

The Total Quality Policy for Excellence in Higher Education: A Tool to Extend Neoliberal Ideology

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Abstract

This article critically examines the relationship between neoliberalism and higher education policies, specifically focusing on the concept of total quality as a tool for extending neoliberal ideology. The first section of the article presents an overview of the neoliberal approach, highlighting its emphasis on deregulation, privatization, and disengagement of the state. The second section focuses on the implementation of total quality policies in higher education, discussing the concept of excellence and how it has been operationalized in neoliberal terms. Through this analysis, the article argues that total quality policies constitute a radical transformation of the traditional role of universities as sites of research and knowledge production, and instead position them as instruments for promoting business interests and market-oriented values. By examining the implications of total quality policies in higher education, this article aims to contribute to broader debates on the radical transformation of the Humboldtian University, once devoted to research and now replaced by a neoliberal “MacUniversity”.

Keywords

Neoliberalism, University, Higher Education, Total Quality, Excellence

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, universities have faced increasing pressure to conform to market demands and to become more efficient and competitive. This pressure has been fueled by the neoliberal ideology, which emphasizes the primacy of the market and the importance of individual competition and self-interest. Under

the neoliberal paradigm, education is seen as a commodity, and students are viewed as customers who must be satisfied by universities' services. This view has led to the proliferation of business-oriented programs and management practices in higher education institutions.

Critics of neoliberalism argue that this approach has detrimental effects on higher education. For instance, it leads to the commodification of knowledge, the erosion of academic freedom, and the prioritization of instrumental knowledge over critical thinking and social justice (Giroux, 2014). Moreover, neoliberal policies often exacerbate inequalities and social exclusion, as they tend to benefit the already privileged and disadvantage the marginalized.

In response to these concerns, some scholars have proposed alternative models of higher education that are more democratic, inclusive, and socially responsible. For example, the idea of the "public university" emphasizes the importance of education as a public good that should serve the needs of society as a whole, rather than the interests of the market or the elite (Marginson, 2016). Similarly, the concept of the "critical university" highlights the role of higher education in promoting critical thinking, social justice, and sustainable development (Barnett, 2011).

However, despite these alternative visions, neoliberalism remains a dominant force in higher education, as evidenced by the widespread adoption of policies of excellence and total quality (Vincent, 2011). These policies aim to measure and evaluate the performance of universities and individual scholars based on standardized criteria, such as research output, citation impact, and student satisfaction. The underlying assumption is that by incentivizing and rewarding excellence, universities will become more competitive and efficient, and will attract more students and funding.

Critics of the policies of excellence argue that they are based on flawed assumptions and lead to unintended consequences. For instance, they tend to favor certain disciplines and forms of knowledge over others, as well as to incentivize short-term and instrumental research over long-term and transformative scholarship (Readings, 1996). Moreover, they tend to create a culture of competition and individualism that undermines collaboration and collegiality among scholars and institutions.

In light of these concerns, this article aims to critically examine the policies of excellence and total quality in higher education from a neoliberal perspective. Specifically, we will analyze how these policies contribute to the extension of neoliberal hegemony in higher education, and how they transform the nature and mission of the university. We will argue that policies of excellence and total quality are not simply technical tools for enhancing academic performance, but rather ideological instruments that reinforce the neoliberal paradigm and its underlying assumptions about the role and purpose of higher education. We will conclude by offering some reflections on the possibilities of resisting and transforming neoliberalism in higher education and on the potential of alternative models of higher education that are more democratic, inclusive, and socially re-

sponsible.

This article is made up of two sections. The first section is devoted to the dynamics of forces and components of the neoliberal approach. Thus, the concept of neoliberalism is center stage. The second section recalls the total quality approach and the concept of excellence and total quality as the two main aspects of neoliberalism in higher education.

2. The Neoliberal Approach

Rather than locking the notion of neoliberalism into a priori scholarly definition, it seemed fruitful to take note of its power and its polysemy. In essence, neoliberalism, or marketization as it is often called, is an expression of economic liberalism that conceives of the world as a market and is concerned with opening up trade relations between countries on the basis of free market principles (Gill, 2004; Maringe, 2010).

Markets are seen as the most efficient mechanism for the distribution of money, goods and services. A free market economy therefore facilitates economic prosperity while providing consumer choice. In this way, neoliberalism can be seen as a form of economic democracy that serves the public better than politics (Farnham & Horton, 1993).

