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Glonacal Forces: Implications and Impact for Japanese Higher Education Institutions

Marian Wang

1. Global Excellence in Higher Education

Kobe University's Vision 2015 stipulates its aim to reach global standards in research, education, contribution to society, and university management (Kobe University, 2013). The university's goal is to become a world-class institution – albeit a phrase according to Marginson, Kaur, and Sawir (2011) that lacks a proper definition – but can be simplified as an institution striving to be perceived by others in the global higher education market as globally effective. Kobe University has reached its final stage of achieving global excellence as it moves on to new challenges (Kobe University, 2013). To this end, the School of Languages and Communication (SOLAC) was commissioned by the university and the Japanese government to develop new global programs that would create global citizens equipped with the linguistic, multi-cultural, and emotional skills necessary to succeed in a global community. SOLAC has been using change levers (Bargh, Bockock, Scott, & Smith, 2000; Marshall, 2007; McCaffery, 2010) that would allow for dispersed leadership practices in program design of global courses and study abroad programs and innovative leadership practices that encourage input from stakeholders including students. Recent changes towards more collaborative and innovative leadership practices highlight the possibility of gradual changes in leadership practices.

2. Glonacal Higher Education

According to Marginson et al. (2011), the ability of leaders to influence the outcome of creating globally effective higher education institutions (HEIs) depends on the institutions' capacity to be responsive *and* reactive in global, national, and local dimensions. The global dimension is the transnational networks of knowledge, information, and human resources across HEIs; the national dimension targets the policy initiatives of the national government; and the local dimension concerns institutional affairs (Marginson et al., 2011). Effective higher education change-management policy requires first and foremost analyzing these three dimensions and visualizing how institutions will be able to position themselves within the world. Marginson and Rhoades (2002) also suggest looking at the inter-relationships between different global, regional, and local agencies. Yonezawa's (2011) glonacal analysis of higher education in Japan shows that

the dominant dimension in Japanese higher education is national, as evidenced by the government policies of creating more globally competitive HEIs and global human resources. Even though the global dimension is becoming more salient as Japanese HEIs have been trying to attract more international students and foreign faculty members to study and teach at universities, the national dimension has been stronger than the global dimension. With respect to the local dimension, Yonezawa (2011) postulates that some universities, academics, and students have been ambivalent towards change because they have yet to witness the short-term and long-term financial benefits of the internalization of higher education. With the development of globalization policies, funds are being redirected from other projects to the internationalization of higher education. As a result, Japanese HEIs are competing for limited funds and are participating in government initiatives of globalization in order to survive. Yonezawa (2011) insists that a glonacal agency (i.e., partnerships, alliances, and networks) that can influence and manage the global, national, and local dimensions does not exist in Japan because the majority of Japanese universities are not being included in the “game of internationalization” (p. 341).

Yonezawa (2011) illustrates that Japanese HEIs are not very active in the government policies towards the globalization of higher education. He urges universities and academics in Japan to be more proactive in responding to globalization pressures and government initiatives. The question remains as to how leaders of Japanese HEIs might be able to position themselves not only within the confines of their HEI but also in a global higher education context. Assuming that leaders can adjust the direction and nature of their response to educational policies rather than rely on reactive tactics to combat globalization, Marginson et al. (2011) advocate processes that emphasize cross-border dialogue among university executive leaders and sharing of creative solutions that may include partnerships across HEIs around the world. Furthermore, they add that institutions that attempt to become global leaders must develop global strategies that consist of positioning strategies within their control and strategies beyond their control. HEI leaders must be able to comprehend how their respective institutions can be influenced by others as well as influence others through a network of relationships across universities.

Although Kobe University has had exchange agreements for faculty and students with 198 overseas institutions, some programs have not continued (“Academic Exchange Agreements,” 2010). Nonetheless, SOLAC has maintained exchange agreements with HEIs in Australia, Austria, China, France, and the United States since its establishment in 2004 and has been able to send many of its students overseas. Will it be possible for Kobe University to re-establish networks with HEIs to increase their overall bargaining position in developing successful study abroad programs? Do leaders need to establish sustainable partnerships with other university leaders and institutions, especially in Asia, to enhance their global positioning and facilitate the creation of a glonacal agency that may bring more Japanese HEIs at the helm of internationalization? To answer these questions, support from the national dimension of the glonacal model that will move Japanese higher education policy from what Kudo and Hashimoto (2011) label as

“domestic-centered internationalization” towards “cosmopolitan internationalization” will be necessary (p. 356).

