholarship. Many scholars prefer to read material in their own language. Assuming that the academic world is a monolingual English environment is not the case, even in a globalized environment.

I have paid careful attention to the translation and publication of my work into other languages and have had reasonable success in securing translated editions. *International Higher Education* appears in five languages. Many of the books I have written or edited have appeared in other languages including Spanish, French, Russian, Indonesian, Turkish, Japanese, and Arabic. Eighteen of my books have been translated into Chinese, several by Peking University Press and other leading Chinese publishers. The China Ocean University Press published a series of my books. Perhaps as a result of these translated editions, several master’s and doctoral dissertations have been written about my work in China.

In most cases, the translations were undertaken on a commercial basis by publishers. In other instances, agencies such as the World Bank or UNESCO have sponsored the translations. It is not always easy to arrange for translated editions. Western publishers, and particularly the large multinational firms, sometimes do not respond to requests for translations and in some instances ask for unrealistic fees for translation rights. Generally, both publishers and authors either do not consider translations important or measure the value of other language editions in purely commercial terms. The fact is that in a globalized world, the academic community needs to seriously consider knowledge dissemination in multiple languages.

## ACADEMIC JOURNALISM

Most academics eschew writing for popular audiences and, indeed, criticize colleagues who do as “popularizers.” Indeed, there is often a price to be paid for interacting with the media. I have always thought that academics have a responsibility to communicate their ideas to a wider audience and to participate in public debate, a point emphasized by Ernest Boyer in *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer, 1997). By translating academic knowledge and research into language easily understood by a wider audience and disseminating ideas and perspective in places with a wider circulation, it is possible to contribute to policy debates and intellectual life. Having been trained to write in a journalistic style for the *Economic and Political Weekly* and for publications and newspapers during my student movement days, I was able to write brief articles that make a point. For most of my career I have contributed opinion pieces, book reviews, and other analysis for newspapers and magazines worldwide. For almost two decades, I have contributed op-ed articles to the *Hindu*, one of India’s main national newspapers, with a circulation in the millions. While in Buffalo, I wrote frequently for the *Buffalo News*. I have also published regularly in a Mexico City newspaper, *Milenio*, and for a time in the *Japan Times*, Japan’s main English-language daily. I have also contributed articles to such publications as the *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), *Clarín* (Buenos Aires), *Vedimosti* (Moscow), and others.

I also contribute regularly to the higher education press, globally. I write regularly for *Times Higher Education* (London) and serve on their editorial board. I also contribute to *University World News*, an Internet-based weekly news source, and other publications.

In 2010, the Center for International Higher Education, at the initiative of Liz Reisberg, started a blog for *Inside Higher Education*, the on-line US-based daily news publication. The “World View” blog features the work of a network of internationally recognized bloggers from around the world, who write on current international higher education issues. I contribute regularly to the blog. Our effort is to bring analysis of contemporary themes to a wide audience through the Internet.

## THE ANALYSIS OF PUBLISHING AND KNOWLEDGE DISTRIBUTION

I realized early on that the publishing industry is intertwined with higher education and the process of knowledge distribution. Without publishers, knowledge cannot reach an audience. In the age of the Internet, traditional publishing has been significantly changed, but the business of knowledge processing and distribution remains of great importance. I was first introduced to the complexities of publishing when my doctoral dissertation, *Student Politics in Bombay* (Altbach, 1968a) was published in India by the leading social science publisher of the day, Asia Publishing House. I was able to participate in the publishing process in the Indian context.

Publishers, journal editors, and others are key parts of knowledge networks everywhere. They are gatekeepers of knowledge and decide, through their publishing choices, what becomes “legitimate knowledge.” Understanding the nature of publishing, editing, and knowledge distribution has significant implications for higher education and for scientific development (Altbach & Hoshino, 1995). Publishers and journals in the developed countries traditionally controlled the key knowledge networks globally—with the gatekeepers in the top universities and prestigious publishing houses especially powerful. Researchers in developing countries are at a special disadvantage in this unequal relationship. *The Knowledge Context: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution of Knowledge* provides an overview of many of the key issues (Altbach, 1987).

Knowledge networks became increasingly complex in the latter years of the 20th century, when multinational firms, such as Elsevier and Springer, purchased or established large numbers of journals and often raised prices for them. The advent of the digital age made things even more complicated and introduced new means of journal and book production and distribution, as well as possibilities for “open access” scholarship of many different kinds. The traditional publishers, with some difficulty, were able to cope with the new technologies. In addition, many new players have joined the system, creating journals and publishing books without regard to quality in order to earn profits.