The state apparatus and its agencies are systematically perceived as inefficient, bureaucratic, intrusive by the neoliberal approach and its intervention—through taxation and labor market regulation for example—is a distorting intrusion into the functioning of the market (Clarke & Newman, 1997). Neoliberals believed that markets, not government plans, were the answer to a bloated, inefficient and unresponsive public bureaucracy. The neoliberal analysis aims to reduce the state to its strict regal functions. The claimed legitimacy of neoliberalism lies in the defense of individual rights and the promotion of freedom of choice (Harvey, 2006). Its key values are individualism and personal freedom, rather than collectivism (Corsani, 2013; Farnham & Horton, 1993).

However, to understand properly the neoliberal ideology, let us first look at its four main components: First, the fact that the state no longer intervenes reactively to compensate for market failures, but proactively to enable the market to be more competitive and firms more competitive. To do this, it has two main tools: deregulation on the one hand, and reduced social spending on the other, both of which favor the private sector. As a result, the state works for the market and is no longer opposed to it as before; they are now allied in a kind of coupling. Then there is the belief that supply creates demand and not the other way around. There is therefore no need for a Keynesian policy to revive economic activity through demand, as was the case in the era of Fordism and its effects on economic growth (Boyer, 1987). From now on, by applying Jean-Baptiste Say's Law of Opportunities (1803), it is thought that it is sufficient to take all the measures that increase the competitiveness of firms so that they invest more, recruit and create jobs, which in the long run leads to an increase in

consumption, which in turn is favorable to growth and firms. This is a supply-side policy, not a demand-side policy; an important ideological reversal. Third, there is the belief that, on the one hand, markets (the private sector) are more efficient than the public sector and that they are self-regulating, which means that the state can deregulate them; and on the other hand, that the efficiency of the public sector must be increased, either by privatizing certain activities (e.g., health, transportation, education), or by applying to the public sector modern management rules inspired by the private sector, which has resulted in “the deregulation and privatization of public services, and the dismantling of union organizations” (Gélinas, 2008: p. 151). Abstract principles of organizational management are applied to the public sector; we are entering the New Public Management, the managerial approach to governance, centered on efficiency and the achievement of technocratic pre-established objectives. According to (Saint-Martin, 2005: p. 89), this is “a conceptual coup d’état”, in other words, a radical paradigm shift. Educational systems are necessarily confronted with this evolution. The practices of this new management are more and more present in them and this is not without consequences on pedagogical practices. Finally, it is considered that too much tax kills tax, so taxes and other charges must be limited to leave more room for private initiative. This leads to a reduction in state expenditure, and therefore in public services, and ultimately to a disengagement of the state in general and a deconstruction of the welfare state in particular. There is therefore less and less dissimilarity between the private and the public.

The reduction of state intervention is mainly taking place in the mechanisms of society (in the social domain). The primary question is whether the separation of the State from the social sphere is a historical trend of the same order as the separation of the State from the legislative and judicial spheres, i.e. irreversible. The analysis of this phenomenon refers to the distinction that can be made between the three spheres of society: the personal sphere, the place of individual interests; the private sphere, the place of corporate interests; and the public sphere, the place of collective interests, the domain of the State. Historically, we can distinguish the following trends: from the 19th century onwards (with Fordism), whereas until then the three spheres were relatively distinct, the private and public spheres encroached on the personal sphere at the time when the “social” was invented, i.e. when a new field of action for the State appeared. With the urban concentration of populations, mass factory work, and the scientific organization of work, growing needs were felt to ensure public order, a minimum of sanitation, public health, education of the masses, and transportation. Hence the appearance of a whole state apparatus to control, contain, supervise, and measure (Boismenu et al., 1995; Dockès, 1993; Vercellone, 1990). The public sphere was thus indeed interfering in the personal sphere. The ensuing reduction of the personal sphere, characterized in particular by a loss of autonomy of individuals, who now depended for their mere survival on the goodwill of firms, since they were no

longer masters of their production tool¹, gradually led to a need for compensation on the part of the state, hence the gradual appearance, in a second stage, of the welfare state. This was a new encroachment of the public sphere on the personal sphere, while the protection provided by the welfare state limited the protection provided by families, neighbors, and communities of all kinds (Moreno, 2006).