3. Glonacal Evidence to Evaluate Long-term Impact of Institutional Responses

To add to Yonezawa’s (2011) research on glonacal forces of higher education in Japan, this analysis will evaluate case studies of globally-driven universities in Singapore that will help assess the long-term intended and unintended impacts of Kobe University’s global initiatives on various stakeholders. Instead of suggesting that HEIs such as Kobe University replicate global strategies that tend to lose their originality and purpose over time (Marginson, 2011) and when concerning creating world-class universities are inherently western in their approach (Deem, Mok, & Lucas, 2008), the analysis will assess ways in which there may be an opportunity for a network of university leaders to share goals and seek partnerships with other universities.

Case studies of HEIs in Asia managing glonacal forces outline the transitional phase of globalization that, according to Asian university presidents interviewed by Marginson (2011), are comprised of three overlapping and interconnected phases: capacity, connectivity, and activity. The ultimate goal of globalization for HEIs is to build on their existing capacity, expand their capacity by creating partnerships with other institutions, increase their presence in the global market of higher education, and raise their global ranking. National governments in the glonacal model are recognized as being major actors in the internationalization of higher education in their ability to build capacity or “strangle it with red tape” (Marginson, 2011, p. 51). The National University of Singapore’s (NUS) mission to emerge as a “Global Knowledge Enterprise” has been successful because the goals and aims of the government and institutions to build a knowledge-based economy and a stronger national identity have overlapped and facilitated the expansion of its global positioning. The policies of the Singaporean government and the emphasis on national identity are similar to the higher education policies of the Japanese government. Moreover, the government’s aim to package Singapore as an educational hub (Sidhu, Chong, & Yeoh, 2011) resembles the Japanese government’s ultimate mission of creating world-class institutions that will attract the brightest students and faculty from abroad. In fact, the Singaporean government’s Global Schoolhouse initiative – financing of world-class universities, expanding partnerships with overseas HEIs through transnational networks, and recruiting international students to study at their elite universities – overlaps with Japan’s global policy initiatives in higher education.

Differences between higher education strategies by the Singaporean and Japanese government should also be identified. The most relevant is that Singapore’s reforms in higher education are closely aligned with other policy initiatives in areas such as taxation, immigration, and intellectual property (Sidhu et al., 2011), which are all complementary to enhancing the global presence of Singapore in the higher education market. The Japanese government, in contrast, must resolve the problem of the stratified diversification of university internationalization policy before

embarking on integrated policy initiatives across other spheres (Kudo & Hashimoto, 2011). Rather than having HEIs in Japan compete for limited funds for global programs in a zero sum game of dwindling funding for higher education, Kudo and Hashimoto (2011) recommend that the Japanese government foster Japanese alliances across universities in Japan to guarantee their survival nationally and globally. Taking their argument further, it may be hypothesized that the Japanese government's global initiatives in higher education may have a stronger impact if they encourage cooperation among Japanese universities *and* partnerships across international universities. Therefore, leaders of HEIs in Japan could foster partnerships not only internationally but also nationally by networking with national and foreign leaders. Ultimately, the goal of leaders at Japanese universities would be to work towards improving the overall global image of Japanese universities (Yonezawa, 2003).

The Singaporean government has been increasing the global positioning of national HEIs by networking with top universities and leaders. While Japanese universities have historically focused on networking with foreign universities by having Japanese students study abroad, elite Singaporean HEIs have been focusing on transnational education (e.g., establishing branch campuses) by offering joint-degree programs with cutting-edge universities such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This, in turn, has allowed universities such as NUS to benefit from the prestige associated with the foreign universities, raise their global ranking, and attract more international students to study in Singapore. In fact, international students in Singapore have listed the following three reasons for studying at universities in Singapore: positive international reputation, financial support, and education in English (Sidhu et al., 2011). It is important to note that the international students did not choose universities in Singapore as their default choice (Sidhu et al., 2011); they were emotionally invested in studying at a university in Singapore. When financial assistance was provided, it was considered an additional benefit, not the primary reason for studying in Singapore. If HEIs in Japan are invested in the challenge of becoming a world-class university, instead of focusing on exchange programs that offer Japanese students the first taste of life overseas (Taylor; as cited in Greer, 2008) or the carrot-and-stick approach of attracting international scholars based on generous scholarships, they may have to come up with clear strategies as to how they can raise their global reputation through sustainable partnerships with some of the most respected HEIs in the world.