Some of these new “publishers” have established hundreds of new journals and often charge authors to publish their articles with no review process. These publications are not taken seriously by the academic community but may confuse potential authors. Similarly, some book publishers publish doctoral dissertations and other works without regard to the quality of the product, do not provide editing or evaluation, and hope that a few unsuspecting libraries may purchase the volume. Digital technology and “print on demand” facilitate innovation, but technological advance does not always work to the benefit of the scientific community. Knowledge networks are increasingly confused.

India was, and remains, one of the largest publishers of books in English in the world, yet Indian publishers, even now, are not part of the global knowledge network. Further, many multinational publishers operate in India. Over the past several decades, India has become a center for editing and book and journal preparation, including copyediting, computer-based composing, and many of the “back-office” elements of publishing. My book, *Publishing in India: An Analysis* (Altbach, 1975a), was the first full-scale discussion of Indian publishing.

Some of the largest and most prestigious publishers in India were, and remain, branches of large multinational firms, although with considerable autonomy. Indian-owned publishers tend, with a few notable exceptions, to be small and have problems sustaining themselves in a

competitive marketplace. Publishing in Indian languages tends to lag behind English-language publishing, to the detriment of possibilities for new journals and other printed products. As literacy increased and a middle class emerged that supported regional languages, a market for books and other publications in these languages emerged. India, with its large internal market, has a more vibrant publishing industry than most developing countries.

In an effort to assist publishing in Africa in particular and in developing countries generally, the Bellagio Publishing Network was established with the assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation. For a decade in the 1990s, I directed the Network that, in collaboration with the African Books Collective, published more than a dozen volumes of research and commentary on publishing and book distribution in Africa and the developing world. The purpose of these volumes was to assist publishers and others involved in book development to improve practice and understand the complexities of global publishing realities. Volumes dealing with copyright, feminist publishing, African publishing, journal publishing, and others appeared in “Bellagio Studies in Publishing.” One of the key books in this series was *Publishing and Development in the Third World* (Altbach, 1992). Our guide to publishing and development was also among the useful books published (Altbach & Teferra, 1998). We also published *Bellagio Publishing Newsletter* quarterly, highlighting information and analysis concerning publishing issues in the context of developing countries.

Linking the practical aspects of publishing and knowledge distribution, such as the nurturing of journals in developing countries, is quite important. Research and analysis concerning publishing, knowledge distribution, and related themes, particularly as they affect higher education, is quite limited (Altbach, 1985c). Now, in the digital age, understanding how journals and other aspects of knowledge distribution work is even more complex—and perhaps even more important in a globalized world.

## NEOCOLONIALISM AND CENTERS AND PERIPHERIES

Stemming from the more ideologically based scholarship of the 1960s, the realities of the Cold War, and research on higher education in developing countries, in the 1970s I wrote about the complex relationships between the developing countries of the Third World (as it was called then) and the industrialized nations. An influential article, “Servitude of the Mind? Education, Dependency, and Neocolonialism,” was published in 1977 (Altbach, 1977), which argued that educational relations and by implication other intellectual and political relations between the developing and industrialized nations, were highly unequal and that these inequalities were the result of “natural” imbalances in wealth and academic strength on the one hand and of specific policies by the rich countries to maintain their influence—neocolonialism. Research on publishing and knowledge distribution in India contributed to this line of analysis—relating the various book and publishing programs financed by the Cold War powers in India, with the aim of influencing opinion and perspectives, as well as other education initiatives. This article was one of the first that sought to tie natural inequalities to specific national policies and also to the politics of the Cold War. A broader analysis was provided in our edited volume, *Education and the Colonial Experience* (Altbach & Kelly, 1984) and the earlier *Education and Colonialism*, both of which had some influence on the debates at the time (Altbach & Kelly, 1978).

By linking center-periphery realities with specific policies of governments, it was possible to analyze the various forces influencing higher education and knowledge communication realities in developing countries. While center periphery analysis was by no means a new tool, applying it to higher education and knowledge communication was original (Altbach, 1981b, 1985a; Shils, 1975). The larger-developed nations—especially those that use English—tend to be most influential in terms of their academic institutions, the production of scientific knowledge in all fields, and editing and publishing influential journals. These countries host the large majority of international students. Their academic institutions tend to be most influential. In the 21st century, they dominate the Internet. Countries at the periphery tend to gravitate to one or more centers. Their universities are less influential and in recent decades do not score at the top of the global rankings of academic institutions (Altbach, 2012). By applying the insights of the center periphery, it is possible to analyze the inequalities that are evident in global higher education.