We are currently witnessing a gradual reversal with the retreat of the “social”, the disengagement of the welfare state, and thus a distancing of the personal sphere from the public sphere. Moreover, this reclaiming of the personal sphere is accompanied by more individualized consumption, personal activities, free time, social networks, associations, contractual forms, partnerships, and less mass consumption, hierarchy, rules governing life and morals, and constraints of all kinds. If the wage-earning model has been at the center of the Fordist social compromise for more than a century with its solid foundations based on three units: the unity of the workplace (the workshop, the factory, the office), unity of working time (weekly working hours, rest periods) and unity of action (the collective organization of work), this model now seems to be in crisis with globalization, technological change, transformations in the organization and functioning of companies, the relaxation of labor legislation in favor of the employer and successive reforms of the social protection system (unemployment, retirement, etc.), perceived as disadvantageous to employees (Bernier et al., 2003; Bouffartigue et al., 2018; Castel & Zecca, 1995; Gautié, 2003; Mazuyer, 2013), call into question the promises of security and economic progress of wage employment (the disengagement of firms from employees). On the other hand, a disengagement of employees has also developed, with more and more employees no longer wanting a long-term or overly constraining commitment to a company, preferring to build a career by changing jobs regularly. Reciprocal commitment has been replaced by ephemeral and loose relationships, while the security and solidarity guaranteed by institutions have given way to uncertainty and individualism. Of course, this does not concern all workers, but the crisis of COVID-19 with its procession of social plans (despite the implementation of the system of partial unemployment in Europe) and the development of platform capitalism (E-commerce, home delivery, etc.) has accelerated the weakening of the historical social model and the “liquefaction²” of work

¹The scientific and technical organization of work in the workshop or factory, put under control all the tasks and operations of the workers, in particular those of the unskilled, who are from then on expropriated from their condition of professional workers “the worker of trade” that they supported in the preceding periods of “quasi-craft” production (Boyer & Freyssenet, 2000; Dockès, 1993), to gradually become a new unskilled working class whose work was rigorously delimited and prescribed (the mass worker) (Coriat, 1994; Houben & Ingham, 1995; Linhart, 2013).

²The author takes up sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s thesis of the “liquid society”. As Baumann explained, “Unlike solids, liquids cannot retain their shape when pressed or pushed by any external force, however minor. The bonds between their particles are too weak to resist... And this is precisely the most striking feature of the type of human cohabitation characteristic of “liquid modernity”. Hence the metaphor. Human bonds are truly fragile and, in a situation of constant change, cannot be expected to remain unscathed. Long-term planning is a difficult exercise and can be perilous since one fears that long-term commitments will restrict one’s future freedom of choice. Hence the tendency to preserve exit doors, to ensure that all the ties one forms are easy to untie, that all commitments are temporary, valid only “until further notice” (Tabet, 2017).

(Hussenot, 2022). Now that institutions forming society have lost both their stability and their legitimacy in recent decades, to show how work is also becoming more and more uncertain and constantly changing. The ties between workers and employers are no longer stable; workers are flexible and independent, and the firm is more fluid as it becomes increasingly disengaged from its employees. In liquid work, “there are no company premises, no colleagues, no schedules, no employee representatives, no health and safety regulations, no accident prevention, no paid vacations, no collective bargaining, no health insurance” (Degryse, 2020).

At the same time, the public and private spheres are coming closer together, with the state and business joining forces to meet the challenges of globalization and competitiveness. We can also observe in the present time that the public sphere (the place where the collective interest is protected) no longer seems to be the preserve of the state. The private sphere (both the money market sector and the non-monetary sector, the third sector) is encroaching on the public sphere. Thus we can note the disappearance of public monopolies (communications, public transport, water supply, electricity), and the greater role played by both the private sector and the third sector (associations and socially responsible enterprises) in the sectors of health, education, pensions, security, and in the fight against unemployment and social exclusion (Moreno, 2006). The social functions of the state tend to be gradually separated from the executive, while the private and public spheres are brought closer together. After the first three separations (from the religious, the legislative, and the judicial), a fourth separation is thus underway, that of the social from the State. This brings us back to our initial point and to a fundamental question about the consequences of this change for education. We have just seen that neoliberalism has led, in the field of education, to deregulation (more autonomy in particular), to certain privatization (more private institutions), and disengagement of the State. The initial hypothesis is thus verified, even if, as indicated above, these three phenomena must be added to the application of the rules of New Public Management to public educational institutions.

