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**Responding to Massification: Differentiation in Postsecondary Education Worldwide**, edited by Philip Altbach, Liz Reisberg and Hans de Wit (Sense Publishers, 2017), 208 pp., USD\$99 (hardback), ISBN 978-94-6351-082-0, USD\$54 (paperback), ISBN 978-94-6351-081-3

The massification of higher education is a global phenomenon of significant importance worthy of this considered, data-orientated, study which presents an analysis of how education systems operate and have developed into the present time. It is a useful text providing a broad and informative investigation of what is termed post-secondary education by the authors: Altbach states in the introduction that the plethora of titles, such as tertiary, vocational and higher, are confusing in themselves and 'post-secondary' is taken as representing of all education beyond schooling.

*Responding to Massification* offers snapshots from around the world documenting the current responses of national post-secondary systems to the global phenomenon of higher education expansion. The book was commissioned for an international meeting in 2017 convened by the German Rectors' Conference (GRK) and sought to investigate the concepts used in and the practices of countries from various regions.

In structure, the book consists of two general theorised chapters followed by thirteen others each focussing on a specific country, and a conclusion which considers massification as described in those particular country contexts. Represented are Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Great Britain, India, Japan, Russia and the United States, grouped within five geographical areas. While the countries chosen have diverse profiles, there appears no specific reason for their inclusion beyond recording the responses to massification of each country that possibly were attending the conference.

The format of this publication works effectively and is easy to access either to read in its entirety as an interesting account of individual impacts of massification, or as a reference or course text-book to understand higher education in multiple national settings. The collection is clearly written and accessible to non-academic audiences. It contains enough contemporary detail to inform and address the critical points of how post-secondary education operates around the world. Shedding light on globalisation and the impact of massification is clearly a central concern, as detailed in the foreword written by the conference organisers.

However, though the book contains three learned chapters considering massification (and a final one which studies its impact in different contexts), there is some lack of cohesion which could come from tying together more fully the reports from each country. The global picture is represented here with a number of accounts of national post-secondary contexts rather than an overall, more comprehensive view of how massification occurred, developed and was transmitted across the world such as we find in Lingard and Rizvi's (1998) work on the fear of homogenisation. For example, 'vernacular globalisation', as described through Lingard and Rizvi's concept of 'policy touchdowns', which helps to analyse how those policies play out in local national contexts, is not addressed in this book, although it is an idea which could have added an extra dimension of analysis.

The purpose of the GRK conference was to investigate and discuss aspects of massification, with fifty academics and policy makers invited to attend. The fact that the papers were assembled into the publication in advance of the conference may have contributed to its sense of separateness. Structurally the book was positioned before the

elements of overall analysis was considered at the conference, and therefore essentially it is a set of working papers for a conference - whose aim was effectively to explore the global impacts of massification in the future. While this reviewer identifies the lack of discussion in this collection of potential developments of massification, there may be a subsequent and very interesting publication arising from the conference itself, in which this most significant topic was discussed in detail.

The book characterises the current state of post-secondary development in most studied regions as a form of managed anarchy where diversification of higher education has proliferated, but differentiation has been more difficult to achieve. The argument is made consistently that there is now an increased number of private higher education providers and providers that are not of the traditional university type - by far more of them than universities that are research-intensive.

By using examples from various countries, the book illustrates clearly that the traditional idea of a research-intensive university which also provides teaching is increasingly, and globally, becoming the minority of institutions. There appears to be a higher volume of students taught by universities with private providers overwhelmingly smaller and offering teaching mostly in discrete fields of education. Paradoxically, although the number of non-traditional institutions is far greater, the majority of post-secondary students are taught within recognisable university institutions. This is because the non-traditional institutions are much smaller in student population, illustrated starkly by the chapter by Goedegebuure, Schubert and Bentley analysing the Australian context which suggests that of the 171 institutions offering tertiary education it is the 43-strong university sector that provides most teaching by far at 92% of post-secondary enrolment.