Policy copying of creating world-class universities will not guarantee positive results if culturally-specific variables are not taken into consideration (Deem et al., 2008; Mok, 2007). As for Singapore, the government decided that top HEIs such as NUS would work with MIT to expand their knowledge economy, provided financial incentives to both MIT and NUS for engaging in a long-term partnership, and prioritized foreign ideas and human resources. On the other hand, the Japanese government has been relatively protective of its higher education policies (Mundy & Iga, 2003), implying that foreign universities may have more difficulty creating transnational partnerships in the form of branch campuses. Even if the Japanese government were

to be able to encourage institutional partnerships and offer attractive financial packages to national and international HEIs, the fact remains that foreign ideas and human resources might not flow as smoothly if tensions between westernization and Japanization are not resolved (Kitamura; as cited in Kudo & Hashimoto, 2011). Given globalization forces and transnational education trends, however, it should not be assumed that higher education systems in Asia might converge towards western systems due to the presence of local and contextual factors in national systems (Green, 1999). Therefore, higher education policies do not necessarily have to converge towards western standards and practices (Deem et al., 2008).

Yonezawa (2011) argues that although Japan has sufficient resources to internationalize its higher education system, it must raise the commitment of local stakeholders to internationalize. Their resistance may not be surprising given that Singapore's case studies of the globalization of HEIs reveal that managing glonacal forces and prioritizing global and national forces could have a negative effect on local students who have become unable to secure positions at prestigious HEIs in Singapore (Sidhu et al., 2011). Although the NUS-MIT partnership was successful in bolstering the image of NUS, the long-term benefits of this partnership are inherently determined by the ability of NUS to expand its capacity and activity in global dimensions without relying on its branding associated with MIT. Sidhu et al. (2011), while recognizing Singapore's success in creating a knowledge-based economy, remain critical of Singapore's strategy of globalization of HEIs that has prioritized global and national forces over local forces.

4. Conclusion

For Japanese universities, Singapore's efforts to create world-class institutions may indicate what could lie ahead. Although the Japanese government's long-term mission is to create world-class institutions that attract foreign scholars and educators, it must also tap into global forces in addition to funding domestic-driven projects to raise global Japanese citizens who have foreign language skills, cross-cultural competence, a sense of national identity, and confidence to work in international settings (Yonezawa, 2014). If, however, like the Singaporean government, the Japanese government chooses global and national forces over local forces as is most likely to occur in the next phase of globalization of higher education in Japan, HEIs may have to form partnerships with foreign institutions and could end up favoring the brightest international students over Japanese students. Japanese higher education institutions could begin to form alliances among themselves, bolster their image within Japan and overseas, and form networks with overseas institutions that have a vested interest in working with them. Marginson et al. (2011) observe that the world of higher education is becoming increasingly complex, "criss-crossed by a complex lattice of networked relations between universities" (p. 16). Japanese HEIs may have been excluded from this international network because they may lack awareness of the rules of the game and are following government policies without strategically thinking about their own educational aims within a global community (Yonezawa, 2011).

Higher education leaders need to begin thinking about how they can collaborate with other institutions in Japan and abroad to establish glonacal partnerships. Leaders have been following government policies regarding the need to send more Japanese students overseas and create new global programs, but now they might benefit from securing stronger global partnerships that could lead to long-term changes in the global reputation of the university. After all, it is uncertain as to how long this trend towards internationalization of Japanese higher education will last (Yonezawa, 2011). University leaders around the world must have “a long-term view in a short-term world” (Marginson, 2011, p. 52), where global partnerships are becoming indispensable for surviving in an increasingly competitive higher education market.

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Higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world are responding at an unprecedented rate to global, national, and local forces – glonacal forces – that impact national education policies (Marginson, Kaur, & Sawir, 2011). The glonacal heuristic agency model (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002) shows that leaders of HEIs must act as mediators in negotiating the ongoing tensions between global, national, and local forces. The purpose of this paper is to explain how leaders at higher education institutions in Japan might respond to global pressures by referring to the glonacal heuristic agency model of internationalization of higher education, Yonewawa's (2011) glonacal analysis of higher education in Japan, and evidence in the form of case studies of globalization of higher education in Singapore. The paper begins with a restatement of the issue of global excellence at a Japanese university to address this issue, analyzes glonacal forces of higher education in Japan, and uses evidence from Singapore's HE globalization strategy to illustrate that global partnerships with other reputable educational institutions could be deepened alongside local strategies that focus on creating global programs and study abroad programs for Japanese students. It is proposed that Japanese universities could become world-class institutions if they strengthened ties with external stakeholders while collaborating with institutional stakeholders.