3. Neoliberalism in Higher Education

As for the concrete translations of liberalization in the field of higher education, they lie essentially in greater financial participation of the user, the establishment of international competition, the transparency of product information, the choice and free movement of students (ECTS: European Credit Transfer System) and the adoption of the objective of total quality and excellence which was previously reserved for the business world, whether it concerns personnel, finance, marketing and of course production. It is a radical transformation of the Humboldtian University, once dedicated to research and now replaced by a neoliberal “MacUniversity”³. Student mobility, i.e. the number of solvent foreign students ³(Ritzer 1996) considers that in a time of McDonaldisation of society where society takes on the characteristics of a fast food restaurant and where there is a shift from the traditional to so-called reasonable modes of scientific thinking and management, the university is also conceived 1) as a means of educational consumption, 2) which allows students to consume educational services and eventually 3) to obtain important “goods”—degrees, and credentials.

that each European country can attract, represents the main stake in this market of services, because, from an economic point of view, their subsistence expenses (housing, food, etc.) are counted as exports to their countries of origin. In addition to this consumption, there are the educational services themselves, which universities are advised to sell (teaching services through tuition fees, but also “incidental” educational services).

This liberalization is therefore not incompatible, as it stands, with the subsidies granted by the State. They are conceived as compensation for the “extra cost” implied by the general interest missions assigned to this category of goods. The reform of financing to allow a stronger commitment from the user, as well as the procedures for setting up quality assurance and excellence, have already been pushed in a large number of European countries since the beginning of the decade 2000 (Brusoni et al., 2014).

The very word “excellence” has come into common usage, becoming the archetype of success and dethroning “very good” at the university. It is in this last field that quality and excellence have become a policy. It is in this last area that quality and excellence have become a policy, a policy that now concerns all areas of action of higher education institutions (Parker & Jary, 1995). These new orientations represent an important challenge for universities. They must answer questions such as: What is a good course? What makes a good teacher? It is not only a question of evaluating products, but also of processes: in addition to the quality of teaching itself, there are questions about the quality of teachers, including selection and promotion criteria, initial and continuing pedagogical training, and profiles of pedagogical innovators (Parmentier, 2006). The questions that arise concern the very nature of the policies followed by universities, the objectives they pursue, the main means of implementing these policies, and finally the results of these policies and their limits.

A policy of excellence in higher education can meet two major objectives. The first is to significantly increase the level of quality of both training and research. Although many definitions of excellence in teaching can be found, some common main patterns can be discerned (Gibbs, 2008):

- A focus on the student, on student learning, and personal support for students and their development, rather than on formal teaching;
- A macro focus on the wider learning environment and the development of the curriculum or program, rather than a micro-focus on teaching;
- A traditional emphasis on the teacher themselves, and student feedback ratings on the teacher, on the teacher’s research record and subject knowledge, and external recognition of the teacher, with little focus on students, on learning, on the learning environment, or on the process of developing teaching;
- An emphasis on efforts to develop teaching, especially through innovation, influencing others, and the leadership of teaching;
- An emphasis on the scholarship of teaching as a particularly highly valued form of the development of teaching.

Thus, when this policy is carried out through the recruitment of the best teachers and the selection of the best students, one can speak of an elitist policy of excellence (Robichaud & Crevier, 2016). Such a policy raises the level of quality of universities compared to other higher education institutions in the world and incidentally allows them to be better placed in international rankings; this contributes to their prestige and attractiveness, which is not a negligible objective in the context of global competition that is developing in this field (Cosnefroy et al., 2016). The second objective is to enable as many people as possible to succeed in higher education (this is therefore social or inclusive excellence) and to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to best fulfill their social and societal responsibilities, particularly in terms of the environment: this is, therefore, societal excellence (Cosnefroy et al., 2016; De Ketele, 2015). We observe that more countries pursue an elitist policy than a social and societal policy (Cosnefroy et al., 2016). These policies of excellence have mostly been introduced in the last decade as a result of relatively recent factors, among which we can highlight globalization, increased university autonomy, international rankings, but also the Bologna process (Palomba, 2015). Globalization is the first factor that can be put forward to explain the recent development of excellence policies. Globalization, which greatly increases the economic interdependence of nations, also exacerbates trade competition among nations. While goods and services requiring low-skilled and cheap labor are increasingly produced by emerging countries, companies in advanced countries are seeing their competitiveness and production melt away at the same time as their demand for labor. Advanced countries, therefore, have no alternative but to specialize in high-value-added products and services (Proulx, 2016; Tsogas, 2012). The supply of jobs in these countries thus changes dramatically for higher qualifications, knowledge, and skills. This leads to the massification of higher education, but also to social demand for higher quality education in this field. Moreover, because it leads to greater mobility of people, globalization leads directly to the internationalization of universities, which can only succeed in this field if they are among the best, hence the policies of excellence.