Centrality is based on a variety of factors. Among them are language—using world languages in higher education and publishing, especially English is of significance—the size of the academic system, a history of academic influence (the former colonial powers are at a considerable advantage), wealth and well-developed academic infrastructures, and others.

In the postcolonial world, it is possible to overcome peripherality. Japan, in the years following World War II, has built a powerful and influential academic system, which does not use English. But it struggles with ways to be recognized globally. More recently, China has made considerable strides to join the front ranks of the top global academic systems (Altbach, 2009). Even small countries, such as Singapore, have joined the ranks of mature academic systems. Nonetheless, they are still part of the international knowledge system, in which the major and largely English-using academic “powers” dominate.

Dependency, which takes its analytical roots from Marxist thought, argues that higher education institutions in developing countries are structurally dependent on the former colonial powers and other developed nations, because of the realities of global capitalism and the specific

policies of the governments and multinational corporations of these countries. Developing countries find it difficult to break with these structures.

During the Cold War, the policies of the major protagonists (the United States and the Soviet Union) included many initiatives aimed at influencing higher education, intellectual life, publishing, and other aspects of culture and education. The “battle for hearts and minds” was very much part of the agenda. Further, in the period immediately following the end of colonialism, many of the former colonial powers were seen as trying to maintain their influence over their former colonies. The term neocolonialism has been used to define the many initiatives that governments have used to gain, maintain, or enhance their influence abroad. While the term is mainly used as a critique of policies, careful analysis of specific instances may yield a more-balanced evaluation.

There are many examples of programs that may be referred to as neocolonialism by some analysts but as “foreign assistance” by others. Programs to translate university textbooks for developing countries, for example, can be evaluated in different ways (Altbach, 1985b). The main scholarship programs sponsored by the American Fulbright program, the German DAAD, the British Council, and many others can also be analyzed in different ways. The Confucius Institutes, sponsored by the Chinese government, can be seen as “soft power diplomacy” or as efforts at neocolonialism.

With the end of the Cold War, governmental efforts to influence education and culture in other countries have slowed, but commercial interests have become the key elements. Multinational corporations in the knowledge business, such as publishers and information technology firms, play a key role in influencing developing and peripheral countries. Countries and academic institutions seek to expand their number of international students in large part to earn income from these students, but at the same time international student flows have cultural and educational implications.

If anything, globalization and information technology have led to increased international higher education relationships of many different kinds. What was once a matter of government policy and an aspect of the political struggles of the Cold War has become a much more complex phenomenon that is central the realities of the 21st century.

## GLOBAL TRENDS: MASSIFICATION, SYSTEMS, AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

I have argued that the driving force and dominating reality of contemporary higher education is massification—the dramatic expansion of enrollments that began in Europe in the 1960s and has since spread worldwide (Altbach, 1999; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Only North America was educating more than 30 percent of its age cohort at the mid-20th century. Enrollments expanded dramatically, reaching 200 million by 2012. Huge inequalities in access continue—with much of Africa enrolling under 10 percent of the age group, while most of the industrialized countries educate 60 percent or more of their young people. The two-largest higher education systems in the world, China and India, respectively enrolled 22 and 13 percent of the age group in 2012; and both have plans to expand access significantly (Altbach, 2009).

The implications of massification are fundamental. Among them is the rise of the private sector. Private higher education is the fastest growing part of postsecondary education; increasing inequalities in academic systems as the bottom of the system seeks to provide access while the top is increasingly selective; and a likely overall deterioration of standards at the bottom, severe fiscal constraints, stress on the academic profession, and many others (Altbach, 1999). All countries are affected by massification, although they move through the process from elite to mass and then to universal access to higher education at different rates and with somewhat different implications (Trow, 2006).

Massification has also contributed to growing inequalities in academic systems worldwide. Mass access at the bottom of the system has resulted in a proliferation of relatively modest or poor-quality postsecondary institutions. At the same time, the demands of an increasingly sophisticated global knowledge economy have created increasingly selective and high-quality universities at the top of the system.

One of the results of massification has been the growth of the private sector, much of it for-profit, globally. Indeed, private higher education is the fastest-growing part of higher education in the world. Parts of the world that were at one time dominated by public universities now have a majority of their students in private institutions—including most of Latin America, Indonesia, and some others. Much of the new private sector is for-profit. Most private postsecondary institutions are “demand absorbing” and of relatively low quality, although there is a small but growing sector of high-quality private universities (Altbach, 2000). This emerging sector requires careful quality-assurance systems, and many developing countries have only limited capacity to supervise the private sector.