Another point of interest highlighted in Chapter 1 by Altbach is that worldwide, the pattern of enrolments in post-secondary contexts is highly varied. The largest numbers of students are not necessarily in the elite types of research intensive institutions, as shown in the context of India, where although most students are taught in universities and colleges, only 2% of the enrolments are in the institutions of 'national importance' (the most elite). Another message that can be taken from this is the vast size difference of the systems - the whole of enrolment in the Australian University sector of 1.2 million, which makes up 95% of the cohort, is dwarfed by the very small percentage of Indian students in the highest echelon universities - which has reached 3 million. In fact the sectors are so vastly different in scale and the structures so varied, to encompass the whole and reconcile them for intelligent analysis is challenging.

In the country-specific chapters the writing verges on the descriptive when explaining historical policy developments. Theorising changes in terms of their policy orientation is rather light in these sections, which tend to be highly statistical, and therefore could quickly become out-of-date, particularly where targets for expansion are only projected to 2020, such as in the material dealing with China.

There is, however, a level of detail through the book which allows for rich case-studies of each country context. One of the more interesting features of the country chapters arises from the lengthy titles of chapters chosen by the authors and also the abbreviated chapter headings that then appear on the subsequent pages. For example Chile's chapter is entitled 'Against all odds: how Chile developed a successful technical and vocational sector in postsecondary education' while the shortened title becomes 'Technical and Vocational'. In reading this international study, the choice of titles

provides a summary of the key conclusion the authors come to about each system and national context.

In the introduction the claim is made that only 2-5% of the 22,000 institutions worldwide are research-intensive universities: it is a key message of the book that massification has not led to expansion through the traditional institutions but has morphed into a new post-secondary landscape. It is therefore not a 'mass' system (Trow 2000) under pressure, but one that is diversified and different - this study describes it as a 'flotilla.'

The book contends that league tables, which continue to be highly regarded, do not begin to mirror the diversity and interest within the higher education sector. This is in part due to the evaluation system's concentration on research while the authors contend research-based institutions make up such a small percentage of all post-secondary organisations globally. A finding such as this highlights the current challenge for the majority of institutions and shows the elitist quality of the league tables which focus primarily on research rankings while most post-secondary institutions are not engaged in this activity. It points to the chasm between the accepted view of higher education and what it is in practice. The contributors' recurrent insights into the dearth of metrics reflecting the actual situation – that is the entire field of the post-secondary sector - is important, but the book does not itself offer any solution for this lack.

A major contribution of the book to the literature is the inclusive approach taken to post-secondary education, choosing not to demean non-research intensive institutions through its decision to review the massified sector holistically and realistically, and so allowing the reader to reflect on the actualities of post-secondary education rather than the difficulties of imagined dreaming spires.

De Wit and Reisberg's final chapter draws on social justice discourses to explain the drivers for massification, and they do not link it to commonly held human capital or knowledge economy arguments. They cast the demand for higher education as a pressure on governments, and explain how systems have been diversified as a response, including private sector expansion to meet this need, a need that some might argue the governments themselves have manufactured. There is a provocative argument made in De Wit and Reisberg's chapter that some systems have the scope for excellence built-in and supported by governments (US, UK and Australia), whereas others who would hope to host world-class universities do not seem to be likely to attain this goal in the near future (Brazil, Chile, Egypt and India). A concern here is that such a global comparison may be misreading the local and national purposes of a university which may promote research excellence within a country, while not necessarily achieving international importance.

There is some mention of the diversified system meeting the needs of the labour market, referencing the well-loved example of the Fachhochschulen in Germany without delving deeply into the labour market question, as so little research does. The final chapter touches on the sensitive question of preparedness for academic study and decreasing interest in university enrolment in a country such as France.

The final section, *Strategy versus Anarchy*, gives a view of post-secondary education as a struggle beset by pressures from rankings, social demand for more access, and labour market forces. It summarises government responses as setting objectives based on the research-oriented international rankings, expanding access, and overseeing quality, all with varying level of success in the countries under scrutiny. In the executive summary

chapter Altbach, Reisberg and de Wit cast the period as one of anarchy that he would hope should evolve into a set of high quality post-secondary systems.

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