The autonomy of universities, the second factor, is important because it gives them the possibility of implementing strategies that allow them to increase their reputation and thus their attractiveness through a policy of excellence aimed at recruiting the best teachers and selecting the best students. This policy allows universities to hope, in the long run, for a higher position in international rankings thanks to the effects of their policy on the reputation of their professors and the quality of their research, and therefore the number of scientific articles published and referenced, which are elements that contribute to a better ranking. It can be argued that greater university autonomy will become even more important in light of the difficulties of public finances in many countries and in light of the prevalence of New Public Management, which requires universities to be more effective and efficient (Aghion et al., 2008; Musselin & Teixeira, 2014).

The third factor is international rankings. Over the past decade, the term “world-class university” has become a favorite formula, not simply for improving the quality of teaching and research in higher education but, more importantly, for developing the capacity to compete in the global higher education market through the acquisition, adaptation, and creation of advanced knowledge. With students seeking to attend the best possible higher education institutions within their financial means, often outside national borders, and with governments motivated to maximize the return on their investments in universities, global reputation is becoming an increasingly important issue for institutions around the world (Williams & Van Dyke, 2007). The two most comprehensive international rankings, which allow for broad comparisons of institutions across national borders, are those prepared by the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES since 2004) and, the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities, prepared since 2003 by Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU). The latter ranking, which is the most influential in the world, uses a methodology that relies exclusively on objective indicators, such as the academic and scientific performance of teachers and graduates, to identify the top 500 universities in the world. Measures used include publications, citations, and international awards (such as Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals) (Eloire, 2010; Salmi, 2009). It is thus clear why universities develop a policy of elitist excellence that attempts to meet these criteria and why ministries of higher education also move in this direction for reasons of national prestige (Hazelkorn, 2015).

The Bologna Process is the fourth important factor explaining the genesis of excellence policies, a factor that is, however, limited to the European space. The European Union was built on the fundamental idea that the movement of goods, capital, and people should be liberated. The mobility of people is, however, limited by the heterogeneity of university education on the one hand, and national qualification systems on the other. Launched by a few countries in May 1988, the Bologna Process now includes 47 countries, 19 of which are outside the European Union. This process has undoubtedly led to greater mobility than before for both students and workers. But it has also encouraged universities to compare the quality of their training and the value of their diplomas among themselves, which has led to a certain amount of competition, if not competition among them, and therefore to the implementation of policies of excellence to increase their attractiveness (Brusoni et al., 2014). Policies of excellence can focus either on teaching, research, or both. It appears that the latter approach (teaching and research) is in the majority, while the former (teaching alone) comes in second while a policy to pursue excellence in research alone is gaining ground (Gunn, 2018).

The Bologna Declaration advocates in its 7th objective to “improve the quality of education provided by European universities and ensure their verification using common international (European) criteria and methods with the help of external international indicators and procedures (quality assurance): It is objectively based on the concept of common quality standards that are externally de-

terminated and then “guaranteed”, i.e. implemented, developed and maintained. The result is the idea that universities will be equipped with tools that they can use to continuously improve and will voluntarily assess the quality of all their activities on an ongoing basis, preferably using the services of external assessment agencies. Both accountability (reporting, mainly in the financial sense) and external quality control have been discussed (Enders et al., 2006). At the European level, commitments to quality assurance in higher education have driven the ENQA network (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) mandated by the Council of the European Union to present proposals, in collaboration with the AAU (the European University Association), for the development of a set of quality standards, procedures, and procedure guides (Brusoni et al., 2014). It is charged with making proposals for the establishment of external quality assurance procedures for evaluation and accreditation agencies, which themselves will need to be subject to the quality assessment of the evaluations they carry out. Within universities, one of the forms in which quality assurance enters is the evaluation of teaching; in other words, in a form that does not explicitly refer to the structural relationship it has with the process of market formation. It is presented in a way that is more neutral and more difficult to contest: the valorization of pedagogy at the university in the service of students. The evaluation of teachers, known as the evaluation of teaching, although it is an individualized evaluation, represents a part of what is designated as the self-evaluation of teaching, the other part being the evaluation of the courses and institutions. In line with the new definition of quality set for higher education where the figure of the student is promoted as a “consumer”, assessment is partly carried out by students (Coffey & Gibbs, 2001; Gunn, 2018; Tomusk et al., 2010).

