

The Impact of Globalisation on Higher Education: A Marxist Critique

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ABSTRACT Globalisation has for long been hailed as a process that brings with it immense benefits to society, social development and social systems. The globalisation process is largely credited for helping to create diversified and flexible learning systems as well as improved quality in communication systems that lead to greater efficiency in the delivery of Higher Education (HE). This view depicts globalisation as a process that is largely benevolent to society. However, this view has earned damaging criticism from Marxist scholars who among other things argue that globalisation tends to transform the higher educational system from a public service to a commercial commodity that is sold for profit with the ultimate result that students from lower social classes would not afford it. The critical issue is that globalisation imposes values and ethos in the HE system that lead to increased educational inequality and social disharmony. This conceptual paper adopts a Marxist theoretical approach to reflect and analyse the impact of globalisation on higher education (HE) practices and processes. It specifically explores how issues of access, equity, funding and national culture are constrained by forces of globalisation. It is based on a study of local and international literature on globalization. The paper also argues that values contained in the global HE system tend to neglect the rich cultures of developing societies and hence university leaders and governments are cautioned not to embrace globalisation uncritically.