The advent of the knowledge economy has also created a demand for internationally linked high-quality research universities—a phenomenon discussed in the next section. As seemingly contradictory trends, for mass access at the bottom and elite institutions at the top, has led in many countries to the creation of academic systems having differentiated institutions with specific mission and foci. Indeed, such differentiation is necessary for a country to serve the increasingly diverse student population.

At the same time that massification was transforming higher education, through massive increases in enrollments and the manifold challenges that entailed, a global knowledge economy emerged that placed emphasis on the “top” of the higher education system—universities and other institutions with the infrastructures and capabilities to deal with a globalized economy and

the research and training needs of highly qualified professionals. These elite institutions often hire staff from an international labor market and educate students from many countries.

Massification and the global-knowledge economy necessitated the differentiation of academic institutions and in many countries the creation of academic systems with institutions serving different missions and societal needs (Altbach, 1999; Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). In many countries, there were typically binary academic systems, with non-university and mainly vocational institutions in one category, and universities, all of which had a significant research mission, in another. In a mass higher education environment and in more complex economies, more kinds of academic institutions were needed to serve different purposes—a differentiated academic system. Such systems necessarily include a small number of research universities at the top but also larger numbers of universities focusing on teaching and perhaps more vocational in orientation, nonuniversity postsecondary institutions, and specialized schools, as well. An example of such a system is the public higher education arrangement in California, but there are many other examples. Despite the logic of such systems, it has been quite difficult for many countries to create them. Historical traditions, competing interests, dispersed policy authority, and other factors present significant obstacles.

## RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Universities, through their research, teaching, and service, have long been responsible for development as well as education for centuries. Universities in developing countries and emerging economies play key roles in national development (Altbach, 1989b). *Scientific Development and Higher Education: The Case of Newly Industrializing Nations* was an early effort to analyze the role that universities can play in emerging research cultures. Cases from South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan were presented in an effort to understand how research cultures in universities can be created (Altbach, Davis, Eisemon, et al., 1989).

Research universities stand at the pinnacle of any academic system. Since the research university was developed by Wilhelm von Humboldt at the beginning of the 19th century in Germany, the institution has continued to evolve. The American version added the idea of service to society to the original Humboldtian model. They are the main producers of knowledge and link most directly to international knowledge networks. These institutions educate most of the academic profession, and produce most of the research, including both basic and applied. Although research universities constitute only a small part of most contemporary academic systems, they are of great importance (Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Salmi, 2009). The role of these key institutions consists of special importance in developing and emerging economies—and often poorly understood as well (Altbach & Balán, 2007). I have argued that most countries require at least one research university—particularly developing countries—in order to participate in the global knowledge economy, to bring relevant research to the nation, and to educate the “best and brightest” in the home country (Altbach, 2007b).

Building and sustaining research universities are complex. They require larger expenditures than teaching-focused institutions. Their academic staff must be highly qualified and internationally linked. Students must also be carefully selected. These institutions will inevitably do a significant part of their work in English—the global academic medium—even if they do not offer teaching in English (Altbach, 2007a). Creating “world-class” research universities is not an easy task in any country and is particularly daunting in developing and emerging economies. Among the challenges are creating an appropriate academic culture, sustained financial support, effective governance, and others (Salmi, 2009).

## GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

Universities have always been international institutions. In the medieval period, Latin was the common language of instruction and scholarship among European universities. Both students and professors came from many countries. The contemporary period has seen the expansion of the international nature of higher education in unprecedented ways. Further, globalization has brought the international role of universities to prominence and has greatly expanded the scope of campus internationalization. The traditional mobility of students has expanded to include widespread faculty mobility and the creation of a global academic profession. Branch campuses, cross-border initiatives, and twinning arrangements have greatly expanded the institutional reach of institutions (Altbach, 2007c; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Student and faculty mobility was and, to some extent, remain the core of international academic relations (Altbach 1986; Altbach, Kelly, & Lulat, 1985). Push and pull factors relating to global student mobility were identified in an effort to explain why students chose to study abroad—and what the consequences of the experience meant. Themes such as the “brain drain” and the common choices of students to link study abroad to migration are central to understanding what is by the 21st century a common phenomenon.