The lessons that can be learned from this situation are as follows: The policy of excellence appears to be a universal phenomenon (Gunn, 2018). Indeed, in many countries, whether large such as the United States, Russia, or Japan, or smaller such as Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, or advanced or emerging such as China and India, such policies are already practiced. The same objectives prevail in all countries, i.e., to have universities that are well placed in international rankings and conduct the most advanced research to have the most qualified workforce, to remain competitive in international markets, and to increase the prestige of the country and the reputation of universities (Brusoni et al., 2014). In this sense, policies of excellence are more elitist than inclusive, and again in the limited sense of social but not societal excellence. For (Teichler, 2007: p. 144) “the terms excellence or elite refer undoubtedly to the apex. “Excellence” underscores the distinction from the others in vertical terms in a highly positively loaded way and creates an aura of exceptionality. The term “elite” refers to a group of excelling persons; those who excel academically are to be viewed as a social entity or part of a social entity which even might have legitimacy beyond its positive performance. Thus, the provisions of the Bologna

Process have developed in contradiction to the primary objective of the process, which referred to a political and economic “transition” from communism to a market-oriented democratic society, from an elite to a mass higher education system (Tomusk et al., 2010).

It reflects “a transformation of higher education and the role assigned to it: the numerical and percentage increase of an age group accessing higher education is transforming the structure and purposes of higher education. Since the end of the Second World War, the democratization of the University has been associated with the idea of an expansion of the rights and freedoms of European citizens. It is called upon to function as an integrative force to limit the marginalization of individuals and social groups” (Goastellec, 2014). Many strongly believe that concerns about the quality of European higher education institutions hide efforts to replace the autonomous professional decision-making and quality criteria in place for university management with management methods borrowed from the corporate sector, which were already underway even before the Bologna Declaration (Coenga-Oliveira & Anctil-Avoine, 2017; Ferrer Llop, 2014; Harari-Kermadec & Porcherot, 2020; Valenduc, 2012).

Excellence and efficiency policies can be identified at all levels: university, faculty, department, and/or individual staff members. They can be applied in the context of higher education institutions’ many different roles and functions. They apply to both management and service delivery, the staff and student experience, and academic and research outcomes. What is clear is that excellence is an expectation and a goal. There is a general understanding that purpose is central to the culture and values of higher education and explains the motivation for continuous improvement. The overriding factors in the development of these policies are institutional autonomy, which has led to a certain disengagement of the state and a certain deregulation of the sector, international rankings, and globalization. These policies are pursued both by governments, whether central or regional and by the universities themselves, especially if the latter are highly differentiated and autonomous. The most frequent policies are those that concern both teaching and research.

4. Conclusion

The shifting away of the Humboldtian conception of the university, which envisioned it as a space for contemplation and societal value deliberation, has resulted in a renewed focus on the purpose and operations of higher education institutions. With the current emphasis on the practicality and profitability of education in relation to the labor market, it is unavoidable that policies of excellence and efficiency, commonly observed in the private sector, will be implemented in higher education. In the realm of education, neoliberalism is marked by shifts in both state and student attitudes. On the part of the state, these changes involve deregulation, privatization, disengagement, and the implementation of New Public Management principles within institutions. Similarly, stu-

dents exhibit a desire for a more pragmatic education, seeking professionalizing training and personalized instruction. This is reflected in their preference for private schools, insistence on measurable outcomes, and a call for greater accountability in academic institution management.

In the context of higher education, neoliberalism manifests as governments seeking to enhance the international rankings of their universities by granting them more autonomy, while simultaneously holding them accountable according to New Public Management standards. Neoliberalism also drives competition among universities, their internationalization efforts, and a tendency towards increased selectivity. It is clear that neoliberal influences significantly shape the landscape of higher education.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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