An element of globalization has been the establishment of international rankings of universities (Altbach, 2012). The two major somewhat reliable rankings, the Academic Ranking of World Universities at the Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the *Times Higher Education* rankings, focus mainly or exclusively on research productivity and ignore other key parts of the work of universities. Further, because of their methodologies, they privilege academic institutions in the developed world. Few developing country or emerging economy universities are high in the rankings. Yet, the rankings play a significant role in determining which universities are most prestigious and at the “center” of the academic universe.

My perspective on globalization and internationalization is to analyze this phenomenon, at least in part, from the perspectives of the developing world, and to point the inherent inequalities evident in many aspects of international academic relations (Altbach, 2004). This analysis is directly related to linking globalization to center-periphery relationships and even to elements of dependency. Developing countries not only lack the funds necessary to compete at the top levels of science, but their universities generally lack the required infrastructure. The academic profession may not have the required training. In short, the global “playing field” is far from equal. Many authors simply point to the positive aspects of international academic relations—a wider perspective is needed.

## THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION

Without a well-educated and committed academic profession, quality is impossible in higher education. Analyzing the academic profession has been a continuing research interest, in part because of the centrality of the professoriate. I have had a special focus on developing countries. Massification has contributed to the expansion and also to the deterioration of working conditions for the professoriate in much of the world and particularly in many developing countries (Altbach, 2003). Yet, as we found in the first international study of the attitudes of academics in 14 countries, undertaken by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1995, academics in most countries remained fairly positive about their profession (Altbach, 1997b). We later looked at academic salaries, contracts, and careers in 28 countries in *Paying the Professoriate* (Altbach, Reisberg, Yudkevich, et al., 2012). That research found significant variations in salary levels among the case-study countries and glaring inequalities both within nations and among them. Clearly, countries at the bottom of the salary rankings will have a difficult time building top-quality research universities. Research on the academic profession in China and India found significant variations in the world’s two largest academic systems, although surprisingly academic salaries are higher in India than in China (Altbach & Jayaram, 2006).

As with higher education trends, generally, the academic profession has become more differentiated. A small elite in almost every country is part of a global academic labor market. These academics produce most of the published research, hold doctoral degrees (in much of the world the majority of academics do not have doctorates), and tend to be globally mobile. While it is increasingly difficult to attract the “best and brightest” to the academic profession in all countries, working conditions and salaries tend to be better for this small elite, although even among this group there has been a deterioration. For much of the profession globally, salaries and conditions of work leave much to be desired. Academics are increasingly employed part time and have little or no security of tenure.

Almost everywhere, academics have lost power and authority in the management of post-secondary institutions. Universities have become large bureaucracies and the sense of academic community that existed in many institutions has been weakened. The concept of shared governance, which had traditionally been widely accepted among the better American colleges and universities, has been weakened in many of them, and power has shifted to administrators. The European tradition of domination by senior professors was weakened during the student revolts of the 1960s and no longer seems to be effective in the era of massification. Politics has intervened in academic affairs in some developing countries (Altbach, 2003). The 20th century saw the professionalization of the academic profession and the rise of faculty power. The 21st century, despite the increased importance of the academic profession in delivering higher education to the masses and at the same time functioning key players in the global knowledge economy, seems to be marked by a weakening of the professorial role.

## CONCLUSION

For more than a half century, I have been fascinated by the academic enterprise. I was convinced early on that postsecondary education is not only an interesting field of research but is a central part of modern society. Based on my graduate training as well as on experience, I took on specific elements of higher education for research and study over time. Students, the academic profession, the role of the university in society, the process of knowledge creation and transmission, and the research university have been at the core of my research foci over time. I was especially interested in these phenomena in the context of developing countries—seeking to illustrate the inequalities that exist in global higher education (Altbach, 1989b).

Key developing countries that had been peripheral in global higher education, most notably China and India, became major parts of the global higher education system (Altbach, 2009). The BRIC countries have taken their places as key academic powers globally (Altbach, Androushchak, Kuzminov, et al., 2013).

Globalization caught up with me at the end of the 20th century, when many of the themes that I had been researching, such as global student and faculty mobility, suddenly hit the front pages of newspapers and, in keeping with the rise of the Internet, the subject of Web sites. The perspective of center-periphery analysis lent itself well to understanding higher education globalization. International higher education moved from the concerns of a few specialists to a topic of wide interest and of growing policy relevance. *International Higher Education* and the various research projects and books, with which I have been associated over time, have illustrated some of the key issues facing higher education in a globalized world and have attracted more interest as a result of the centrality of the global higher education involvement.

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